

Us & Them?

Experiences with polarization dynamics from the perspective of
black migrant communities in the Netherlands



Palau Holst

S0600199

Supervisor: Olivier Kramsch

Internship supervisor: Kirsten Tinnemans

Masterthesis Human Geography
Conflicts, Territories and Identities
2018-2020



Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

Abstract

This study focuses on perspectives of citizens with Surinamese, Caribbean and African backgrounds on polarization dynamics in the Netherlands and how these dynamics affect their identity construction. The results indicate that within these communities an increased polarization is experienced between so-called ‘non-western migrants’ and so-called ‘natives’ in the Netherlands. An othering discourse that differentiates ‘non-western migrants’ or ‘allochtonen’ from ‘natives’ or ‘autochtonen’, and increasingly problematizes the presence and position of ‘non-western migrants’, plays a central role in this polarization. On the other hand, the advancement of a counter discourse is identified, that is related to a movement of emancipation of black citizens. This discourse challenges the othering discourse and the second-class position of non-western migrants in society; instead it promotes equality and inclusion and emphasizes that it should be normal that the perspectives of this group count equally in our society.

Both the othering discourse and the counter-discourses affect the possibilities at hand for identification of individual members of Surinamese, Caribbean and African communities. Their ability to identify with the imagined national community is restrained as well as their ability to attain full citizenship. The dichotomization of identity categories is exercised both from within their community and from outside. As a result, respondents generally observe an increased focus on subgroups amongst their communities. These subgroups are often based on the country of origin, but not necessarily. New ethnic categories are formed; for example by uniting for a shared goal to further the emancipation of black citizens. Besides these reactions, respondents describe that some members manage to maintain a position that escapes these dichotomous notions of identity and to occupy an in-between identity. Under increased pressure of polarization, space for these in-between identities is however declining.

Table of contents

Abstract	ii
Table of contents.....	iii
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Introduction to the theme.....	1
1.2 Research objective + Research question	2
1.3 Relevance.....	3
1.3.1 Societal relevance.....	3
1.3.2 Scientific relevance	5
2. Context	7
2.1 Multiculturalism in Dutch Society	7
3. Theoretic Framework.....	12
3.1 Polarization.....	12
3.1.1 Polarization framework.....	12
3.1.2 Affective and Ideological Polarization	13
3.1.3 Potential contributions and risks of polarization	14
3.2 Othering, power and exclusion	15
3.2.1 Othering and nationalism, colonialism, the history of slavery	16
3.2.2 The Established and the Others: Autochtonen & Allochtonen	16
3.3 Identity	18
3.3.1 Negotiating identity.....	18
3.3.2 Citizenship.....	19
3.3.3 Minority ethnic identity.....	20
3.3.4 Power, exclusion and stigmatization.....	22
3.4 Conclusion	23
4 Methodology.....	24
4.1 Research philosophy	24
4.2 Data collection	24
4.3 Respondents	26
4.4 Positionality.....	28
4.5 Data analysis.....	28

5	How are current polarization dynamics described?	30
5.1	Type of polarization	30
5.1.1	Othering discourse	31
5.1.2	Counterdiscourse	34
5.2	Increase	36
5.3	Relevant actors	40
5.4	Conclusion	42
6	The effects of polarization dynamics	44
6.1	Citizenship and equality	44
6.1.1	National identification?	46
6.2	Dichotomized identities	47
6.3	Identity salience	48
6.4	Ethnic identification	49
6.5	Affective polarization	51
6.6	Ideological polarization	52
6.7	Conclusion	55
7	Conclusion and discussion	58
7.1	Indications for praxis	60
7.2	Suggestions for future research	62
7.3	Reflection on the research process	63
	Literature	65
	Appendix I: Interview Guide	73
	Appendix II: Interview Transcripts	77

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction to the theme

Apeldoorn's mayor got summoned in court last November by a man who worried about the survival of the 'blank, Christian population' (NOS, 2019). This was motivated by 2019's *Sinterklaas- intocht* (the reception of Saint Nicholas in the Netherlands), which would take place in absence of *Zwarte Piet* this year. The man supported his accusation with his own wish to have children: he only wishes to have children if the old *Sinterklaas* tradition would remain intact, including *Zwarte Piet*. Thus, he felt a 'victim of genocide'.

