The influence of the political situation of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, Ahok, on ethnic identity: Research on Chinese Indonesian students temporarily staying in the Netherlands

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1. Introduction
On 19 April 2017, it was announced that Ahok had lost the re-election for a second term as governor of Indonesia’s capital, Jakarta. Ahok, whose official name is Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, was Jakarta’s first ethnic Chinese Christian governor. This is remarkable for a country in which 87% of the population is Muslim (Westcott 2017a). According to the research of Arifin, Hasbullah and Pramono (2017), 1.2% of the country’s population consists of Chinese Indonesians. Therefore, due to his background, Ahok is considered a double minority (Westcott 2017b). He started his governorship in 2014 after being appointed by the President of Indonesia: Joko Widodo, also known as ‘Jokowi’. By the assignment of Ahok as his successor, Jokowi made a statement that religion and ethnicity should no longer be a problem in Indonesian politics, which is notable since Chinese Indonesians used to be refused from the political sphere (Budiman 2005; Lembong 2008).

During the re-election campaign, sentences from the Quran were quoted by Ahok to attract Muslim supporters and to inform them that they were allowed to vote for non-Muslims. However, his idea backfired as the video of this speech was cut, falsely suggesting that Ahok was insulting the Quran. Consequently, the manipulated version of the video was used by the opposition, even though the editor had admitted to editing the video. This resulted in protests of Muslim supporters for Ahok to abdicate and they even wanted to have him executed. Additionally, Ahok was prosecuted for blasphemy during the campaign (Westcott 2017b).

Anies Baswedan, a Muslim Indonesian, was eventually the elected governor of Jakarta. After the election, Ahok was found guilty of blasphemy and sentenced to two years in jail (The Guardian 2017). This led to responses from leaders from all over the world and peaceful rallies were organized to show solidarity to Ahok in different countries, including the Netherlands (The Malaysian Insight 2017).

In Indonesia, habitants of Chinese heritage are still regarded as outsiders, people who are not integrated in the Indonesian society, even after centuries of living in the country (Dawis 2005). This is one of the reasons why Ahok has attracted a lot of attention from the Indonesian media as well as the Chinese Indonesian society. Since the re-elections, the hatred towards Chinese Indonesians has been reawakened (Bland 2017; The Economist 2017), this will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

The information mentioned above leads to the research question: “How does the political situation of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, Ahok, influence the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesian students temporarily staying in the Netherlands?” Ethnic identity is influenced by the social, cultural and political environment in which a group lives (Nagel 1994).

The goal of this master thesis is to research how Ahok’s political situation influences the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians. It contributes to former research which explains how past political environments have influenced the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians (Arifin et al. 2017; Budiman 2005; Dawis 2009; Hwang and Sadiq 2010; Suryadinata 2008; Walujiyono 2014). Moreover, the political situation of Ahok developed recently, therefore no research has been done thus far on how this has influenced the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians. More broadly, this research contributes to understanding how political environments can influence the ethnic identity of minorities.
To collect the data for this research, in-depth interviews were conducted with ethnic Chinese Indonesian students who temporarily stayed in the Netherlands. The target group for the interviews were full ethnic Chinese students whose family has lived in Indonesia for at least three generations. During the interviews they explained their opinions and ideas about being Chinese Indonesian in Indonesia, about Ahok and the current political environment. The number of interviewees is small and therefore it will merely give an indication of how the political environment can influence the ethnic identity. It is not intended to generalize all Chinese Indonesians through this research, therefore it does not mean that all Chinese Indonesians perceive themselves this way or that ethnic identity is always influenced by the political environment.

The structure of this thesis is as following: first the political background information on Chinese Indonesians will be discussed through literature research. Hereafter, the definition of ethnic identity that is used in this thesis will be explained. Then, the research method by which qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted, is illustrated. Finally, the results are presented and by analyzing those, the conclusion is drawn.

2. Political background information on Chinese Indonesians

This chapter discusses the political background of Chinese Indonesians, starting from the period of 1945 until now. The governments of these periods illustrate how influential the political situation was for the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians. In particular, Suharto’s regime (1966-1998) has exerted a significant influence on the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians. Therefore, a lot of research has been done on this period that demonstrate how the political environment was able to negatively influence the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians (Arifin et al. 2017; Budiman 2005; Dawis 2009; Hwang and Sadiq 2010; Suryadinata 2008; Walujono 2014).

The governments of Sukarno (1945-1966) and Suharto (1966-1988) implemented policies which made it more difficult for Chinese Indonesians to express their Chinese heritage and culture. Their policies separated the Chinese Indonesians and the indigenous Indonesians. Segregation policies were also realized by the same governments, but in contrast to the Dutch period, these policies were not in favor of the Chinese Indonesians. For example, Arief Budiman (2005) strongly argues that the political regimes of Sukarno, Suharto and the regimes that followed were the reason for the Chinese Indonesians to continuously change their own perceptions of being Chinese Indonesian, as well as their rights and obligations.

First, it is important to understand why up till now the Chinese Indonesians are not considered as a part of Indonesia; why they are considered as ‘aliens’ (Aguilar 2001; Mackie 2008; Walujono 2014). Moreover, where does the difference between the Chinese Indonesians and the indigenous Indonesians come from?

The discrimination of Chinese Indonesians originates from the period in which Indonesia was a Dutch colony. As stated by Winarta (2008), the Indonesian population was ranked by the Dutch based on race. The highest ranks were given to the Europeans, followed by the Foreign Orientals, which included the Chinese Indonesians, and the lowest ranks were assigned to the indigenous Indonesians. As a result of this segregation policy, the indigenous Indonesians were envious and resentful of the Chinese Indonesians (Turner and Allen 2007).
This is in contrast to before the Dutch colonization, when the Chinese were actually integrated into the Indonesian society (Somers 1965). Therefore, it was the political environment which laid the ground for the discrimination of Chinese Indonesians and further segregated them from the indigenous Indonesians.

The idea that Chinese Indonesians do not belong to the Indonesian society has remained. Due to the political situation, Chinese Indonesians were able to become significantly wealthy during the colonial period. Additionally, they were forced by latter governments to engage in the business sector, which accumulated more money and thus more wealth. Moreover, former president Suharto stated in his speech of 1968 that at least 70% of Indonesia’s economy is in the hands of Chinese Indonesians and this image has remained (Herlijanto 2016). Consequently, the tension between Chinese Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians is fuelled by this economic gap (Coppel 2008; Mackie 2008; Turner and Allen 2007).

2.1 The regimes of Sukarno and Suharto

The governments of the two presidents Sukarno and Suharto contributed to the segregation of Chinese Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians. Their policies also exerted influences on the social and cultural environments, and thus influencing the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians (Arifin et al. 2017; Budiman 2005; Dawis 2009; Hwang and Sadiq 2010; Suryadinata 2008; Waluono 2014).

During the government of Sukarno (1945-1966), the Chinese Indonesians had two choices. The first choice was to maintain the Chinese identity and culture, while still trying to integrate in the Indonesian state. For them, acquiring the Indonesian citizenship did not imply losing their Chinese identity. The alternative was to assimilate with the locals, endeavoring to blend in. In contrast to the former group, the idea of the pro-assimilation group was that Chinese Indonesians should not consider themselves exclusive; in order to become Indonesian, they should open up to marrying indigenous Indonesians, changing their names and converting to Islam (Budiman 2005; Soebagjo 2008).

The regime of Suharto (1966-1988), which was also called The New Order regime, forced assimilation upon the Chinese Indonesians. Chinese Indonesians were obligated to become Indonesian and as a result they had to hide their Chinese identity (Arifin et al. 2017). Consequently, it made them lose a part of their ‘Chineseness’ (Hwang and Sadiq 2010; Suryadinata 2008).

