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## Investigating Multiculturalism and Mono-Culturalism Through the Infrastructure of Integration in Rotterdam, the Netherlands

This paper explores first-hand experiences of citizenship education specifically-designed for immigrants from the perspective of native Dutch settlement workers and volunteers in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Based on eight months of ethnographic research and in-depth interviews with settlement workers, this article explores how these 'minor figures' influence and inform the 'Infrastructure of Integration' and reinterpret national Dutch cultural values and norms on a local level. Using past understandings of multiculturalism and the current project of assimilating all non-western Muslim immigrants into Dutch society, this article investigates how these minor figures reproduce exclusionary discourses of belonging to the imagined community of the Netherlands.

### Keywords:

citizenship education, minor figures, infrastructure of integration, autochthony, Dutch multiculturalism

### 1 Introduction

The Netherlands has been overcome by what Dutch scholars call a 'culturalization of citizenship' in which "more meaning is attached to cultural participation (in terms of norms, values, practices and traditions) [of individuals], either as alternative or in addition to citizenship as rights and socio-economic participation" (Tonkens, Duyvendak, & Hurenkamp, 2010, p. 7; Mosher, this issue). This can be seen in the popularity of right-wing politicians who promise to lessen the amount of non-western immigration, the influence of the European Union, and have rekindled a sense of nationalism that has been socially stifled since World War II (van Bruggen, 2012). Yet, this nation-building project is not just a practice of national or political leaders; instead, this project can be found in the everyday practices of workers and volunteers involved in the infrastructure of integration. The result of this trend toward the culturalization of citizenship has created a more focused, mono-cultural society that moves well beyond what some scholars describe as the Netherlands's multi-cultural roots.

Integration programming for immigrants provides a fruitful context to investigate the ways in which education ties into projects of nationalism. This article investigates how state-supported citizen-making projects are understood and produced through 'the infrastructure of immigration' by asking, how ordinary citizens construct national discourses through neighborhood integration projects. Therefore, the kind of 'citizenship education' discussed in this paper aligns with Ong's (1999) notion of cultural citizenship that focus on the process of negotiation surrounding ideas of citizenship between state actors and individuals; a process that is inherently influenced by the specific context of power and politics. Using an approach similar to Delanty (2003), this article explores how ordinary citizens' 'repeated participation'

within larger (state) activities, such as citizenship courses, allow them to (re)define Dutch citizenship in their everyday practices within the larger political context and social categories of belonging. Specifically, this paper investigates how local native Dutch workers and volunteers interpret and guide immigrants' integration into Dutch society. On the local level, this civic integration infrastructure can be thought of as what Miller and Rose call, "the practices of minor figures" in which multiple non-state actors, such as citizenship education and second language learning volunteers, redefine their ideas of citizenship through their own participation in state-informed practices (2008). This paper will also examine how actors involved in the integration process of immigrants create and define membership to the national community.

The data presented in this paper are part of a larger study concerning perceptions of belonging to "the imagined community" of the Netherlands (Anderson, 1983), from the perspective of both the native Dutch and non-western immigrants. The author used a grounded theory approach in order to examine the manner in which native Dutch citizens reproduced exclusionary discourses of belonging surrounding Muslims immigrants in educational spaces. These spaces, as will be discussed further below, are both within and outside of those of integration classrooms, into what Leander, Phillips, and Headrick Taylor (2010) label "outside of school" settings where despite their location, the implicit guidelines that structure the relationships of the classroom are embodied in these spaces (p. 333). These spaces reproduce social, cultural, critical and political understandings which can then be used to explore the manner in which minor figures create 'culturally-appropriate' perceptions of national identities that exclude and reinforce the difference of certain immigrants, in particular Muslim immigrants, in the Dutch context. This focus on the integration of non-western Muslim immigrants, and Muslim women in particular, aligns with a larger European (and North American) trend to focus attention on the integration of non-western, non-Christian residents following attacks of terrorism by reported Islamists, the question of Muslims' perceived allegiance to the nation, and an increasing tolerance for Islamophobic rhetoric within the public sphere (Sniderman, 2007; Fekete, 2008; Allen, 2015).

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This article focuses on the everyday practices of individuals working and volunteering in the infrastructure of integration in order to better understand how these 'minor actors' perceive how one belongs to an ideal Dutch community today. It seeks to answer the question, how are discourses of national belonging interpreted and acted upon by those charged with providing the education linked to this nation-making paradigm? To answer such a question, this paper explores questions concerning the future of such recently-adopted assimilative policies as they are enacted by those individuals who are taking part as facilitators of such discourses of national belonging. As discussed in further detail below, integration policies and practices for non-western Muslim immigrants living in the Netherlands have taken on an assimilatory approach. Through the use of in-depth and ethnographic interviews with various educators and volunteers involved in local integration and settlement services, it becomes apparent that the idealized national community in the Netherlands has become one where fluency in the Dutch language and the emancipation of women have become particularly important. Furthermore, the comportment of oneself through Dutch spaces and the presence of these immigrants in Dutch spaces becomes a particularly interesting avenue for investigation with relation to the integration of Muslim women immigrants into Dutch society in both a physical and metaphorical stance. This paper begins with a brief history of the concept of multiculturalism and integration policies in the Netherlands as a background to the Dutch context. Next, I present my methodological approach and explore my research question using data collected during my doctoral research. These local experiences provide insight into first-hand accounts of nation-building from front-line integration and settlement workers in order to examine the realities of the 'infrastructure of integration' in a Dutch context.