This anecdote illustrates the intensity with which, each year around the fifth of December, the debate around *Zwarte Piet* emerges, ever since Jerry Afriyie and Quincy Gario started their campaign '*Zwarte Piet is racism*' (Black Pete is racism). The debate exhibits hostile attitudes of two opposing groups that tenaciously cling to their viewpoints. One group opposes *Zwarte Piet* as a racist character that symbolizes the history of slavery and argues for a *Sinterklaas* celebration without *Zwarte Piet* (Schols, 2019). The other group considers the *Sinterklaas* celebration including *Zwarte Piet* as an essential part of Dutch culture that thus has to be continued without modification.

The debate can be regarded as part of a broader debate that is taking a prominent place in the political agenda and media coverage since the late 1990's or early 2000's: how do we cope with migration, integration and the multicultural society (Vasta, 2007). The topics were introduced by a small group of critics, or self-proclaimed 'new realists', asserting that multicultural policies have failed and resulted in the failure of integration of ethnic minorities, increasing segregation and inequality in the Netherlands (Prins, 2002). Over the years, their discourse has become increasingly normal and is expressed by a large share of politicians and a broad audience in Dutch society.

These topics guarantee heated debates, exemplary for polarizing dynamics in the Netherlands around issues of immigration, multiculturalism, diversity and the

integration of ethnic minorities. Within these debates a sharp distinction is propagated between a group that is indicated as the *indigenous people of the Netherlands* and the group of people with a migration-history, and more specifically those indicated as *non-western migrants* (Vasta, 2012). Their presence and position in society is problematized. *(non-western) migrants* are increasingly attacked as ‘not fit for Dutch society’, group-thinking is increasing and attitudes have become more hostile. As such, people with a migration background have a unique position in the Netherlands. These negative discourses inevitably affect individuals that belong to the targeted groups (Kian & Gorashi, 2018).

Paul Mbikayi, representing the Congolese diaspora in the Netherlands and in his role in the advisory board of the *Kennisplatform Integratie en Samenleving (KIS)*¹, shared concerns about the ways in which polarization dynamics affect migrant communities. He signals a movement of increased pressure to take in more extreme positions in debates, as a reaction to the sustained exclusive discourse. This research aims to gain explorative insights in polarization dynamics in migrant communities.

1.2 Research objective + Research question

With this research I aim to gain more understanding about the effects of polarization dynamics on migrant-communities in the Netherlands. More specifically I focus on experiences and perspectives of people with a Surinam, Caribbean or African background, living in the Randstad.

The central question in this research is:

To what extent, and how, do members of Caribbean, Surinam and African communities in the Netherlands currently experience polarization dynamics and how does this affect individuals in their identity?

These are some sub-questions that will support exploring the topic:

¹ Research-institute that focuses on questions of integration and society

- How is polarization in society described and experienced by citizens with a Surinam, Caribbean or African background and how does this relate to theoretical frameworks about polarization?
- Which developments of affective polarization within Surinam, Caribbean and African communities do key figures describe?
- Which developments of ideological polarization within Surinam, Caribbean and African communities in the Netherlands do key figures describe?

1.3 Relevance

1.3.1 Societal relevance

“Polarization is one of the main themes of our time. It is important to prevent cultural differences and conflict from escalating into enmity. That has a lot to do with the quality of our society.” (Boutelier, 2020, fsw.vu.nl).

Polarization is a phenomenon of all times and places and is not a good or bad thing per se (RMO, 2009). It can be productive to trigger changes in society and help understanding opposite viewpoints (van Wonderen & van den Berg, 2019). At the same time, when the process of polarization lasts too long and/or escalates, it carries the risk of segregation, splitting societies, triggering conflicts between groups and evaporating space for nuanced opinions. Moreover, polarization along ethnic lines is often considered to carry the risk of causing conflict (Ellian, 2009). In the Netherlands mostly ethnic and religious identities play a central role in recent polarisation debates. This is confirmed by the definition of polarization as stated by the Ministry of Interior affairs, referring to sharpening contradictions between groups in society, which can result in tension between those groups and increased segregation in ethnic and religious terms (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2011).