To explain this, an overview is given of the different policies which were introduced to force assimilation upon Chinese Indonesians. As Lembong (2008) explains, the policies can be divided in two parts: cultural and politico-economic. The former means that the three pillars of the Chinese culture, namely Chinese schools, media and organizations, were forbidden. It was prohibited for Chinese Indonesians to write Chinese characters and use the Chinese language in the social and public sphere. Moreover, they had to transform their Chinese names into Indonesian names (Winarta 2008). For the politico-economic part, Chinese Indonesians were only allowed to work in the business sector, excluding them from other sectors, such as the government and the army (Lembong 2008). As a result of the political pressure, they became very limited in expressing their Chinese ethnic identity.
Although Suharto implemented laws which forced Chinese Indonesians to assimilate, he still took advantage of them for his own economic gains (Soebagjo 2008). Considering that they build their wealth in Indonesia, they are in debt to the country.

Chinese Indonesians were considered the scapegoat of the society; they were the causes of all the problems in Indonesia (Anggraeni 2017; Tan 2001). Budiman (2005) states that the government pressured the Chinese Indonesians to feel ashamed of being Chinese, most of them felt inferior and believed they were not ‘real’ Indonesians. They were not allowed to view themselves as ‘Indonesian’, neither as ‘Chinese’ citizens (Walujono 2014). In consequence, the Chinese Indonesian community separated themselves from the Indonesian society for self-protection.

In addition to this, Aimee Dawis (2009) wrote about the identity of Chinese Indonesians in relation to the Chinese media, focusing on the generation born after ’66. She explained that this generation wanted to live in China, Taiwan or Hong Kong due to the Chinese media and the political environment of Sukarno’s regime. In Indonesia, they had to assimilate, while at the same time they were regarded as the ‘other’. The political situation in Indonesia forbid them to speak and learn Chinese, therefore, by watching the Chinese media, they were able to recreate their own identity and ideas about the Chinese culture. Dawis describes it as an ‘imagined security’: if they were able to move to China, it would be possible for them to express their Chinese culture. However, because they are not able to speak Chinese, the only possibility is to continue to live in Indonesia. Consequently, the political and social economical environment disturb the identity of Chinese Indonesians: they would never be fully accepted by the Indonesian society, while at the same time they would be unable to experience the Chinese culture.

Moreover, Hwang and Sadiq (2010) researched how the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia dealt with the Chinese minorities. They argue that it is the state which influences the relationship between the Chinese minorities and the indigenous population. Their research shows that the Malaysian government accepted the Chinese Malaysians, while the regime of Suharto separated the ethnic Chinese from the Indonesian community. Suharto’s assimilation policies, forbidding the three pillars of the Chinese culture, caused this young generation of Chinese Indonesians to suffer a loss of their Chinese ethnic identity.

Sukarno and Suharto’s governments introduced policies which separated Chinese Indonesians from indigenous Indonesians. These regimes influenced the social and cultural environment of Chinese Indonesians. It led to a decrease of expressions of the Chinese culture and thus the Chinese ethnic identity.

2.2 May 1998 and the Reform Era
Suharto’s regime ended with the riots of May 1998, in which mainly the Chinese Indonesians were targeted. The government of Suharto pressured Chinese Indonesians to assimilate, therefore they viewed themselves as Indonesians (Soebagjo 2008). However, because of the incident of May 1998, Chinese Indonesians realized that it did not matter how long they had been in Indonesia, they would still be regarded as Chinese (Soebagjo 2008). Due to the political and economical situation, people were unsatisfied with the government which led to riots in Jakarta and Solo. During this period, the riots targeted Chinese Indonesians; they were robbed, their businesses were ruined, they were raped and approximately 1100 people
were murdered (Aguilar 2001; Heidhues 2017; Soebagjo 2008; Turner and Allen 2007). Coppel (2008) states that most of the victims were non-Chinese looters, however, the ruined shopping complexes were indeed owned by Chinese Indonesians. Most of the politicians and high ranked military still kept their jobs. The Chinese Indonesians did not talk about the riots, because the same politicians stayed in power and they feared the consequences.

The period after 1998 is called the Reform Era, during this period the politics made it possible for the Chinese Indonesians to accept their 'Chineseness' (Arifin et al. 2017). The cultural restrictions which were implemented by Suharto were eliminated by the regimes after Suharto, which made it possible for the Chinese Indonesians to reconnect with the Chinese culture, for instance, the three pillars of the Chinese cultural identity were restored (Lembong 2008). Moreover, the Indonesian economy was affected by the Asia crisis, giving the Chinese Indonesians the opportunity to help to rebuild Indonesia (Soebagjo 2008). The political influence led to a decrease of violence against Chinese Indonesians. According to Coppel (2008), there were only two significant incidents against Chinese Indonesians, in 2000 and in 2006. Both of the incidents happened around the anniversary of the May 1998 violence, however, the reasons remain unclear.

Budiman (2005) explains that after 1998, the Chinese Indonesians do believe that it is possible for them to accept their ‘Chineseness’, while at the same time show that they are Indonesians who love their home country. However, Turner and Allen (2007) demonstrate that even though laws of discrimination and racism against Chinese Indonesians were lifted, it did not mean that the mindset of the indigenous Indonesians had changed. In addition to this, Soebagjo (2008) argues that the indigenous Indonesians still have difficulties to accept ethnic Chinese as a part of the Indonesian society as they feel resentment and hostility towards them. For instance, Chinese Indonesians are often still accused of corruption, even though non-Chinese commit the same crime (Walujono 2014).

Furthermore, Purdey (2003) demonstrates that Chinese Indonesians are not able to form any kind of ethnic and national identity because of the lack of cultural security. She illustrated how ethnic Chinese Indonesian children of the generations that grew up under Suharto’s regime experienced a damage of their identity as they did not recognize themselves as Chinese descendants. After 1998, ethnic Chinese Indonesians were given the possibility to establish their own political parties. However, they felt the need to emphasize that their foremost reason was to show their support for Indonesia.

The last few decades, the Indonesian government has made efforts to accept Chinese Indonesians as part of the Indonesian society and therefore allowing Chinese Indonesians to express their Chinese heritage. However, Chinese Indonesians still feel discrimination by the indigenous Indonesians, hence, Soebagjo (2008) as well as Budiman (2005) point out that Chinese Indonesians feel pressured to only express their Chinese heritage moderately. They are afraid that if they would be too carefree, they would be accused of 'not wanting to assimilate' into the Indonesian society. In the worst case, an incident could fuel anti-Chinese sentiment, and they would again become the scapegoats of the Indonesian society.
2.3 Nowadays political situation: The resurgence of *pribumi*

After Ahok lost the governorship, there seems to be a resurgence of the usage of the Indonesian term *pribumi*, which translates to *indigenous Indonesians*. During Suharto’s regime, the media used this term a lot to accentuate the differences between the Chinese Indonesians and to exempt them from the Indonesian society. In contrast, Chinese Indonesians are referred to as *non-pribumi*, which means ‘the other’, outsiders or people who do not belong in Indonesia (Freedman 2003; Hwang and Sadiq 2010; Turner and Allen 2007). Former president Habibie forbid the usage of the term after 1998, because of the negative association (Lembong 2008; Turner and Allen 2007).

The term comes from the Dutch colony period, in which indigenous Indonesians had the lowest position in the Indonesian society in contrast to traders, who were often ethnic Chinese or Arabic (Chan 2017; Ramadhani 2017; Suryadinata 2008). By using the term, the differences with minorities were further emphasized, implying that minorities are not Indonesians and that they do not belong to the Indonesian society.

However, the usage of the word *pribumi* has recently made a resurgence and has been used for speeches by officials. For example, General Gatot Nurmantyo gave a speech in which he stressed that the minorities are not part of the Indonesian culture and that they are not the same as the *pribumi* (Suryadinata 2017). In addition to this, the new governor of Jakarta, Anies Baswedan was impeached on the 16th of October.