## 2 Multiculturalism in the Netherlands?

The pillarization system in the Netherlands was in place from 1917 until 1960s, in which the state funded various civic organizations run through religious institutions and ideological organizations (or pillars). During this time, individuals' everyday lives were informed by their membership in a particular religious or political pillar through separate (state-funded) schools, hospitals, social support agencies, newspapers, trade unions, political parties, and media outlets. These pillars historically consisted of Protestants, Catholics, Liberals and Socialists. During its height, leaders or representatives from each respective pillar worked together on communal issues; however, ordinary citizens would often work, socialize, and frequent businesses that were run by members of their own pillar community. This segregated lifestyle was best known through the Dutch maxims "living apart together" (Entzinger, 2006, p. 124) and "good fences make good neighbors" (Kaya, 2009, p. 118).

This institutionalization of cultural pluralism supports the definition of multiculturalism from the introduction (this issue), where "a society of many cultures is possible

as a basis for 'living together with differences'" (Fleras, 2012, p. 387); the latter phrase of which harkens back to the Dutch motto of "living apart, together". Yet, while cultural differences were practiced and tolerated, this approach to Dutch society did not include any cultural identities that were non constitutive of the imagined community of the Netherlands. This selective acceptance of cultural pluralism was challenged and eventually broken with the introduction of non-western immigration.

In the 1960s, the Dutch actively recruited 'guest workers' (*gastarbeiders*) from Italy, Spain, Turkey, and Morocco in order to fill a gap in their employment sector caused by their long history of emigration from the country. These workers were not given legal citizenship as they were expected to come in, work, and then return to their respective homelands once the employee shortages were over (Vink, 2007, p. 339-340). Despite a reduction in the number of jobs for low skilled laborers throughout the 1970s, the guest worker population continued to grow, mainly due to family reunification policies.

Before 1979, the Dutch dealt with immigrants on an *ad hoc* basis as previous waves of immigrants were largely repatriates from Dutch colonies who integrated well into society and, guest workers were assumed to be temporary residents (Vink, 2007, p. 340). In 1979, however, the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) released a report called *Ethnic Minorities*, which maintained that the Netherlands had become a land of immigration and that guest workers were not returning to their homelands as previously predicted (Vink, 2007). In 1983, the *Minorities Memorandum* was released and included "a number of general provisions that related to ... the legal status of immigrants, most notably with regard to political participation and citizenship status" (Vink, 2007, p. 340). In this *Memorandum*, the government agreed that immigrants with past colonial ties, guest workers, and refugees "had become a permanent part of Dutch society and that the country would therefore assume 'a permanent multicultural character'" (Dutch Government, 1983, p.12, as cited in Vink, 2007, p. 341). This policy granted these minority groups with official rights that allowed them to develop infrastructure around cultural retention in the Netherlands and afforded them access to other welfare opportunities (Vink, 2007, p. 341).

Using the background of Pillarization and the policies of the early 1980s, scholars have labeled the Netherlands as having a multicultural past because the Dutch tended to "institutionalize cultural pluralism in the belief that cultural emancipation of immigrant minorities (was) the key to their integration into Dutch society" (Duyvendak & Scholten, 2012, p. 269). These same scholars argue that since 1990, there has been a dramatic turn-about in how the Dutch integrate immigrants which can be understood as much more assimilatory in tone (see for example, Doomernik, 2005 or Joppke 2007). A more recent example of this assimilatory approach includes, for example, a *Memorandum on Integration*, released in 2011 by the Minister of the Interior, which stated that the

government believed that Dutch society, and the values that it was based upon, should be central to all future integration policies (Government of the Netherlands, 2011). In so doing, the national government stated that integration policies needed to promote a mandatory, unified Dutch character in order to prevent the threat of “fragmentation and segregation in society” (Government of the Netherlands, 2011, para. 3). With this change of course, the government spoke overtly against the perceived (cultural) “relativism embedded in the model of the multicultural society” (Government of the Netherlands, 2011, para. 2). The alternative, according to the Minister, is that “no-one would feel at home in the Netherlands” (Government of the Netherlands, 2011, para. 3). This *Memorandum* implies that the Netherlands is a place where increasing diversity creates a sense of disassociation for the majority community (as was implied in the statement that no-one would feel at home with continued cultural fragmentation), which is a phenomenon that the government intends to correct. Such an assimilatory approach has never been so overtly stated by the government. Other scholars however, have argued that the Dutch have not so much turned-away from multiculturalism, but rather, that they were never multicultural in the first place (Vink, 2007; Duyvendak & Scholten, 2012).

Vink has convincingly argued that the Dutch used multiculturalism only in a descriptive sense; that is, as a means to describe the diversification of Dutch society rather than in a normative sense (2007, p. 344), as in the way that multiculturalism is understood in Canada, for example. He argues that past policies like *the Minorities Memorandum* actually worked to increase minorities’ dependency on government institutions (through their cultural institutionalization), which also reiterated the paternalism of the state with relation to non-western immigrant groups (Vink 2007, p. 345). Vink further describes the ways in which minority cultures are themselves discussed in national immigration policies as unequal partners in Dutch society, for example, in the 1983 *Memorandum* where the “majority culture” is described as being “anchored in Dutch society” (2007, p. 345). The distinction as *unequal partners* highlights the lack of power these minority groups had to enact a state of multiculturalism that was equalized across all cultural partners (Vink, 2007, p. 345); Importantly, this interpretation of official Multicultural policies (as disadvantageous for minority groups) is reminiscent of the arguments by critics of Canadian Multiculturalism (see for example, Mackey, 2002).

