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Multiculturalism and multicultural citizenship : public views on national belonging, equality and cultural distinctiveness in the Netherlands

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Summary

Title of this PhD thesis: Multiculturalism and multicultural citizenship: Public views on national belonging, equality and cultural distinctiveness in the Netherlands

The growing ethnic and cultural diversity in Western societies since the end of World War II has given rise to issues regarding social equality for citizens of different ethnic backgrounds, and immigrants' cultural and ethnic identity. In the last two decades, debates on these issues have increasingly tended to focus on norms, values and practices of Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands and other European countries.

The debates on these issues have been accompanied by scientific studies focusing on whether and to what extent the (policy) responses of Western societies to immigration and the resulting diversity can be characterized as 'multicultural', an adjective which generally means that the cultural distinctiveness of immigrants in society is being taken into account. Such normative response, also referred to as multiculturalism, has three central aspects, which are closely related to fundamental debates on citizenship and are described by Shadid (2009) as the central dimensions of multicultural citizenship. The first of these dimensions concerns the recognition that individuals of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds who have legal citizenship belong to the national group. The second dimension bears upon social equality, not only on grounds such as gender and sexual orientation, but on grounds of ethnic origin and religion as well. The third dimension is the most defining aspect of multiculturalism: the recognition of cultural distinctiveness of the various groups in society, which is seen by proponents of multiculturalism as necessary to achieve citizen equality.

However, many scientific studies of these dimensions focus on regulations, policies and the political discourse of the societies concerned. In contrast, studies of *public* views on the national belonging of (new) citizens of various ethnic and

cultural backgrounds are rare. There has also been little empirical research on the relationship between immigrant's ethnic identity or multiple citizenship status and their loyalty to the nation-state, a specific aspect of the recognition of national belonging which has been increasingly debated and problematized in the last few decades. The purpose of this study is therefore to explore Dutch citizens' views on the three said dimensions of multicultural citizenship, including loyalty to the nation-state. By exploring these views, this study hopes to contribute to the understanding of how the social construction of national belonging is related to various aspects of attitudes towards cultural diversity, including views on equality, prejudice and cultural distinctiveness. By assessing these relationships, this study will also make an empirical exploration of whether the three dimensions of multicultural citizenship are indeed distinct, as theorized by Shadid (2009) (see **Chapter 1**).

The exploratory character and wide scope of this study led to the choice of a mixed-method methodological design, as discussed in **Chapter 2**. This design included a survey (n=710, conducted in November 2012) and semi-structured in-depth interviews (n=66, carried out between March and August 2013) in which both native Dutch and first- and second-generation immigrants – holding Dutch citizenship – were interviewed. Most interviewed immigrants are of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese or Antillean descent, and as such belong to the four largest non-Western immigrant groups in the Netherlands (n=202 in the survey and n=25 in the in-depth interviews). Apart from these groups and native Dutch (n=468), the survey included a small group of Western immigrants as well (n=33).

In **Chapters 3** and **4**, public views are explored on the first dimension of multicultural citizenship: the recognition that individuals of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds who have legal citizenship belong to the national group. As mentioned above, this dimension includes views on immigrants' multiple citizenship status and their loyalty to the nation-state. The analyses in these chapters show that respondents disagree on this issue, indicating that national belonging is not determined only by the status of legal citizenship, but is imbued with social aspects as well.

The respondents appear to have four distinct conceptions of national belonging: *civic*, *territorial*, *ethnic* and *legal*. On average, they attach most importance to the civic type, that is, they attach most importance to inclusive criteria for national belonging such as feeling Dutch and having knowledge of Dutch culture. Almost as much importance is attached to the territorial type, which includes such criteria as being born and living for most of one's life in the Netherlands, and to the legal type, which implies exclusive legal citizenship, where the latter type refers to not holding multiple citizenship. Respondents who

considered these territorial criteria and/or the criterion of exclusive legal citizenship to be important, argued that these are necessary preconditions for citizens to develop a sense of belonging and loyalty to the Netherlands. Least importance is attached to the ethnic type of national belonging, which includes exclusive criteria such as having Dutch ancestors, a Western name and a Christian background.

The importance the respondents attach to these criteria for national belonging appears to be related to their political preference, their educational level and the strength of their prejudice that immigrants are a source of cultural and economic threat. With respect to the latter, the more exclusive the type of Dutch national belonging, the stronger its relationship is to this type of prejudice. Furthermore, the importance attached to the most exclusive types – the ethnic type and exclusive legal citizenship – appears to be negatively related to educational level. Finally, voters for right-wing parties generally attach more importance to criteria for national belonging, whether they be inclusive or exclusive. Most importance is attached to the types of national belonging by voters for the right-wing (populist) Popular Party for Freedom (PVV) and the ultra-orthodox Protestant Reformed Political Party (SGP), which corresponds with statements made by the members of Parliament representing these parties, who have repeatedly stressed the importance of (exclusive) boundaries of the Dutch national group during the last decade.

Almost half of the respondents appear to oppose multiple citizenship, the analysis indicates. While, as mentioned above, some respondents argued that exclusive legal citizenship is an important precondition for developing loyalty to the nation-state, most found it difficult to explain the necessity of this exclusiveness.