After Ahok lost the re-elections, Anies Baswedan became Jakarta’s new governor and he is supported by several Muslim organizations (Kwok 2017). In general, indigenous Indonesians feel that Chinese Indonesians became rich by taking advantage of them. Therefore, he argued in his first official speech as governor on 16 October 2017 that the *pribumi* should take back what is theirs. By stressing the importance of being *pribumi*, he excludes the other minorities, for example the ethnic Chinese or Arabic. Even though Anies is actually of Arabic descent himself, he seems to overlook this and uses his speech to fuel the tensions between ethnic Indonesians and ethnic Chinese (Chan 2017).

According to Anya’s article (2017), Anies’ speech has already impacted Chinese Indonesians. After the speech, a schoolboy of Chinese descent has been discriminated by being called ‘Ahok’, which was actually a positive thing during Ahok’s governance. However, since Ahok was sent to prison, his name is used to mock Chinese descendants.

In addition to this, Turner (2003) compares the period of Suharto’s government with the period after his regime. He used Chinese Indonesians as scapegoats, especially when Indonesia was politically and economically unstable. Therefore, it gives the impression that the new governor of Jakarta is acting the same (Ramadhani 2017).

Herlijanto (2016) explains more about the *pribumi* elite as they are divided into two camps. The first camp supports and sympathizes with Chinese Indonesians, they believe that Chinese Indonesians are Indonesians. The latter feels threatened by Chinese Indonesians and argue that they are trying to exert their influence by not only dominating the economics, but nowadays also the politics. Therefore, this group was against Ahok as they were convinced that his policies would only benefit the Chinese Indonesians, therefore strengthening their power.
The recent resurgence of the usage of the Indonesian term pribumi is negatively affecting the Chinese Indonesians. Addressing indigenous Indonesians as pribumi separates and excludes other minorities such as Chinese Indonesians from the Indonesian society.

3. Ethnic identity
A person’s ethnic identity is influenced by social, political and cultural surroundings, including the ethnic cultural customs and traditions. As explained in section 2.1, research on the period during Suharto’s regime and the period after showed how the political situation affected the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians.

Additionally, Freedman (2003) focused her research on the influence of the political environment on the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians. As Freedman defines (2003;439): “Ethnic identity is formed from internal dynamics within a group, as well as being shaped and affected by the larger social, political and cultural environment in which a group lives.” She argues that Chinese Indonesians are exempted from participating in the Indonesian politics, however, after 1998 it was finally possible for them to start their own Chinese political parties and to express their Chinese culture, thus their Chinese identity.

Moreover, Tsang (2001) explains that ethnic identity is fluid and socially constructed. In her research she looks at the discourse of Chinese Americans, and she explains that (2001; 234): “The more powerful individuals in society use the politics of identity to maintain their privileged positions.” Privileged groups are perceived positively while, the ‘other groups’ are perceived negatively. This might explain why Suharto and Anies would want to separate Chinese Indonesians from indigenous Indonesians and keep their position in the society vulnerable. Since the Chinese Indonesians already dominate a large part of the economy, it is needed to exempt them from the political sphere. The indigenous Indonesians will feel threatened if they become more influential in the political sphere (Herlijanto 2016).

In this research, it is addressed how Ahok’s political situation influences the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians. Since Ahok’s situation changed recently, no research has been done on this topic. Ahok’s current political situation will be used to argue that the expressions of the Chinese ethnic identity are subject to the political environment. Nagel’s definition of ethnic identity will be adopted (1994;152): “Ethnicity is the product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and culture; however, ethnicity is also constructed by external social, economic and political processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions.” In addition to this, a person can have multiple ethnic identities and depending on the social and political environment, one chooses the most advantageous one. For this thesis, Nagel’s research helps to understand how the current political environment influences the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesian students temporarily staying in the Netherlands.

By adopting certain laws or by influencing the majority of the population, the political situation can influence the ethnic identity, because the state has the most influential role in the society. Therefore, Nagel explains, the political environment is the basis for discrimination and repression. The background information on the Indonesian politics has illustrated that Chinese Indonesians are subjected to politics, signifying that the political situation decides whether they are allowed to express their Chinese heritage and Chinese identity. Additionally, this research will show how the current political environment can
change the perception of one's ethnic identity. It demonstrates how Ahok, during his governorship as well as in his current political situation, influences the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesian students.

4. Method
To research the ethnic identity of the Chinese Indonesians, the focus is put on the generations that were born during the '80s and '90s. Since it is not possible to go to Indonesia, Chinese Indonesian students who are currently staying in the Netherlands were interviewed, so the influence of the Netherlands is taken into account. However, the main purpose is to understand the influence of Indonesia’s political situation on the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesian students. All of the interviewees were born in Indonesia and their families have lived in Indonesia for at least three generations, some even for ten generations.

Since the interviewees can afford to study abroad, it means that most of them are part of the Chinese elite in Indonesia. Therefore, their opinions may differ from Chinese Indonesians who are residing in Indonesia. Nonetheless, they can still comment on the current threatening situation in Indonesia as they are aware of Indonesia’s political situation and the fears among the Chinese Indonesian society since they are in contact with their families and friends. Therefore, this research group can give an indication of how the political environment can influence one's ethnic identity.

To obtain information for this research, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted, because it gives the interviewees the opportunity to explain about their opinions, beliefs and feelings. According to Seidman (2006), conducting interviews enables us to understand the experiences, stories and culture of another person. Furthermore, Seidman states (2006; 9): “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.” It gives researchers the opportunity to understand other people’s behavior. Therefore, conducting in-depth interviews makes it possible to give an insight in the experience of Chinese Indonesian students in the Netherlands. The interviewees offered their opinions about different topics such as their knowledge about their Chinese heritage, their experiences of discrimination in Indonesia and the Netherlands and their feelings regarding the current political situation. All participants will remain anonymous in this thesis to protect confidentiality.

In the end, 23 interviews were conducted in English, from April 2017 until the beginning of July 2017. The duration of the interviews were between 25 and 70 minutes. Most of the interviewees were between 20 and 30 years old, the youngest interviewee was 19 years old, while the oldest was 37 years old. 8 of them were female and 15 were male. The group consisted of bachelor, master and PhD students from different universities in the Netherlands. These interviewees were found, through Chinese Indonesian friends and colleagues. Therefore, this research group was not a random sample. They came from different cities in Indonesia, most of them came from Jakarta or Surabaya. 12 out of 23 participants came from the latter city, because some of universities in Surabaya have a partnership with the universities in the Netherlands. There were 6 interviewees who came from Jakarta, and the remaining 5 interviewees were from other cities in Indonesia.

Before the interviews were conducted, the aim was to interview students who were fully ethnic Chinese and only stayed temporarily in the Netherlands. This group was chosen,
because it would mean they would have recent experiences in Indonesia. During the interviews, it was revealed that 3 of the interviewees were actually multi-ethnic, namely Chinese and Indonesian. 2 of them were 1/8 Indonesian, while the other interviewee was half Chinese, half Indonesian. In this research, there is an emphasis on similarities between the interviewees in their opinions on Ahok. Therefore, the multi-ethnic’s interviews were still helpful since most of their answers did not differ much from the other interviewees.

Initially, the idea was to only research the political environment in Indonesia, however, most students might not be involved in politics. Therefore, questions regarding all three environments were asked: the social, the cultural and the political environments. Consequently, the interview guide can be divided into three sections: living in Indonesia, the political situation in Indonesia and living in the Netherlands, these can be found in Appendix 1. However, after analyzing the data, there was a considerable amount of information. In order to give a good analysis of the opinions of Chinese Indonesian students, it was decided to focus on the political situation. Especially, since all interviewees were able to give opinions and insights about Ahok.