Ideally, the Netherlands aims to be an inclusive society that creates equal opportunities for all its citizens. The spread of anti-immigrants sentiments in the Netherlands has diverse influences on immigrant communities, including individuals born and raised in the Netherlands. Despite the inclusive ideology, a significant share of

citizens feels discriminated and excluded (Dekker & den Ridder, 2019). Members of minority groups report higher incidences of discrimination and negative judgements from 'native Dutch' (Moors et al., 2009). Fifty per cent of the youth with a non-western migration background experience discrimination on the basis of their ethnic or cultural background (Meijer et al., 2018). Feelings of not being accepted as full citizens are increasingly prevalent (Noor, 2016). Although the objective gap between autochthonous and allochthonous communities on many social aspects, for example shared values, is narrowing, the experienced gap is growing (Moors et al., 2009).

Berry (1997) distinguishes four strategies of acculturation, depending on the combination of whether or not individuals maintain connections with the culture of origin and with the country of settlement. These strategies can result in integration, assimilation, separation/segregation and marginalization. The likelihood to successfully apply any of the strategies depends on the conditions, attitudes and characteristics in society and by dominant and non-dominant groups. The integration strategy, which is regarded the most healthy strategy for mental wellbeing, requires several preconditions: *"widespread acceptance of the value to a society of cultural diversity (a multicultural ideology), relatively low levels of prejudice, positive mutual attitudes among cultural groups and a sense of attachment to the larger society by all groups"* (Berry, 1997, p 11). These preconditions are increasingly under pressure.

Citizens with a migration background are being defined increasingly as being outside the imagined national community (Vasta, 2007). Integration into and becoming part of a Dutch national identity becomes near impossible for ethnic minorities, as racialized and inferiorized others. The negative targeting of specific groups is likely to contribute to higher levels of segregation, exclusion and inequality. It can even be argued that current political and social developments might lead to marginalization of migrant communities. High levels of discrimination combined with the expectation that minorities will adapt, carries the risk of marginalization.

Attention around issues of polarization seem to be primarily directed towards 'native' citizens. Sentiments of discomfort that are present in migrant communities are not addressed as much or even overlooked. The first two weeks of June 2020 were marked by protest around the country that expressed discomfort about the position of

black citizens in the Netherlands. Although the fieldwork for this thesis has been conducted before these protests, this study can offer context to these protest voices. With this thesis I aim to contribute to understanding about the impact of polarization in society and polarization dynamics within migrant communities on individual citizens with a migration background. An exploration of the effects of polarization dynamics in migrant communities, raises awareness about the struggles migrant groups deal with. This may turn out helpful for authorities to effectively respond to situations in society.

1.3.2 Scientific relevance

Polarization in Dutch society between ethnic groups is regarded a relatively new phenomenon. Research has been few and far between, and although polarization is a process that affects everyone in society in different ways, most research so far focused on ‘native’ populations. With this research I hope to contribute to a more comprehensive insight in the dynamics of polarisation, by exploring the effects of polarization on migrant communities. There is need for more research on the intersection of political and societal discourses concerning migrants and citizenship and actual patterns of multiple membership (Vertovec, 2002).

This qualitative research, based on in-depth interviews, can also add context to quantitative figures about trends that are related to polarization. An example is research that indicates that the experienced gap between allochthonous and autochthonous people in the Netherlands is growing, whilst the objective gap is narrowing (Moors et al., 2009). With in-depth interviews it is possible to gain insight in the positions of people and the impact of societal developments on these positions.