Other scholars have agreed with Vink that multiculturalism was never an official policy in the Netherlands. For example, Duyvendak and Scholten (2012) argue that there was never an identifiable multicultural discourse, even during points where the government supported institutionalized diversity, due to the contradiction of certain contemporary anti-multicultural policies. Furthermore, Duyvendak and Scholten argue that confusion exists around whether the Dutch followed a multicultural approach because of the divergence between these

policies as a top-down process versus their actual practice on local levels (2012). Duyvendak and Scholten argue that despite the quick eschewing of multicultural policies from state policy makers, multicultural practices continued at the local level past the turn of the millennium; for example, the practice of local government authorities consulting ethnic or religious organizations over community events and affairs (2012, p. 278). Indeed, district government officials continued to consult local ethnic organizations concerning community events and affairs during the time of my field research (see Long, forthcoming). Therefore, while multiculturalism might not have been a deliberate state process, there exist “pragmatic attempts ... on the local level” (Duyvendak & Scholten, 2012, p. 278). It is these pragmatic attempts that this article explores as they are played out by municipal workers and volunteers involved in the integration courses and policies for immigrants. From the data presented below, it becomes apparent that there are local interpretations of national-level approaches to Dutch integration and that these interpretations reproduce exclusionary discourses of national identity and belonging. Therefore, it is important to understand how cultural ideals have informed practices within the infrastructure of integration and how do integration practices influence ordinary citizens’ construction of an imagined community in the Netherlands? In order to answer these questions, I first provide a background to integration and settlement programming from the municipal level and then discuss the everyday practices of integration through the eyes of workers and volunteers at municipal-level integration organizations.

### 3 Integration and settlement programming in Rotterdam

According to Rotterdam’s “What is Civic Integration?” website produced in 2007, citizenship requires ‘participation’ and thus necessitates the ability to read, write, and understand the Dutch language (“What is civic integration,” 2007). The website also states that mandatory ‘civic integration’ (translated from the word *Inburgering* in which *burger* is literally ‘citizen’) will teach students how to live together in Rotterdam and throughout the Netherlands. Students are selected to attend civic integration courses if their economic status is deemed a hindrance for participating in society, for example, if they are on unemployment insurance for an extended period of time. This selection also depends on whether their cultural values are regarded as similar or adoptable to that of the Netherlands; for example, Japanese immigrants are counted as ‘western immigrants’ because they are assumed to be effective contributors to the Dutch economy (*Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek* (CBS), 2015).

The focus of most integration policies today is on the integration of Muslim immigrants from Turkey and Morocco. Dutch immigration officials categorized guest workers who emigrated from Turkey, Africa (predominately thought of as coming from Morocco), Latin America, or Asia (with the exception of Japan) as “non-

western immigrants" (CBS, 2015). Schinkel has argued that it is non-western immigrants and Muslims who are predominantly identified as lacking cultural integration and are therefore seen to exist on the 'periphery' of society (2008; van den Berg & Schinkel, 2009). The Dutch also used autochthony discourse, that is, narratives concerning (national) belonging to one's native homeland, in their political discussions. These terms identify Dutch citizens as *autochtonen* which translates to "natives" and immigrants as *allochtonen* which translates to "foreigners". The concept of autochthony however also carries certain understandings whereby *autochtonen* are largely thought to be white, liberal-minded, secularists or Christians; while *allochtonen* are often identified or portrayed in the media as non-western immigrants, individuals who have darker skin and who might hold more conservative values toward women and society, and who may be non-Christians. As argued by Shadid (2006), Muslims are often associated with "crime, drugs, and general nuisance... accused of fundamentalism, terrorism, radicalism, disloyalty and orthodoxy as well as of undertaking activities that are 'dangerous to democracy' and harmful to integration" in the Netherlands (p. 20). This framing of Muslim immigrants from Turkey and Morocco as being in the most need of cultural integration has been commonplace since the turn of the century. With regard to integration courses, such immigrants are typically asked to attend courses if they are parents or educators of children and regarded as lacking the necessary knowledge to raise children in a way that will guarantee their integration into Dutch society (Schinkel & van Houdt, 2010, p. 707).

#### 4 Integration policies for immigrants living in the Netherlands

Since January 1, 2007, integration policies have legally mandated the aforementioned individuals who are living in the Netherlands to complete *Inburgering* courses. As part of the process for naturalization and integration in the Netherlands, immigrants and refugees must pass a series of exams that require them to have sufficient knowledge of the Dutch language, history, and culture. According to an affiliated city website entitled *It begins with language*, there are three groups of individuals who must undergo such training: 'new comers', 'old comers' and spiritual ministers (*hetbegintmettaal.nl*, N.d.). Newcomers are defined as those who are immigrating from outside Europe, who do not have a Dutch passport and are between the ages of 16 and 65. Old-comers are between the ages of 16 and 65, do not have a Dutch passport, have lived in the Netherlands for eight years or less, and do not have any Dutch education. Lastly, spiritual leaders such as imams, pastors, hospital chaplains, rabbis, or those working in religious education, humanistic counseling, pastoral or missionary work are all required to take civic integration courses in addition to the above guidelines. Such stipulations mark those students seen to be in need of instruction concerning Dutch cultural norms as being different from the rest of Dutch society. These courses, by their very existence,

highlight the presence of an "autochthonous culture" which students must learn.