However, no significant differences in commitment and loyalty to the Netherlands were found between respondents with single citizenship and those with multiple citizenship. Similarly, no significant differences were found in the levels of affective commitment and loyalty to the Dutch nation-state between native Dutch and Western and non-Western immigrants and their descendants. Moreover, the affective commitment of immigrants, including those with multiple citizenship, to their own ethnic and religious groups, appears to be positively related to their affective commitment to the Netherlands. Therefore, the results of this study indicate that neither ethnic and religious identity nor indeed multiple citizenship undermine immigrants' attachment and loyalty to the nation-state.

Views in Dutch society on the second dimension of multicultural citizenship, that is, social equality, are explored in **Chapter 5**. More specifically, views are explored on policies and regulations to achieve both formal equality (equal treatment) and substantive equality of opportunity for those citizens from diverse

ethnic and cultural backgrounds who had come to the country primarily as labour migrants.

A large majority of the respondents supports both the principle of the equal treatment of citizens of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds and national anti-discrimination policies. Those who do not support this principle and such policies, appear to attach more importance to the exclusive (ethnic) criteria for national belonging, such as having Dutch ancestors and a Western name, and, not surprisingly, have a stronger prejudice that immigrants are a cultural and economic threat. This prejudice, in its turn, is negatively related to educational level, and appears to be strongest among voters for PVV and SGP, followed by voters for the right-wing liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), the left-wing Socialist Party (SP) and the ChristianUnion (CU). Voters for the left-wing Labour Party (PvdA), the left-wing liberal Democrats 66 (D66), the left-wing Green Left party and the right-wing Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) are the least prejudiced.

At the same time, almost half of the respondents is of the opinion that anti-discrimination policies should be improved. They argued that more effective policies, such as quota measures and preferential treatment, are necessary and should be introduced. They also stated that such policies will and can only be effective when politicians stop making polarizing statements. In contrast, among those (a small minority) who oppose anti-discrimination policies, some native Dutch respondents argued that the problem of discrimination is exaggerated and that 'it is the immigrants' own fault', because, as one respondent said, 'They want to be different from the Dutch'.

Despite the sizeable support for anti-discrimination policies, a majority of the respondents opposes the preferential treatment of (naturalized) immigrants and their descendants in the context of job applications. Moreover, none of the respondents who do support policies for immigrant integration mentioned that specific measures should be implemented to reduce the substantive disadvantages of minorities on the labour market. Interestingly, the opposition to preferential treatment appears to be explained only to a small extent by the prejudice that immigrants present a cultural and economic threat and by views on who belongs to the national group. This opposition might partly be explained by a misunderstanding of the measures concerned: respondents said that they oppose positive action because it implies positive discrimination (which is forbidden by law in the Netherlands). Still, this study cannot explain the finding that the opposition to preferential treatment for immigrants is substantially larger than the opposition to preferential treatment for women.

Chapter 6 explores public views on the third dimension of multicultural citizenship: the recognition of cultural distinctiveness. As current political debates on this issue are primarily concentrated on the religious practices, norms and values of Muslim immigrants and their descendants, the exploration in Chapter 6 largely focuses on interpretations of church-state relations and the perceived incompatibility between Dutch norms and values and the norms and values embraced by Muslim immigrants. Indeed, the analysis indicates that respondents associate the ‘cultural distinctiveness of immigrants’ primarily with such Islamic religious manifestations as mosques, Muslim schools and the Islamic headscarf.

Interestingly, the analysis indicates that both respondents’ tolerance of such religious distinctiveness and their appreciation of cultural diversity in general are much lower than their support for the principle of equal treatment. Their opposition to certain aspects of the formal recognition of religious distinctiveness is substantial: almost half opposes the right of public officials (including teachers) to wear an Islamic headscarf and a third oppose granting new religious groups the right to build prayer houses. Importantly, the analysis indicates that these respondents do not oppose the formal recognition of religious distinctiveness as such (including manifestations of all religions), but specifically reject the presence of Islamic manifestations and expressions in the Netherlands. However, respondents who opposed the formal recognition of religious distinctiveness did not argue that such recognition would conflict with the neutrality of the state, or that it would hinder the development of immigrants’ loyalty to the Netherlands – arguments that have played a prominent role in the Dutch political debate since the year 2000.

Finally, the respondents’ tolerance of religious distinctiveness appears to be positively related to their educational level, and negatively related to both the importance that is attached to relatively exclusive criteria for national belonging (such as having Dutch ancestors) and to the prejudice that immigrants present a cultural and economic threat. Furthermore, voters for PVV and SGP are the least tolerant, followed by voters for VVD and SP. Most tolerant of religious distinctiveness are voters for the left-wing parties PvdA, D66 and Green Left.

While, as mentioned above, the analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 clearly indicate that public views on national belonging are related to views on social equality and the recognition of cultural distinctiveness, the analysis in **Chapter 7** indicates that these three dimensions of multicultural citizenship are empirically distinct. In other words, the normative response of citizens to the cultural diversity in their society assumes three distinct aspects. In Dutch society, this is reflected in the phenomenon that the wide support for an inclusive conception of national

belonging and the principle of equal treatment (discussed above) does not imply a high level of tolerance for religious manifestations of all groups in society.