Furthermore, since the relatively high influx of refugees in 2015, a lot of scientific attention has been directed towards refugee populations, which seems to have slightly diverted the attention away from populations that have been residing in the Netherlands for longer periods. Recent research regarding this audience had a strong focus on radicalized Muslims, mostly on demand of city councils (e.g. Sloomman & Tillie, 2006; Wessels & Dijkman, 2012). Attention for the broader influences of current discourses on

migrant communities, their identity formation and coping strategies seems to be less widespread. A clear understanding of complex processes and dynamics of polarization would benefit from the inclusion of a broader audience than radicalized individuals.

2. Context

2.1 Multiculturalism in Dutch Society

After World War II Dutch society increasingly diversified in terms of ethnicity. Migrants from Morocco, Turkey and Southern Europe came as guestworkers; post-colonial migrants from former Dutch colonies, Surinam, the Dutch Antilles, and Indonesia; and since the 1980s an increasing number of refugees and asylum-seekers found their way to the Netherlands (Bosma et al., 2012, Vasta, 2007). It was not until the 1970s that the government started formulating migration and integration policies (Bruquetas-Callejo et al., 2007). In part because the Netherlands did not envision being an immigration country; guest workers were initially expected to have a temporary stay in the Netherlands, after which they would return to their home countries. Besides, Dutch society was socio-spatially structured in pillars along lines of class and religion (Vasta, 2007). Within this context migrant communities were encouraged to organize themselves around their religious or ethnic identities and to ‘stick to their own’ habits, norms and values.

In the 1970s it became clear that new waves of migrants kept coming to the Netherlands and guest workers would probably stay permanent, having their families join them. This initiated new policies to secure the legal status, political rights, housing and social situation of immigrants, and to counter racism and discrimination (Castles, 1986; Vasta, 2007). Much of these policies, known as *(ethnic) minorities’ policies*, can be seen as a continuation of aspects of pillarization, such as funding and support for ethnic and religious minority communities to establish their own cultural and institutional structures (Vasta, 2007; Entzinger, 2003). “Integration with retention of identity” was the motto: migrants were approached as a group with culture that was completely different and that had to be tolerated (Gorashi, 2014). The dominant view explained society as changeable and diversity as added value, resulting in policies that facilitate integration as an interactive process that will change all involved actors.

By the early 1990s, immigration further increased and diversified (Entzinger, 2003). The effectiveness of minorities’ policies was questioned, because they did not seem to meet the objective to overcome the relative social and economic deprived

position of minorities. In 1994 new integration policies were introduced, which no longer encouraged immigrants to uphold their habits. The approach gradually shifted towards demanding immigrants to adapt to the receiving country (Bruquetas-Callejo et al., 2007; Entzinger, 2003).

Since the late 1990s political debates and media coverage about multiculturalism, migration and integration issues intensified. Scheffer (2000) was one of the main initiators of the debate on multiculturalist policies, setting the tone with his critical essay 'het multiculturele drama' (the multicultural drama). In the essay he criticizes how 'tolerance' is used as an excuse for a lack of interest to keep ethnic minorities socio-economically connected to the rest of society. He asserts that the attitude of not facing problems and avoiding emerging conflicts, resulted in strong segregation, increasing inequality between different groups, a waste of talents and expanding pressure on the welfare state. As a result, tensions and alienation in society increased and tolerance weakened, leading Scheffer to regard these developments as the biggest threats for a peaceful society.

Over the course of 2 decades, the dynamics in this debate completely changed and exhibits growing hostile attitudes. The interpretation of immigration and integration issues in socio-economic terms, shifted towards a cultural interpretation (van der Brug, Fennema, van Heerden & de Lange, 2009). Many other topics became an integrated part of the multiculturalism debate: from crime and religious terrorism, to race and inequality, even globalization and markets are involved. A discursive shift can be recognized that moves away from civic identity towards nationalism: Dutch identity and culture is increasingly considered unchangeable, and diversity in society a problem (Vasta, 2007). Old style notions of a national culture imagined as homogenous and superior have revived. The idea that 'natives of the country' have a right to claim their culture, because they were here first, is increasingly taken for granted, and it follows that immigrants have to change their culture and assimilate (Gorashi, 2014). The public discourse is nowadays characterized by a widespread tendency to blame the migrant; for failed integration, but also for many other social problems in society.