At the time of this research, those immigrants who wanted to obtain Dutch citizenship had to pass a two-part test in order to naturalize: a national exam and a practical exam. The national exam is standardized and consists of knowledge concerning Dutch society, being able to repeat Dutch phrases, and an electronic practical exam. The practical exams are conducted using role play techniques where students carry on a simulated interview or a short discussion, for example have a parent/teacher meeting concerning the progress of their child in school. These exams take approximately two hours for the price of € 399, according to *Ooverburggen*, one of the civic integration providers in Rotterdam.

In addition to writing exams for the practical portion of civic integration, students must complete a portfolio that documents 20 different experiences (signed by a witness) that highlights various civic integration proficiencies. The choices of portfolios include: citizenship, work, education, health and child welfare, social participation, and entrepreneurship. Proficiencies addressed in the work portfolio include, but are not limited to: acquiring personal insurances (e.g. asking questions from a provider); housing (e.g. paying one's rent, acknowledging the need to conserve energy, cleaning up one's property); education (e.g. signing up for further training); contact with neighbors in the area (e.g. introducing oneself, inviting a neighbor over, responding to an invitation, speaking with the neighbor concerning an issue and possible solutions, apologizing to the neighbor for something that the student has done wrong); searching for work; specific work techniques (e.g. writing up a client complaint); work-customer service (e.g. discussing performance review); work-care and wellness (e.g. reading and understanding texts about health, hygiene and safe working practices). The final interview to assess one's portfolio takes approximately 1 hour and costs € 169. These activities in skill development emphasize the importance of active citizenship within Dutch society.

In the following, I first provide an overview of my methodological and theoretical approach. This section is followed by the presentation of first-hand experiences of integration from the perspective of those native-Dutch working within the infrastructure of integration. What becomes apparent is that those working in the system of integration wish to develop citizens in a way that reinforces a mono-cultural perspective of Dutch society.

#### 5 Data gathering & methodology

The data for this article comes from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2009-2010 that included ethnographic and semi-structured, in-depth interviews with five native Dutch workers and volunteers who are/were directly involved with the integration courses in a neighborhood of Rotterdam. I gained access to this research site as a participant observer; that is, I took part in the integration courses and affiliated activities as a researcher, volunteer, and student. The qualitative data used in this article was collected over an eight month period

when I was attending an official integration course for newcomers and was a volunteer for a cycling program for non-western immigrant women. The classroom-based integration education courses were held on average three times a week at the same neighborhood centre where the weekly cycling courses were organized.

The data found in this article are presented as case studies of integration projects in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. By case study, I am referring to what Willis (2007) defines as “an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, and event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group” as a means to gain an holistic understanding of such a phenomenon in participants’ everyday lives (as cited in White, Drew & Hay, 2009, 21). In so doing, these case studies provide five separate perspectives on the single question of how discourses of national belonging interpreted and acted upon by those charged with providing the education linked to this nation-making paradigm. These case studies provide rich-detail concerning first-hand experiences of a larger, faceless process surrounding the integration of immigrants. Because other researchers have already conducted important work on Dutch integration from the perspective of its immigrant participants (see for example, Ghorashi & van Tillburg, 2006; Bjornson, 2007; van den Berg & Schinkel, 2009), it is pertinent to understand the perspective of educators and volunteers in the settlement and integration sector which I understand as being a part of the nation-making process.

Further, these local perspectives provide unique insight into the words and actions of these individuals as they transcended their role as educators of civic curriculum to individuals personally involved in the nation-making process. These conscious efforts, when discussed comparatively, provide insight into the manner in which those involved in the infrastructure of integration, produce exclusionary constructions of belonging to the imagined community of the Netherlands.

The data used in this article comes from in-depth, semi-structured interviews, conducted in either Dutch or English that were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by professional transcribers, in addition to data gathered through participant observation and ethnographic interviews that were documented in field note entries, with five different participants. Following a grounded theory approach, I collected and analyzed my data at the same time thereby obtaining an in-depth appreciation of my participants’ nation-making experiences in a manner that focuses my attention to those themes that *they* find important (Bernard, 2006).

In order to identify municipal educators, volunteers and workers in my local field site, I used purposeful sampling techniques. Thus, these interviewees were selected on account of their role as *Inburgering* educators, volunteers or policy makers involved in citizen-ship education for immigrants. Having established a relationship with these interlocutors, through participant observation, I held multiple interviews, both formal and informal, with these participants. My analytical process included

reading through interview transcripts and my field notes in order to locate themes through open and selective coding techniques (Bryant, 2014). Upon reaching a point of theoretical saturation (Bryant, 2014, p. 131), it became apparent that there was indeed a culturalized understanding of integration by those involved in local integration activities.

In order to better understand the context of integration courses and my ethnographic field site, I conducted qualitative content analysis, using open coding techniques, on the educational documents collected throughout my ethnographic fieldwork that concerned integration and settlement education for non-western immigrants. These documents were supplemented by an analysis of content found on the national government immigration website and affiliated integration (civic education) partners. The findings from these documents helped shape the background and analysis of this work in terms of allowing me insight into which narratives, keywords, and themes were deemed to be “officially important” as determined through their presence, and therefore significance, in user (cycling) guides or manuals for integration instructors and their students.