I am of Chinese ancestry, my father’s parents were born as Chinese descendants in Indonesia and my father was born in China. Due to the political situations in Indonesia and in China during the regimes of Suharto and Mao Zedong, they decided to migrate to the Netherlands with my father. Therefore, I am a second generation of Chinese-Dutch, which puts me in a position which is called the ‘insider approach’ (Tweed 2002). It is experienced as living in two worlds: the world of the interviewee and the interviewer. When the ‘insider’s approach’ is used, it is difficult to see where the line of the interviewee and interviewer might be crossed. Moreover, I have experience as an overseas Chinese in the Netherlands, which might help to understand the interviewees. I am aware that being an insider might give the potential of being biased, however, it gave me more insight into their experiences.

5. The results
In order to answer the research question: “How does the political situation of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, Ahok, influence the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians?”, this chapter is divided in three sections. The first section discusses how Ahok’s political situation had a positive impact on the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesian students who temporarily stayed in the Netherlands. The second section explains the negative impact of Ahok’s political situation. In the last section, Ahok’s sentence and the loss of the re-elections is explained in relation to the emergence of the radicalization in Indonesia and the consideration to migrate to the Netherlands. Throughout the conclusion quotes from the interviewees are presented to illustrate their opinions and believes. In some cases, small grammatical corrections were made to make the quote more comprehensible. 

First of all, it is important to explain more about the interviewees’ background in order to understand how they view themselves. The majority expressed feeling Chinese as well as Indonesian. Chinese in the sense that their ancestors came from China, their appearances are of ethnic Chinese and sometimes they know about the culture and language. The arguments they gave for feeling Indonesian were: they were born in Indonesia, grew up there and the Indonesian language is their mother tongue. Additionally, almost all
interviewees believed that Indonesia was their home country. Whether they felt Chinese, Indonesian, a mix of both, or international did not affect this belief.

5.1 The positive impact on ethnic identity
These subsections explain how Ahok had a positive impact on the ethnic identity of the Chinese Indonesian students. They expressed that they could be Chinese as much as Indonesian. Ahok showed how both identities could be embraced and that they should not feel ashamed for feeling Chinese or Indonesian. They felt comfortable and confident in displaying this. This can be drawn from the fact that the interviewees often expressed feeling proud of Ahok as well as feeling safe.

5.1.1 Sense of pride
Feeling proud was often communicated by the interviewees, regardless of whether they felt more Chinese, Indonesian or both. In all cases they felt a pride of being Chinese Indonesian and Ahok was regarded as a role model for Chinese Indonesians. He showed that being Chinese Indonesian meant they could also be part of the Indonesian community and the politics and help their home country. The quotes in this subsection represent the pride that the interviewees had as Chinese Indonesians and show in what way Ahok was considered a role model.

As explained before, Chinese Indonesians do not often go into politics, which makes them feel exempted from the Indonesian society (Lembong 2008). An interviewee expressed feeling Indonesian, while knowing that his appearance and blood are Chinese. Even though he wanted to help develop Indonesia, he felt as if it was not in his place to do so, because he is also ethnic Chinese. Therefore, being discriminated and portrayed as different, he felt that he was not Indonesian, pressured to feel Chinese:

“I think I do not even know anybody, my friends or my family or Chinese descendants that get a job in the government, plus I think they still do not want the Chinese to get inside their government, because they feel that they need to own the government and if the Chinese are in the government they [refers to indigenous Indonesians] fear that they do not have the power in the government anymore. [...] No, it does not make sense, because the Chinese Indonesians are also Indonesians, you cannot discriminate based on race. Basically, we have the same nationality, we represent Indonesia, we want our country to be better, not to have it for our own. I think it is unfair.” (Interviewee 19: Surabaya)

However, Ahok showed them that it was possible for Chinese Indonesians to get a government position. They expressed that Ahok created the path for Chinese Indonesians to go into politics and become an example for them. The hope that Chinese Indonesians could be accepted as a part of Indonesia was given by him, that they were allowed to help build the country from the political side instead of only the economical side:

“I believe he will be able to, not him personally, but I believe he is the pioneer in the sense that there are a lot of people that has been backing him, a lot of the younger
generation. When Ahok was chosen as a governor, we had the feeling that we also have the chance. If Ahok can do this, if he can become the governor, then I can do it as well. I believe, like my family in Jakarta, my cousins are joining and following his steps. They are trying to get into the government, they are starting to study law, because of this. So, I believe this is the start of good stuff happening and if Ahok gives up, you know it might crumble.” (Interviewee 20: Surabaya)

“I will say so, like I said, when he first became the major it gave hope. Well, because most Chinese Indonesians are known for their business ability, but for him, to be able to go into politics, it gave hope that others, other Chinese Indonesians can do that too.” (Interviewee 23: Jakarta)

Moreover, because he was the governor of Jakarta and still kept his Chinese roots, there were some who believed that he could have been the bridge between Chinese Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians. The interviewees explained that he did not try to hide that he was Chinese, for example, his nickname Ahok shows his ethnic Chinese heritage. Most interviewees thought that since he is fair to both ethnicities, he is a governor of all people in Jakarta. He made the infrastructure in Jakarta better, setup ways to prevent flood and tried to solve poverty. As Ahok was the first Chinese Indonesian governor, it made them actually feel proud of their heritage.

One interviewee agreed to almost all of the former mentioned arguments and showed her support for Ahok. She explained that she felt quite Chinese, more than her friends. This was due to the fact that she, in contrast to her friends, was able to speak Chinese languages and knew significantly more about the Chinese culture. She liked Indonesia as a country, but not the people who live there. However, Ahok made her change her view as she felt that because of him she could be part of the Indonesian society, she wanted to feel Chinese as well as Indonesian. Consequently, she wanted to accept her Indonesian part, thus making her feel more Indonesian. During the interview, it was obvious that she is really proud of him, especially since he is Chinese Indonesian:

“Even though I am not from Jakarta, me and my friends really love Ahok. Because he is the only Chinese Indonesian governor, he is the governor of the capital [sense of pride] and he made Jakarta a better place to live so we really like to talk about him. To think highly of him, but that is all. [...] I can think of him as a representative. Because he is like a role model I think, rather than a representative. I think role model suits him better. Previously, Chinese Indonesians, maybe many of them feel that they do not belong here. They feel Chinese but seeing how Ahok dedicated himself to Indonesia, how much he loved Indonesia somehow it grew seeds of love for Indonesia, love of Indonesia with Chinese Indonesians. [...] Well, I thought he would be able to [refers to be a bridge between Chinese Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians], but he already lost the elections. I do not know what will happen after October, his job as the governor. I prayed that he would win, so that people would see how Chinese Indonesians can change, can change like the city that used to create
chaos into something more. There are rules and regulations for everything: it is cleaner, safer.” (Interviewee 6: Surabaya)

5.1.2. Safety
Another important factor was the fact that there was a Chinese Indonesian in the government, therefore they felt safe which is shown in the citation below. If it was necessary, there was someone who could step up for the Chinese Indonesians, someone who would protect the Chinese Indonesians. Having Ahok in the government gave them some reassurance, especially since there was a general idea among ethnic Chinese that the government institutions were not trustworthy (Hertzman 2014, Purdey 2003). At the same time, it demonstrates that the interviewees know that their position as Chinese Indonesians still remains vulnerable:

“First, when there is a Chinese governor in Indonesia, I think you can feel safe, because you have more guarantee. And the second one is because he has a better program. Because most of them, I do not live in Jakarta, but other people say they [refers to Ahok's government] have a better impact in terms of infrastructure, in the road and also with the flood. I think they have a better solution compared to the others. He also tried to change the people in the government that are not really working, they have scandalous corruption or something, so I think I support him because he is of the same race and has a better program compared to the others.” (Interviewee 21: Surabaya)

Ahok was an example for the interviewees, he showed that it is possible for Chinese Indonesians to enter the politics and he made them feel safe. The interviewees had the idea that they could be proud of both ethnicities and the political environment made it able for them to accept it. The idea was that all Chinese Indonesians were accepted, because Ahok was welcomed as the governor of Indonesia.