“Between the events of 9/11 and Europe’s current refugee crisis, a political atmosphere marked by the exclusion and othering of immigrants has become endemic to Europe. This pattern is highly pronounced in the Netherlands, where negative attitudes towards the culture and religion of migrants – in particular islamic migrants – visibly intensified at the turn of the century.” (Kian & Gorashi, 2018, p. 334).

Today’s reality reflects a high appeal of populist anti-immigrant parties in the Netherlands, such as Wilders’ *Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV)*, which became second largest in the country’s most recent national elections, and the new *Forum voor Democratie*, that turned out to be the biggest party nationally in recent provincial elections. These parties draft a clear divide between *indigenous* and *foreign* populations and profile themselves as advocates of autochthonous interests, while displaying negative attitudes towards the *foreign* (Ultee, Arts & Flap, 2003; Davidovic, van Donselaar, Rodrigues & Wagenaar 2008; Fennema & van der Brug, 2006). Their focus is primarily directed to the socio-cultural dimension and more specifically to issues of identity (Lubbers, 2009). From an ethno-pluralist ideology, they are devoted to protect the nations’ traditional and unique culture, which should not be damaged by mixing people and cultures. They thus endorse a monoculturalistic vision and reject the multicultural society.

In response many mainstream political parties have gradually shifted their positions regarding migration and multiculturalism issues towards a populist, anti-immigrant agenda (van der Brug, Fennema, van Heerden & de Lange, 2009; Davis, 2012; Gorashi, 2014). Ideas depicted ‘extreme right’ and racist in 1990s, are nowadays considered ‘normal’ (Davis, 2012). *“... amongst the European nations most associated with policies of multiculturalism, the Netherlands has been the site of probably the most spectacular political developments and dramatic policy reversals.”* (Herbert, 2014, p. 86). As reported by ECRI (2019), the political debate and media coverage is influenced by xenophobic language and politicians openly speak about racist beliefs and biological superiority. Online hate speech is a daily reality and remains online for a long time. Many people that belong to minorities feel excluded because of this hostile language.

An emphasis on a fixed national identity can be observed, subsequently followed by the idea that this can be threatened by the mores and moralities of racialized outsiders (Mepschen, 2019). This notion of culture is mirrored in current discourse and policies that deal with integration, multiculturalism and diversity. It opposes an understanding of cultures as integrated, adaptive systems, in interaction with its surroundings and broader societal developments, in dialogue with all present citizens (Kottak, 2006). In these discourses, a division is built between Europe's Judeo-Christian tradition and non-Western migrants. Non-western migrants are depicted as backward and incapable of embracing modern norms, values and behavior, such as understanding democracy, gender equality, homosexuality (Mepschen, Duyvendak & Tonkens, 2010). Thus, migrants are increasingly being defined as being outside the imagined national community (Vasta, 2007). The discourses persistently impose fixed imaginary categories, thereby ignoring the diversity within migrant communities and how the majority doesn't conform to stereotypes.

The ideology of static, uniform societies translates into more restrictive migration and integration policies, integration is presented as a one-way process, in which ethnic minorities are expected to adapt, even if this involves coercive measures (Vasta, 2007). In 2004 integration became obligatory, and fines would be imposed if a newcomer failed to integrate. *“Current notions of compulsory integration, in both official and the public discourse, go back to old-style notions of one-way assimilation expecting immigrants to integrate into a national culture imagined as homogeneous and superior.”* (Vasta, 2007, p. 725).

Schinkel and van Houdt (2010) explain how the inclination to fix national culture shaped a paradoxical approach of integration, in which full citizenship is only attained when formal citizenship is complemented by moral citizenship. The result is a virtualization of citizenship; moral citizenship can only be achieved by immigrants through active citizenship and assimilation. But the latter implies a community to assimilate to, whose existence is debatable, or at least should be seen as a moving target. Hence, assimilation, integration and citizenship, become possibilities that are impossibly achieved.