## 6 Theoretical perspective

I situate my theoretical perspective within the critical social theory, in particular, I use Yuval-Davis’ notion of ‘multi-layered citizenship’ and its role in shaping contemporary politics of belonging (2007). The concept of multi-layered citizenship allows me to explore the heterogeneity of nationalist projects and to appreciate citizenship as a concept which has both formal and substantive aspects that highlights the intersectionality of identities (Yuval-Davis, 2007). Using this perspective as a framework, I explore and reflect upon the cultural as well as social, historical and ideological forces and structures that produce and constrain experiences of belonging and nation-making from the perspective of those working within the infrastructure of integration, that is, the practices of minor figures.

In what follows, I present two in-depth interviews of integration workers in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. I will then discuss my first-hand experiences as a volunteer for a local cycling program, which was used as an integration activity, and the conversations and interviews I had with the volunteers of this program, and others like it.

## 7 Integration inside the classroom

The integration courses that I attended as a participant observer were run three days a week out of a local neighborhood centre called, *Jarris Buurt Centrum*<sup>ii</sup>. I joined these lessons in November and stayed until June when these courses broke for summer holiday. My instructor for this courses was Hilde, a 30-something, blonde haired, soft-spoken woman who was well-liked by all her students. She led courses in Rotterdam and Dordrecht, in both day and evening programs, through a private company which is one of the seven private companies authorized to provide civic integration services in Rotterdam. Hilde used various teaching techniques to

cover the material in the textbook and was known for adhering to the strict rule of speaking Dutch at all times.

In the class I attended with Hilde as our instructor, the other students were predominantly of Turkish and Moroccan women who had come to the Netherlands with their husbands. There was a range in the number of years spent in the Netherlands from approximately 30 years to less than five years. When I asked the women why they chose to participate in these courses, their responses varied although for most of the students in this class, these lessons were described as “a means to an end”; that is, a means to acquire a visa or the first step toward other kinds of education. In general, students’ reactions toward the program were not negative but rather of genuine interest and appreciation of time spent with the other students. I was present on two occasions when students who were already-graduated visited the class ‘just to spend time’. Both visitors said that they found the courses cozy and friendly (*gezellig*). These classes also proved useful to network and socialize with one another and obtain practical information. For example, the students were quite happy one day to learn from one of their classmates that there was a doctor in the area who would speak Turkish with you; a rare occurrence as there were few Turkish-speaking doctors in Rotterdam.

During my participant observation of these courses, I became aware that the physical space in which these courses took place was important. This was further described by Hilde during an interview:

We originally operated these courses out of a small room in the local mosque three days a week. We had to move though because the room where we had these classes had no windows and because we were always interrupted by calls to prayer. We arrived for the lessons at 1 o’clock in the afternoon and by 2:20, the prayers started. We couldn’t do anything for the next half an hour because it was so loud and that went on every class! So I asked if we could take the loud speaker out of the room and they always said “yes” but it was never actually taken away. So I could not give good lessons. What I think is not nice about giving civic integration lessons in a mosque is that there was no Dutch being spoken in the place.

Secondly, we were working in a women’s only space so no men were allowed to come in. So for the women, in my eyes, it is much harder to acculturate. Some women were in the courses for over two years (the regular timing is three, six, twelve, or 18 months) because of how much harder being in the Mosque made it to learn. I thought, this is not good, they must learn how to participate, work, intern, speak Dutch, and what to do when they encounter men. If they don’t do these things then they haven’t really integrated.

So, I asked my boss to move locations. What eventually happened is that I moved the group from the Mosque to join another smaller group already taking place in the Jarris Neighborhood Center (JNC). The JNC was also ideal because they had computers

there and some of the exams are on computers. In the Mosque there is nothing like this so I thought, I must let them see that. There were enough advantages to move there for sure (Hilde, July 22, 2010).

By not supporting what she perceives as Dutch values, such as mixed gender spaces or not speaking Dutch while inside this space, Hilde’s reaction to move the class to a more-Dutch location demonstrates the manner in which individuals’ actions, as well as their affiliations, influence one’s perceived belonging; a factor which attaches not just to people but the places they use and imbue with meaning. This reinforces other researchers’ findings about the general publics’ unease associated with visible Islamic structures, such as mosque architecture, on the Dutch landscape (see Landman, 2010). It is significant to note that the space of the classroom itself was an important feature of the integration process for these immigrants.

In addition to this field site, I was a participant observer during four different graduation ceremonies held for students after completing pre-integration courses throughout Rotterdam. My involvement with these ceremonies was limited, often as an observer or volunteer; however, I was invited to each ceremony once another Dutch integration and language instructor, Femke, learned of my research and my interest in non-western immigrant integration services. Femke frequently shared her opinions concerning the integration of non-western immigrants, a process she had become disenchanted with over time. During one conversation, Femke stated,