5.2 The negative impact on ethnic identity
In contrast to the positive aspects, Ahok also had a negative effect on the ethnic identity of the Chinese Indonesian students. This research demonstrates that the negative aspect outweigh the positive, since the students explained more about the former. Based on their opinions on the aftermath of the re-elections, the conclusion was drawn that they felt attacked for being Chinese Indonesian. This is shown in the renewed hatred, fear of the Chinese Indonesian community and the resemblance to the incidents of May 1998. It made them reluctant in accepting their Indonesian part. Even if they felt Indonesian and wanted to be Indonesian, they knew that they would not be accepted by the Indonesian community:

“Actually what we are all aiming for is to not to have racial profiling. I also, I want to say ‘I am Indonesian’, not Chinese Indonesian. For example, I know many people from Singapore, they are Chinese Singapore, every one of them says ‘I am Singaporean’. They never say ‘I am Chinese Singaporean’, because they love to be Singaporean. Singapore is a great place to be, there is no racial profiling, they live
peacefully with many Indonesians, they are also cool with each other. What I think we are actually aiming for is the unity of the country, of the people. Not the Chinese Indonesians, but all people. [...] Well, let us say that they are Chinese, but they do not really particularly care about Chinese anymore. Well, I still care. So, they are just living as other normal people. But still, unfortunately, there is always a gap between Chinese and Indonesian people. Because, Chinese people always hang out with Chinese people. It is in the community, for example the school that I went to, of course there are some Indonesians, but it is around 5% of the 1000 people.” (Interviewee 12: Surabaya)

Moreover, due to the continuous rejection by the indigenous community, they did not want to be the same as them. In addition to this, their appearance is something which will continue to separate them from indigenous Indonesians:

“Because when I compare myself with local Indonesians [refers to indigenous Indonesians], sometimes I think there is no way I am doing the things that they are doing right now. Since there are a lot of scary things that they are doing and sometimes I say ‘I am yellow’ [refers to being ethnic Chinese], I should be aware. I should stay in the house to be safe. Especially when there are riots, because it can happen once every three months. I do not know, it is not a riot, but it is scary. A lot of people are gathering, like protesting, usually I stay at home. I am yellow, I should stay home.” (Interviewee 5: Surabaya)

“How I feel? If people judge me as Chinese, I cannot deny that, how can I deny that I am Chinese. If I talk to him I can tell him that I am Indonesian. But if there are strangers I cannot deny that I am Chinese, because many people judge based on appearance and I think I am quite Chinese, or my appearance seems so. [...] If I say to him or her that I am actually Indonesian, then they will understand. Because in my name itself, there is no Chinese character right? [mentions his name].” (Interviewee 4: Surabaya)

Thus, on one hand it makes them not feel Indonesian, but on the other hand, they also understand that it is not approved to strongly express being Chinese, because that would separate them even more from the Indonesian society.

5.2.1 Renewed hatred
When Ahok went into politics, some indigenous Indonesians felt that he was crossing the line. It is illustrated by the quotes below how Chinese Indonesians feel threatened by the indigenous Indonesians. On the contrary, the indigenous Indonesians’ power is threatened because of the increasing participation of Chinese Indonesian in politics, which creates a tension within the Indonesian society (Herlijanto 2016):

“So, he himself [refers to Ahok] is a good politician in that sense, but the tension [refers to the tension between indigenous Indonesians and Chinese Indonesians] is
there, I can understand it. Because there is kind of a informal job separation in Indonesia. If you are Chinese Indonesian, because you have the money, you will be expected to take over the business and they [refers to indigenous Indonesians] kind of accepted that. Then if you are Indonesian Indonesians [refers to indigenous Indonesians] you will go into politics or to the army, those kind of stuff. But now, Ahok is a Christian and Chinese Indonesian and being the governor of the capital. Now, this creates a bit of tension for some people. Because he is kind of crossing the boundaries. So he is expanding the influence of Chinese Indonesians sometimes. It threatens some people who still have this kind of thinking, because not all Chinese Indonesians have this kind of thinking as well.” (Interviewee 1: Surabaya)

The interviewees experienced hatred from indigenous Indonesians during the elections and after Ahok lost the governorship. On social media, lot of commotion was caused by Ahok. It is a platform on which it is easy for people to express their opinions, and thus also to discriminate. This became notable when indigenous Indonesians expressed their opinions about Ahok. Stories were recalled by the interviewees in which indigenous Indonesians expressed their anger and hatred towards Ahok, and also threatened Chinese Indonesians, thus creating a bigger gap. Through social media, the interviewees were confronted with the reality and realized that they are not considered as a part of the Indonesian community. Therefore, Chinese Indonesians are not only faced with the hatred on the streets, but now also online:

“First of all, it shows that Indonesia is not as tolerant as people thought it would be. We definitely feel more afraid as Chinese Indonesians, because before Ahok, I can say it was concealed racism. People think about it, but they do not really show it, they do not really act on it. But now you can see that people are starting to really show this racism and this definitely has an impact on Chinese Indonesians. You can see, in local media, not the good media, but the local media like gossip and stuff. When for example, Chinese Indonesians drive a car and they crash into a small store, then you immediately see they [refers to indigenous Indonesians] are always insulting these Chinese Indonesians, like saying that is what he got for being Chinese Indonesian and those kind of stuff. [...] It is more severe than before, people now are not afraid to show their thoughts about racism in Indonesia.” (Interviewee 20: Surabaya)

“In Indonesia, well I think it is only in Indonesia, but currently the hot news is in Jakarta. One of the governors is Chinese, so people are saying that he is a pig. Because Chinese are similar to pigs. Do not let the Chinese take control of the Indonesians, because he is Chinese, not Indonesian Indonesian [refers to indigenous Indonesians]. Although he is Indonesian, he is born and raised in Indonesia, and people are demonstrating and even doing violence in the city because he is promoting himself as a governor and he is Chinese and sometimes it is quite racist. The comments, the demonstrations, maybe it is not only race but also due to the religion. It is that both that makes Indonesia split up, because of the Chinese and non-Chinese, the non-Muslims and the Muslims.” (Interviewee 3: Jakarta)
In addition to this, Suryadinata (2008) expressed that if there is an economic crisis in Indonesia, there is a chance that the Chinese Indonesians will become the scapegoat again, which is confirmed by an interviewee:

“Yes, it is actually the first time that this has happened, we have like the 98's and stuff, but you can say that it is different. Because in the 98's Chinese do not enter into politics, not into high positions. But I can say that this is the first time, in modern times that a Chinese Indonesian goes into a higher ranking position and people are really showing their dissatisfaction. [...] Yes, I believe the same thing can happen, if something bad happens in Indonesia, let us say an economical failure or stuff, then I really believe that the 98's can still happen again.” (Interviewee 20: Surabaya)

In an attempt to decrease the discrimination of Chinese Indonesians, several policies were carried out after May 1998. Earlier, one interviewee explained there was no racism before Ahok. He felt safe and was not afraid to express himself as a Chinese. However, other interviewees disagreed as it is impossible that there is no hatred against Chinese Indonesians. The following interviewee described that even though he felt more Indonesian than Chinese, he knew that Chinese Indonesians did not have the same position in the Indonesian society as indigenous Indonesians:

“The Chinese Indonesians, many of them were prosecuted, there was this riot in '98. Many Chinese Indonesians were the victims and in just 20 years, do you think that those people who had so much hatred against Chinese Indonesians are suddenly now loving Chinese Indonesians or are they all gone from Indonesia? I do not think so. And since the case of Ahok, many people have opinions about Chinese Indonesians and it may trigger something bad, that is also what I am afraid of. Chinese Indonesians are very vocal, Ahok is not this or that. They think we have equal rights, we can be anybody we want to be. But in reality, Chinese Indonesians are still hated by many people in Indonesia. I do not know how many, but I think 5%-10%. But still there are many people and they are stronger than the Chinese Indonesians, so this may trigger something that could be bad for the Chinese Indonesians. [...] Well, modern normal places, if you go to shopping mall or to the city of Jakarta, where things are pretty normal, or you go to places where the majority is Chinese Indonesian then it is fine. But there are places where they have, fundamentalist people, you do not feel safe there. Because they might hate you, they might think ‘this guy is Chinese’, something like that.” (Interviewee 17: Padang)

5.2.2 Fear of the community Chinese Indonesians and 1998
Ahok is a public figure, therefore, on one hand the Chinese Indonesian students felt safer knowing that they had his support. On the other hand, they are afraid that his statements might put them in danger. Therefore, the quotes chosen in this part show the general fear and the vulnerable position, which they have for being Chinese Indonesian.
Interviewees understood that Ahok might have insulted people, however, they are afraid that his actions alone would have a negative influence on the whole Chinese Indonesian community. The generalization of Chinese Indonesians has become a threat, and thus one action of a Chinese Indonesian accounts for the whole group (Coppel 2008). An interviewee who believes that Ahok might have a negative influence on all Chinese Indonesians confirms this:

“Sometimes I am afraid that something will happen if he [refers to Ahok] says the wrong thing, cause if he says the wrong thing they would label all Chinese. Even with this kind of event they were all talking about a repetition of May 1998. I do not know if you know about it. I do not know if he could be a bridge, but it seems not at this point now.” (Interviewee 12: Denpasar)

Some interviewees consider him as an example of Chinese Indonesians who finally have the opportunity to start a career in politics. To others it showed how vulnerable the position of Chinese Indonesians is in Indonesia. He is now used as a lesson for why Chinese Indonesians should not become politicians:

“But now, personally, if my father would say I want to run for the office, I will be worried about him. Look at what happened to Ahok, I do not want that to happen to you! I would say that it makes other people more wary of running for office, into the politics, or become like a civil servant. Because for the last case, I think there are not much improvements for Chinese Indonesians, if you want to go to the sector of the government, there are mostly Indonesian Indonesians [refers to indigenous Indonesians].” (Interviewee 23: Jakarta)

“I think so, he is in jail now. I think some of my family members are even afraid of speaking. They say: ‘See Ahok was very upfront to say his opinion, without any censorship and without any manners. Now, he is in ending up in jail and that is the warning for Chinese Indonesians, just stay at your place, do not even dare to be politician’, for example. […] Discrimination. In some places there are several Chinese Indonesians, to be in the governmental position, but most of the time it will be more difficult. You know, I am Chinese, I and the native Indonesian [refers to indigenous Indonesians], actually I do not like to say native, because I am actually also native Indonesian. But if we apply for the same governmental place, if we have similar abilities, he is going to be the one to be picked.” (Interviewee 11: Jakarta)

The current political situation made them realize that they are not in the same position as ethnic Indonesians. They cannot proudly express that they feel Chinese and at the same time they cannot express that they are Indonesian. Depending on the political events, they have a mixed identity. The political situation pressures them to feel more Chinese or more Indonesia.

According to one interviewee, Indonesia was becoming more dangerous for Chinese Indonesians, because the anti-Chinese sentiment in the Indonesian society is growing. It
should be noted that the investigation of the incident that is mentioned by the interviewee was still ongoing when the interview was conducted. Moreover, it is uncertain whether ethnicity was the motive in this case:

“Before everything [refers to Ahok’s comments on the Quran] happened, I felt safe in Indonesia. I felt that racism is gone, because during that time as well, I became close friends with local Indonesians. I felt like there was not much racism, we should stop racism, this kind of stuff and then the news of Ahok broadcasted. People were commenting on social media and this definitely has given me more fear compared to before. Especially since my sister is in Jakarta and she is Chinese Indonesian, so the fear is there.[...] No, she did not experience anything but one of her [Chinese Indonesian] friends did. [...] One of her friends is missing, she ordered an Uber from my sister's apartment to somewhere in Jakarta and then she went missing for three days and later they found her dead. This has definitely given me more fear. [...] Right now, I do not know, there are a lot of pictures going online right now, like local Indonesians threatening Chinese Indonesians, using WhatsApp or text messages.” (Interviewee 20: Surabaya)

There was only one interviewee who admitted that her ethnic identity was attacked and that she had to adjust the image she had of herself. Before the political situation, she felt more Chinese and she emphasized that she was proud of this. However, during and after the re-elections, she came to the realization that there remains a lot of hatred towards Chinese Indonesians. Therefore, she felt the pressure to be more Indonesian and to know more about the Indonesian culture. Her Chinese identity had to be suppressed, while at the same time it had to be emphasized that she was Indonesian. The political situation forced her to change and adapt her ethnic identity:

“Maybe if you asked me a few years ago I would have said I am Chinese, like not literal Chinese, but more to the Chinese side. For now, it is half half. [...] Because I did not know that people think being Chinese or Indonesian will effect this much, the situation in Indonesia. Now, I am realizing that it is not good for us to discriminate with ‘I am Chinese’, or discriminate local people. We are staying in Indonesia and we need to be proud of it and we need to try to make it a good situation. We should not do things which could make it worse, that is why.” (Interviewee 10, Surabaya)

The idea that people can have multiple ethnic identities (Nagel 1994), is confirmed by the interviewee. Depending on the political and social environment, one chooses the most advantageous ethnic identity. Moreover, this interviewee is forced to choose the identity which makes her feel the safest.

According to the interviewees, the current political situation reminds them of the attacks of May 1998, which is explained in Chapter 2.2. It became a recurring topic as the interviewees addressed this topic, it was not initiated by the interviewer. The quotes represent their memories of May 1998 and explains how the current political situation resembles that period.
Among the Chinese Indonesians there is a resurgence of fear for anti-Chinese sentiments Bland (2017). Since the current situation reminds them of the previous attacks, the interviewees felt unsafe and this fear is shared by others (Economist 2017). Slogans from 1998 were displayed during the re-elections, by which the protesters called for Ahok to step down. It gave an indication of the hatred: it was intimidating and offensive to the Chinese Indonesian witnesses of May 1998 (Jennings 2016). Many interviewees were frightened as they came to the realization that indigenous Indonesians still feel hatred towards them. They feel threatened for being Chinese and find themselves separated from the Indonesian society:

“That [refers to May 1998] is what we are afraid of. This is what is being discussed in the community, even in the group chat with my friends. Well, whatever we are doing right now, it is always a wait and see kind of situation. We cannot do anything until it happens right, but a lot of people are actually afraid of what would happen because it is obvious that the majority of the people are not open to differences, to changes basically. So they are still the same old kind of people, they have not changed at all. [...] They must have felt it, I know they felt it [refers to changes in Jakarta because of Ahok's governance]. They feel it, but again the race and the religion is in the culture. They support more, if they can relate themselves to the people that they support. Ahok is probably like an alien to them, because he looks different, he has a different belief. That is probably why they could not trust him.” (Interviewee 7: Jakarta)

Some of the interviewees were older than 30, therefore they have experienced the incidents of May 1998. One interviewee had to flee the country with her family, because she lived in Jakarta:

“I kind of feel threatened just for being Chinese. Because of the riot [refers to the riots of May 1998], we had to flee the country. [...] We, my family, ran away to Singapore for a couple of months. Until then, even though we returned to Indonesia, we did not stay in Jakarta during that time. We stayed in Batam, the island next to Singapore. We stayed there, we stayed in Singapore for probably three months and then we moved to Batam, just to be in Indonesia actually. But, after the riots cooled down we kind of forgot everything. But you kind of know that it could happen anytime basically. So it is basically, I do not feel safe, back home [refers to Indonesia].” (Interviewee 7: Jakarta)

The indigenous Indonesians sometimes threaten the Chinese Indonesians by reminding them of what happened in May 1998. As a result of the discrimination, the Chinese Indonesians do not want to view themselves as Indonesians, because it implies being indigenous Indonesians. Therefore, they are forced to feel Chinese:

“Because there is the perception that the local Indonesians [refers to indigenous Indonesians] hate Chinese because Chinese are rich and stuff. The Chinese also hate the local because they are mostly scared of the local population, because of the bad situation of the '98. So you always see that there is this racism that happens and it
happens both ways. [...] Because in Indonesia, you really have the separation: the Chinese always cluster together, the Indonesians always cluster together. So we always had the feeling that: ‘I am not Indonesian, I am not like you guys. I am Chinese Indonesian, I come from China.’ If people ask you: ‘What are you?’ They would always say: ‘I am Chinese Indonesian, they never say I am Indonesian.’ So the Chinese Indonesians never feel that they belong in Indonesia, because the Indonesians they sometimes give threat. If you do not want this to happen, remember 1998 and those kind of stuff.” (Interview 20: Surabaya)

5.3 Current political situation
This paragraph describes the current political situation of Indonesia and demonstrates how Indonesia is radicalizing, which affects the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesians. They fear that Indonesia is radicalizing and that Ahok’s loss and sentence can be considered as victories for the Muslim society in Indonesia. Due to this pressure, going to the Netherlands did play a role, because it could be their way out of Indonesia.

5.3.1 Radicalization in Indonesia
The idea of Indonesia becoming an Islamic State was a topic which was again initiated by the interviewees. This subchapter will explain the radicalization in Indonesia, which is important to mention as it can further affect the ethnic identity of the Chinese Indonesians. The quotes show the interviewees’ perspective on the Muslim community and the position of the Muslim community in the Indonesian society.

Ahok plays a role in this matter as he was accused of blasphemying the Islam, therefore sentenced to two years jail. Even though the interviewees believed that the verdict was unfair and too heavy, the punishment was a victory for the Muslim community. Initially, the prosecutors had demanded one year. However, the pressure from the masses and protests led to a harsher punishment (Kwok 2017). In addition to this, the new governor of Jakarta is a devoted Muslim, therefore, it was a double victory for the Muslim community.

The Muslim community is gaining more influence and support in Indonesia in all layers of the society. Even though most of the interviewees believed that the low education played a role for being more radical, it seems that this is not the case anymore:

“It is usually like that, because the lower educated people are so dumb and blind with those kind of things [refers to the radicalization in Indonesia]. I think it is because of the radical view of Islam. I think it is because of that it makes everything worse, personally, I am quite racist, but it is the reality. I have never seen such a religion, people who have done really many bad things because of the religion. Like ISIS and stuff, do you know how Muhammad got his followers? By threatening people to kill them if they do not convert to Islam. I can be killed by saying this. If you go to Arab there is this museum in which Muhammad has a sword, he is the only religious leader who has a sword. Did Jesus have a sword? No. Did Buddha have a sword? No.” (Interviewee 14: Surabaya)
“Yes, [silence], actually a lot of people think this way [refers to the radicalization in Indonesia]. Right now, I believe it is true because on the social media, people are saying stuff. Right now, we see a university in Jakarta and a university in Bandung and they are saying, we are Indonesian, [says Indonesian sentence], which was spoken during the war time at a go together. Right now they are saying: ‘We are an Islamic country, we are local Indonesian’, and this kind of stuff. People are really gathering at a building and they say this phrase out loud and it is being broadcasted everywhere. There is a lot of seeds of the 98's right now, in Indonesia. [...] No, it was mostly because of racism, but I do not know how. It sometimes, it somehow becomes related to religion, during the protest. Because during the 98's the trigger was actually race, not the religion, but right now it is moving towards religion and stuff.” (Interviewee 20: Surabaya)

The Indonesian secular education can be a reason for the emerging Islamist culture (Woodward et al. 2010) and according to the interviewee this is becoming a problem:

“I do not think actually that this is more about Chinese Indonesians or local Indonesians [refers to indigenous Indonesians]. This is about hardcore Islamic and the others. Because right now there are also problems with the radicalism, they want to make Indonesia an Islamic country. [...] Because there is a national television program in Indonesia, they usually talk a lot about the politics and the latest episode is about the radicalism and from that I realized how bad the condition actually is, because some of the students, even in high school, believe in the Kalifaat and in the radicalism. So the government needs to do something about it, right now. [...] Because what I heard is that, now it is still 5% of the teachers in high school that believe about the radicalism and this 5% seems small, but this can be a huge shock for us.” (Interviewee 10: Surabaya)

The radicalization in Indonesia is becoming a threat as Muslim groups are trying to relive the Indonesian nationalism (Allard and Beo Da Costa 2017; Fealy 2016; Shen 2017). Anies is supported by Muslim groups and his governorship is seen as a victory for the Muslim communities (Kwok 2017).

Only a small number of Chinese Indonesians is devoted Muslim, but they are not accepted by fellow Muslims (Putro 2014). Approximately 25% is Christian, however, this statistic comes from 2000 (Steenbrink and Aritonang 2008). In general, the number of Chinese Muslims is significantly less than the number of Chinese Christians. It remains difficult to obtain the exact numbers concerning the religions of the Chinese Indonesians. Therefore, the radicalization of Indonesia is a problem for them as most of them are not devoted Muslim.

5.3.2 Migrating to the Netherlands
The future of the Chinese Indonesians was discussed by Mackie (2008). According to him, the Chinese Indonesians will regard themselves as Indonesians overtime. As a consequence, their Chinese cultural ethnicity will decrease. He doubted whether there would be
circumstances in which many Chinese Indonesians would feel the need to migrate out of Indonesia. However, the current political environment was not taken into account as this research shows that the majority of the interviewees does feel threatened because of the growing anti-Chinese sentiment and radicalization.

Some interviews revealed that they wanted to stay in the Netherlands if the political situation in Indonesia remained insecure. Their reasons for leaving Indonesia is influenced by the political instability in Indonesia and the appeal of the Netherlands:

“Based on what I heard, most of them are living in Jakarta and they are thinking about leaving the city, leaving Indonesia. [...] You see that there are a lot of demonstrations and a lot of riots and it is getting worse, for example that they try to repeat what happened in '98. So, that is the moment that they would prefer to leave Indonesia and I know some of the Chinese that I met here even in Netherlands and also in the United States, they actually left Indonesia during the '98 riots and they decided it was not safe anymore and then they moved out of Indonesia.” (Interviewee 16: Sumatra)

Some interviewees expressed that if they would be able to stay in the Netherlands, they would want to bring their parents here. In addition to this, their families want them to stay in the Netherlands, as they find it safer because there is no political turmoil, at least not to the same degree as in Indonesia:

“Because it is safer, politically and if you live in the Netherlands it is more peaceful and the economic situation is more stable and there is infrastructure. I can go anywhere easily, whereas in Indonesia it is not that easy. Maybe the main reason is, here in the Netherlands, if I am Chinese, my knowledge is more appreciated by the people, not like in Indonesia. I think most of the cases if Indonesian people, especially Chinese Indonesian people, if they graduate from another country with a high degree, you can see them as intelligent people. But if you go back to Indonesia, I think they do not care about it, they do not appreciate your effort to study there. [...] Maybe I can give an example, my friend, a Chinese Indonesian again, he graduated from Germany. He graduated from Germany and he went back to Indonesia. In Indonesia he went to apply for a job, but with his qualification he did not get a job which qualifies his education, so he gets a lower job. If he applies for work here, people will appreciate his knowledge more, so he will get a job of his qualification level.” (Interviewee 22: Tangerang)