Although I find myself a tolerant woman, some-times I question my level of tolerance because I see a bunch of women coming to this country, dressed with headscarves, and I wonder, ‘Wow, what has my nation come to?’ The city of Rotterdam has changed a lot since I was a little girl and I am worried about integration on a whole. For example, some of the *allochthonous* women I used to work with are not allowed to take part in my lessons anymore because their husbands feel as though it was “too much freedom for them to speak Dutch”. I think this is because the Moroccan and Turkish people who come to the Netherlands now, come from the less educated parts of their countries. Many of them marry their sisters, brothers, or cousins; thus, their IQ is (negatively) affected. With lower IQs, the next generation of children don’t have a chance. I think that these migrants have to catch up to the ‘West’, or, the Netherlands. They are behind in the times in how to treat their women, how to belong, and don’t make an effort in this society. I do not think that Moroccans or Turkish immigrants have the ability to match Dutch society; we will only be able to live apart, together. (...) I just don’t think these people (*allochtonen*) would accept homosexuality, or approve of female emancipation. So, I actually think that it is the attitude of these people that did not allow for a better relationship. You know, when the Surinamese, Indonesian, and Moluccan migrants came in, you did not realize that



they were Muslims (most Indonesian migrants were Muslims). They blended in. But now, the Dutch are too tolerant and what was once our strength is now our weakness (Femke, June 10, 2010).

Femke's perspective of the 'typical' students in her class becomes part of the larger discourse often used to support the focus of integration services on non-western immigrants; That is, that *allochthonous* individuals, particularly those stemming from Turkish and Moroccan immigration, are fundamentally different and in need of "proper education of Dutch moral standards" (van Bruinessen, 2006, p. 12). The fact that Femke questions not only the social values that immigrants from Turkey and Morocco might hold in contrast to the Dutch, but also perceived defectiveness in their genetic make-up, reifies these individuals into bounded ethnic groups that have particular social problems. In addition, Femke connects the lack of morals from one generation to the next, an act which supports the discourse in Dutch politics and media that Moroccan and Turkish youth have a 'lack of warmth' at home. This lack of warmth is associated with a lack of direction, parenting, or family atmosphere in the home which contributes to youths' public misbehavior and their inability to integrate into Dutch society effectively; this process is understood to disconnect non-western immigrants (and subsequent generations) from the Dutch "nation" (see Müller 2002 for further discussion). Similar to Fellin (this issue), it is the mothers who are often the focus of education campaigns, which points to the gendered approach of this citizenship process. These mothers have become targets of disciplinary action so that it can be assured that they will be able to raise children who become 'active' Dutch citizens (Kirk and Suvarierol, 2014, p. 252).

Significantly, Femke alludes to a multicultural ideal when she spoke of the inability of *allochthonous* individuals to match Dutch society, stating that "we will only be able to live apart, together". While her use of this phrase is telling of her belief that contemporary integration practices approach integration in the same way as they did during the period of Pillarization – an approach which she does not perceive as being successful – it is as important to recognize that Femke faults *allochtonen* for "not allow(ing) for a better relationship" conceivably between themselves and the Dutch.

With regard to the lived experiences of multiculturalism by ordinary citizens, these integration instructors segregated and subordinated non-western Muslim immigrants in relation to the majority members of the Netherlands. Importantly, non-western Muslim immigrants were perceived as having a resolute culture, which although speaks of the existence of multiple cultures in Dutch society, does not support an equitable relationship among them. Like the national policies for integration of immigrants, local accounts of integration supported the emancipation of these subjects through the acquisition of Dutch cultural values and norms that were to be delivered in Dutch spaces; spaces of which did not

include mosques or spaces perceived as anti-feminist. Importantly, these interlocutors did not just discuss their perceptions of this culture as specific cultural experiences but instead, superimposed these cultural traits, such as anti-homosexuality and conservatism toward female gender roles, onto a larger "Islamic Culture". These cultural traits were discussed as the binary opposite of their understandings of a "Dutch Culture" and point to a connection with the national con-text.

The following is an exploration of one of those methods, in particular, the use of cycling as an integration tool in one of Rotterdam's neighborhoods for the purpose of integrating female Muslim immigrants. It becomes apparent that cycling is perceived as a particularly Dutch manner of travel in public space and is a way to demonstrate Dutch cultural values and one's wish to belong in greater society.

### 8 Integration outside of the classroom

The Netherlands is known for having a 'bicycling culture' (Pelzer, 2010, p. 1). Pelzer argues that cycling is part of the Dutch 'national habitus'<sup>iii</sup> and that cycling should be viewed as a "cultural phenomenon that reflects the way in which the bicycle was used...to create national identification" (2010, p. 2-3). Pelzer believes that the Dutch have a bicycling culture not only due to the importance that cycling takes as a means of transportation but also in terms of how the public spaces in the Netherlands are physically constructed (2010, p. 2-3). For example, in Rotterdam, city planners designed the downtown streets to incorporate separate cycling lanes. Cyclists in the city also benefit from other infrastructure such as traffic control lights specific for bicycles, innumerable bicycle parking areas and rental facilities, and an underground tunnel beneath the river Rotte, made specifically for cycling transportation. Despite these allowances, cycling is seen to be a national pastime and mode of transportation.

In a study on the mobility among ethnic minorities in urban centers of the Netherlands, a researcher at the Cultural and Social Planning Bureau concluded that immigrants were less mobile than the native Dutch, opting instead to take public transportation (Harms, 2006, p. 1). The author concluded that "people of foreign origin leave (their) house more rarely than the ethnic Dutch" and that it is "perhaps, cultural factors, like the limited possibilities for Muslim women to go out of the house without the consent or without being accompanied by their husbands", that results in such differences in spatial behaviors, particularly when looking at Turkish and Moroccan groups (Harms, 2006, p. 6-7). Acknowledging the problematic cultural and religious generalizations made in the above assertions, this report underscores popular belief that non-western immigrants and their children are thought to be unwilling or unable to integrate, and in this case, to learn the national (cultural) mode of transportation.

Cycling lessons for immigrant women in the Netherlands have been available since the 1980s, and are now supported by foundations such as the National

Cycling Support Centre (*Landelijke Steunpunt Fiets*, LSF) that was founded in 1996 (*steunpuntfiets.nl*, 2015). According to text found on their website, immigrant women who can cycle are more emancipated than those who cannot because cycling “increases their independence and capabilities” (*steunpuntfiets.nl*, 2015, para. 1). This organization makes cycling a distinctively Dutch trait and one that represents Dutch cultural norms when they write “with other riders and good guidance, foreigners (*buitenlanders*) dare to go cycling and they become more familiar with the Dutch roads and with the Dutch culture (*de Nederlandse cultuur*)” (*steunpuntfiets.nl*, 2015, para. 3).

This integration trajectory for cycling classes was evident when I spoke with Tom, a native Dutch man, about his past experiences working for Rotterdam’s municipal government. During one of our in-depth interviews, Tom said:

The bicycling lessons took a lot of time and effort. We had to arrange the bicycles, get people to teach the lessons and other things. I arranged things more than actually taught any lessons. After a while, I thought the project had failed because I didn’t see any immigrant women cycling in the area. Then one day, I saw one of the men who taught these lessons and he said that he was still giving diplomas out, but that the women did not cycle very much after the lessons had finished. To which I said “Shit! Then these women did not really understand the intention of cycling.” When I heard that they were going to start bicycling lessons at the JNC, I said “Good! Get out there and start doing it!” because you can see the backwardness of these people who live very small lives because they don’t get out. They don’t know many people. The more backward the person is, the smaller their life is” (Tom, March 21, 2010).

This excerpt provides a window into Tom’s perception of what constitutes Dutch cultural norms and values. Like Hilde and Femke before him, Tom juxtaposes the culture of non-western immigrants with Dutch culture, even going so far as to call it “backward” which aligns to what scholars have been writing about the representation of Muslims and Orientalism in western thought. This perception of backwardness is reminiscent of Sherene Razack’s argument that Muslims, living in ‘the West’ after 9/11, are subjected to neo-colonial ideals where they are perceived to be in need of civilizing (2008). Thus, cycling lessons for, as Razack would categorize, the imperiled Muslim women living in the Netherlands is one way to emancipate these ‘backward’ women from their culture, religion, and overbearing husbands and fathers. Importantly, this idea of ‘backwardness’ is used as a counterpoint to understand the belonging of oneself to the community of the Netherlands, which although comes in many forms, can be easily identified through one’s ability to cycle. This underlying discourse is apparent when Tom states that “these people live very small lives because they don’t get out”. Thus, the purpose of these lessons was to emancipate the participants from their backwards

lifestyle and to get them (visibly) out into the neighborhood, and in so doing, broadening their exposure to the world.

In what follows, I provide experiences of cycling courses at the Jarris Neighborhood Center (JNC) where I volunteered to help non-western immigrant women learning how to cycle. These courses were part of the citizenship curriculum for immigrants working toward their integration requirements. From these experiences, it became apparent that teaching immigrants how to cycle was understood as a means to afford these women freedom from perceived oppressive relationships, often attributed to the perception that Muslim women were oppressed by their husbands and culture. The fact that these women were taught how to cycle was considered an important step in their process of integration into Dutch society; that is, the act of cycling was seen as a practical skill but also one that was associated with the Dutch national identity.

Cycling lessons at the JNC began in 2009 and were financially supported through funding from the district government. The target group for such lessons is non-western allochthonous women who are identified as Muslims. As such, these cycling lessons were listed as a ‘women-only’ activity, an act which drew on the perception that Muslim women would not attend events that included male, non-family members. These lessons began at 9:30 am, every Friday morning, when the women arrived at the local neighborhood center and then walked over to an open plane across the street. My job as a volunteer was to teach participants how to balance, peddle, and to practice turning and avoiding objects while on the plane. Once these steps were learned, the women graduated to cycling by themselves along a path through the park. Once they were confident enough in their abilities, one of the volunteers took an advanced group of cyclists out onto the streets in the neighborhood in order to practice knowledge of street signs and rules of the road in addition to gaining experience cycling in traffic. This was often a nerve-racking experience as the streets were busy with traffic from other cyclists and automobile drivers. In general, the process took ten weeks to complete and at the end, participants received a certificate of completion made available through the local school. This certificate could be used toward the participation portion of one’s naturalization certification.

The majority of the participants at these sessions were women between the ages of 25 and 65 years old who had immigrated from Turkey and Morocco. During the lessons, it was more common to hear women speaking Berber, Arabic, and Turkish rather than Dutch. These women came from a variety of family situations although the majority were mothers or grandmothers who lived with their extended families. Few of these participants worked although, some were in the process of taking integration courses or were students at the Islamic University. Although the majority of these women would have been considered Muslims because they wore headscarves, their religious identity and the topic of

religion did not surface, to my knowledge, throughout the eight months that I volunteered. When I asked participants of the lessons why they took part, women cited “hanging out with friends” and “finding a quicker form of transportation to their jobs and throughout the city”, as reasons. This is not to say that individuals did not use these courses as a means to fulfil their integration checklists but that there may have been other, more pressing reasons reported to me. For those local Dutch natives who organized and guided these classes, however, integration was a central goal of this project.