“They [his family] think it is a really nice place, they really love it here and they also told me to stay here. They think with the political turmoil that is happening in Indonesia that Indonesia is no longer a suitable place to live in, so they push me to live in Holland. [...] Yeah, I think 50% of my friends who came with me are being pushed by their parents to stay in Holland, because they feel that Indonesia is no longer safe, I think that it quite a lot of people. [...] think it [Indonesia] has never been safe, but since the impeachment of Ahok they feel more strongly about it, they feel more conscious and when they see the Netherlands, they see a really good, excellent
country to live in with no political turmoil, that I know of. I do not know if that is true or not. They see a good country and an opportunity for their children to live in, I think they will strongly recommend them to live in the Netherlands.” (Interviewee 19: Surabaya)

Furthermore, their ethnic identity is influenced by staying in the Netherlands as the majority of interviewees felt more Indonesian after coming to the Netherlands. They feel comfortable and safe to express that they are Indonesian. They are not confronted with indigenous Indonesians, who restrict the Chinese Indonesians from having this feeling:

“I think in some way I maybe feel more Indonesian since I came here, because I started to realize that there are some things that I cannot get easily here, for example food. In Indonesia there is better food, which makes me think, I feel in some way Indonesian. In general I think there is not much difference. The only thing is, here I can be myself without having to think that I am Chinese. In Indonesia I have to think, ‘I am Chinese’, so I have to limit myself, I cannot be to outspoken for example.” (Interviewee 16: Surabaya)

“I feel Indonesian, when I am like abroad especially, I feel I am Indonesian. But then, the weird thing is, when I am in Indonesia, I feel like I am Chinese. [...] But then when I am here, I met a lot of not only Asian people, also Western people I feel proud to be Indonesian.” (Interviewee 6: Surabaya)

Dawis (2009) concluded that the generation Chinese Indonesian born in the ’60 never felt safe in Indonesia. For some interviewees the same conclusion can be drawn as they want to flee the country because of the current political situation. The increasing support for the Islam and radicalization of the Muslim community causes them to feel unsafe. Therefore, migrating to the Netherlands is a solution as they fear a repetition of May 1998, they even have friends and relatives who consider to leave Indonesia. In the Netherlands, the majority felt more Indonesian, in contrast to Indonesia.

6. Conclusion
The goal of this thesis was to research the influence of Ahok’s political situation on the ethnic identity of Chinese Indonesian students who temporarily stayed in the Netherlands. To draw conclusions, 23 in-depth interviews were conducted with Chinese Indonesian students who temporarily stayed in the Netherlands, in which positive and negative views on Ahok’s political situation were discussed. Additionally, questions in relation to their ethnic identity were asked. In this research, there is a focus on the similarities in their opinions about Ahok. This made it possible to draw conclusions about the influence of the political environment on the ethnic identity of the Chinese Indonesian students.

Governor Ahok had a positive effect on the ethnic identity of the interviewees as he motivated them to have pride in being Chinese Indonesian. Firstly, they felt proud on their ethnic identity, by being Chinese as well as being Indonesian. Chinese in the sense that their ancestors came from China, their appearances are of ethnic Chinese and they sometimes
know about the culture and language. At the same time, they viewed themselves as Indonesians, because they were born there and because Indonesian is their mother tongue. Ahok demonstrated how it is possible for Chinese Indonesians to get involved in politics and how they can help build their home country, especially since almost all of the interviewees regarded Indonesia as their home country. Secondly, they felt safer because Ahok is also Chinese Indonesian, therefore, he was supportive of them. It was finally possible for them to express both of their identities. One interviewee actually felt more Chinese, but because of Ahok she was proud of being Chinese Indonesian. It made her more proud of her Indonesian heritage as well. According to the interviewees, it felt as if the Chinese Indonesians were accepted by the Indonesian community because of Ahok.

However, for the interviewees, the negative effects outweigh the positive ones. When Ahok lost the re-elections, they felt uncomfortable to express that they were Indonesian as well as Chinese. They felt the hatred from indigenous Indonesians and sensed the fear of the Chinese Indonesian community, which reminded them of the attacks from May 1998. They were constantly reminded of not belonging to the Indonesian community, as indigenous Indonesians recited slogans from May 1998 to threaten them. Therefore, most of them do not want to view themselves in the same way as indigenous Indonesians and are pressured to identify themselves as Chinese. However, one interviewee was proud of being Chinese, but she felt the need to suppress her Chinese identity due to the political situation. It made her realize that Chinese Indonesians should emphasize that they are Indonesian and part of the Indonesian community, in particular when they are openly discriminated in their daily lives.

The current political environment shows radicalization in Indonesia, as the support for the Muslim community is growing. Firstly, Anies who is a devoted Muslim was appointed as the new governor and secondly, Ahok was sentenced for blasphemy. These two incidents were victories for the Muslim community. Therefore, the interviewees expressed that they felt threatened and unsafe, as most of them are a double minority: they are ethnically different and not devoted Muslims.

When they came to the Netherlands, they realized that it could be possible to migrate in order to avoid the political turmoil in Indonesia. Furthermore, the majority emphasized that staying in the Netherlands made them feel more Indonesian when compared to staying in Indonesia. They did not feel threatened for expressing their Indonesian identity.

Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that the expression of one’s ethnic identity is subject to the political environment. In the case of the interviewees, the expressions of their Chinese and Indonesian ethnic identity are subject to the political environment in Indonesia. Furthermore, their position in Indonesia still remains vulnerable.

This research is focused on a small and specific group of interviewees. Therefore, it gives an indication of how the political environment can influence one’s ethnic identity. More research on this topic would give a better understanding of the influence of the political situation on ethnic identity. For example, a bigger research on different generations of Chinese Indonesians in Indonesia can give a better or even different view on how Ahok’s political situation has impacted their lives. Additionally, more research could be carried out towards Indonesia’s radicalization and the impact on Chinese Indonesians and other minorities.
Appendix A - Interview guide

1. Can you tell me anything about your background, your age, what city are you from, which generation Chinese Indonesian are you?
2. Why and when did your family go to Indonesia?
3. What kind of languages do you speak?
4. Is it common in Indonesia to speak these languages?
5. What kind of languages do you speak at home?
6. (In case they do not speak Chinese languages) Have you had interests before in learning Chinese language?
7. (In case they speak Chinese languages) Why did you choose to learn Chinese languages?
8. Have you been to China before, why?
9. What was the experience of going like (discrimination, feeling of alien, sense of identity, belonging did you feel Chinese or Indonesian or something else)?
10. Are their certain traditions or habits you know of the Chinese culture?
11. Do you feel mostly Indonesian, Chinese or something else?
12. Have you experienced discrimination in Indonesia, can you give examples?
13. What country do you regard as your home country?
14. Do you perhaps follow the politics, what do you think/know about the case of Ahok?
15. Do you support Ahok?
16. Did you also discuss this with friends or family, what do they think about it?
17. Do you think that his prosecution influenced the Chinese Indonesians, so yes can you give examples?
18. How long have you been in the Netherlands?
19. What was your first impression of the Netherlands?
20. Was going to China different than going to the Netherlands, and if yes why?
21. Have your family and friends been to the Netherlands, what do they think about it?
22. What was their opinion when you wanted to go to the Netherlands?
23. Can you speak Dutch, or would you like to learn it?
24. Have you experienced discrimination in Netherlands?
25. After going to the Netherlands did you feel closer to the Indonesian identity, Chinese or something else?
26. Would you like to stay in the Netherlands, why?
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