Throughout my eight months of participation in these cycling courses, I often heard Tieneke, a native Dutch woman in her early 50s who volunteered at the cycling lessons reassert the integrationist mission of the classes by insisting that everyone speak Dutch during the cycling lessons and coffee breaks. She would often say, “Come on Ladies! You must speak Dutch! Speak Dutch!” On one occasion, Tieneke was approached by two of the participants, one of which was trying to translate the intentions of the other. Tieneke stopped the ‘translator’ in mid-sentence and said, “No, no, you” pointing to the woman who did not speak Dutch very well, “try to tell me what it is you mean in Dutch. That is what you’re supposed to do here” (Tieneke, April 16, 2010, field notes). Tieneke’s insistence on the use of the Dutch language for communication during this activity, when she notes “that is what you’re supposed to do here”, connects the purpose of these lessons not just with cycling but with speaking the Dutch language - both of which are cultural traits associated with an ideal Dutch identity.

Furthermore, Henny, a native Dutch woman who was also a volunteer at the lessons and lived in the area, told me during an interview that she volunteers to help immigrant women because she “wanted to make people more comfortable in their daily practices in Dutch society, so that (these women) could do these things in everyday life” (Henny, June 28, 2010). Henny started volunteering with immigrant mothers from her local school and began volunteering as a cycling coach when one of the mothers told her that ‘everyone bicycles here’. Henny made note of this to me and added, “I didn’t see this but they did. (So) I take part because I see these women picked it up very fast and were happy to have this...I noticed how beneficial it could be (for them)” (Henny, June 28, 2010). Although Henny’s outspoken intention for these courses were not to assimilate these women into a particular Dutch ideal, Henny’s description of the women differentiated them from the larger Dutch majority. Moreover, her comments were somewhat reminiscent of the paternalistic approach of past integration policies, when she stated that “I noticed how beneficial it could be for them”. Thus, the act of cycling, as described by Tom and Tieneke, was used as a means to understand who belonged within the imagined community of the Netherlands and which traits were thought to be typical in Dutch culture. This experiential process of identifying Dutch values and norms was also used as a means to categorize non-

western immigrant women, as being non-Dutch. Overall, the actions and interactions among the volunteers and the participants reinforced notions of ideal Dutch behaviour through one’s repeated participation in the infrastructure of integration. These ethnographic examples speak to a mono-cultural interpretation of Dutch culture, values, and norms.

## 9 Concluding remarks

This article explores the manner in which discourses of national belonging are interpreted and acted upon by those charged with providing education linked to nation-making projects, such as immigrant integration into Dutch society. In so doing, this investigation also provided insight into the infrastructure of integration; an infrastructure which is made visible through the actions of ‘minor figures’ in relation to certain immigrant groups. Their actions demonstrate an understanding of Dutch cultural values and norms that defined traits thought to typify the majority Dutch culture; Such traits included the demonstration of female emancipation, for example, through their use of independent transportation such as bicycles, participating in non-Muslim spaces, for example, when taking courses outside the mosque, or speaking Dutch while in public.

Exploring the process of civic integration education in general is important for two reasons. First, this exploration has confirmed what other Dutch social scientists have argued, that there has been a culturalization of citizenship where citizenship and belonging to a Dutch ‘majority’ community are now understood largely through cultural factors (Tonkens et al., 2010). This becomes evident in situations where non-western immigrants, and in particular women, are required to interact with the opposite sex, accept homosexuality, learn to cycle, “act emancipated” (according to workers’ and volunteers’ perceived Dutch ideal), and to speak Dutch. Second, cycling lessons as a form of civic integration education shows how such lessons are not bound only to the classroom space but can also be located within everyday public spaces such as the public squares where these cycling lessons occurred. These case studies showed how civic education is not limited strictly to curriculum specialists, teachers, and students but is a process in which ordinary citizens who become involved in the integration process are also influencing the experiences of those participating students.

In sum, this article provides insight into the ways in which individuals craft their own understanding of citizenship education that works to create an exclusionary understanding of social belonging and civic engagement for new immigrants. Such an approach does not engender a multicultural awareness or sympathy but has instead reaffirmed the Netherlands’ mono-cultural project to integrate immigrants and build relationships across the imagined community. In so doing, these experiences have led to a citizenship education where Dutch cultural values, language and even comportment in public spaces are focused upon and where a mono-

cultural, rather than a multi-cultural, approach is the chosen framework for social cohesion within society.

Further research concerning the role of 'minor figures' in creating culturalized understandings of national citizenship, for example, through their participation in integration and settlement practices, would help illuminate the complex ways in which nations and their imagined communities are built not only from above, by the major nation-building figures like politicians, but also from below, through those everyday (re)conceptualizations of citizenship.

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### Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Changes to the integration system came into place on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. These changes included the need for immigrants to pay for their civic education courses (loans have been made available for students through the government) and the institution of exams for certain migrants before coming to the Netherlands. Furthermore, the naturalization exams now include 5 parts: Knowledge of Dutch Society; speaking skills; reading skills; listening skills; and writing skills (for more information see Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, N.d. .; see also *inburgeren.nl*, N.d).

<sup>ii</sup> The name of the center was changed to safeguard confidentiality.

<sup>iii</sup> Pelzer defines Bourdieu's habitus as: the impetus for individuals to cycle because they have grown up with bicycling and lived in a context where cycling is naturalized (2010, p. 2).