The concept of moral citizenship is a result of what Schinkel and van Houdt (2010) call ‘the double helix of neo-liberal communitarianism, which consists of a neo-liberal emphasis on individuality on one hand, and, on the other hand, a de-individualizing selective focus on national community. The communitarian emphasis on Dutch culture, norms and values marks a shift from the previous ‘right to be different’, to a ‘duty to be the same’, reflected in policies of cultural assimilation. The neo-liberal individual responsabilisation can be seen in the light of critique on the welfare state, facilitating the shift of responsibilities from the state to its citizens, supposedly ‘active citizens’ capable of governing themselves. Within the context of a diverse society, the double helix of neo-liberal communitarianism results in janus-faced policies. With ‘soft’ facilitative responsabilization, operating for those already deemed able to take responsibility (*natives*), supplemented by repressive responsabilisation for those classified as a ‘risk’ for social order, because of their supposedly inability to assume responsibility (*non-western migrants*).

3. Theoretic Framework

3.1 Polarization

Polarization, the central concept in this thesis, is defined as “the splitting of a society into two distinct groups that are different ends of a spectrum, such as rich and poor, or white and black” (Rogers, Castree & Kitchin, 2013). It is a mental construct in which group identities play a central role: two group identities are classified as opposites (Brandsma, 2016). The required fuel to maintain polarisation is provided by judgements about the opposing identities. Positive and negative judgements equally provide this fuel, by upholding the conversation about opposing identities. Polarization is a dynamic that can develop in various directions: decrease, increase or stagnate (van der Varst, Bervoets, Bouabid & van der Veen, 2011). The concept received broad attention in the Netherlands in recent years; according to a 2019 report by SCP (Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau), the idea that Dutch society is increasingly polarized is shared by a big part of the Dutch people (Dekker & den Ridder, 2019).

3.1.1 Polarization framework

Polarization describes a dynamic in which space for nuance decreases while groups of people move to extreme and opposite positions and us-them thinking increases (Brandsma, 2016; Gorashi, 2009; Bellaart, Broekhuizen & van Dongen, 2016). The conceptualization of polarization carries the possibility of a two-sided process. There is a general emphasis on the dominant group, but both dominant and subordinate or minority groups can enforce polarization. The conceptualization of polarization comprehends the act of polarizing: a communicative act that classifies group identities and exacerbate differences (RMO, 2009). Besides communicative acts, polarization describes the process of groups becoming increasingly opposed to each other. Polarization thus describes causes and effects, which may seem confusing.

Polarisation can occur along different lines and subjects: politics/ideology, age, ethnicity, religion etc. It can manifest at different levels: in politics and the public debate, in neighbourhoods, social media, schools, professional surroundings. According

to the SCP report, polarization between ethnic groups is currently most apparent: although differences in level of education and income are deemed to cause the biggest contrasts in society, respondents mostly worry about conflict and tensions between ethnic groups, or between people with a migration-background and those indicated as ‘natives’ (Dekker & den Ridder, 2019).

In the foundation of polarisation various factors can be distinguished: (I) a social climate that nurtures polarization, for example a common sense of discomfort or loss, (II) advancing factors, like media reporting or increased assertiveness of second- and third-generation migrants, (III) trigger events, that further instigate feelings of discomfort or loss (Bellaart et al., 2016). When polarizing dynamics are active in a community, Brandsma (2016) distinguishes five roles that individuals in this community can perform: pushers, joiners, silents, bridgebuilders and scapegoats. Pushers play a crucial role in boosting polarizing dynamics, by actively seeking confrontation and impeaching the opposing group in order to amplify support. Joiners are those convinced by pushers that their interests are at stake and therefore join the story of the pushers. Silents often constitute the biggest but least visible group, and are characterized by a neutral, indifferent or nuanced attitude. This group is believed to be crucial in resisting polarization: they are willing to change, but not as fast as those at the front lines. These moderate voices are believed to prevent that the opposite ends will armour themselves in their own right. Bridgebuilders aim to bridge the gap between opposing identities, from the assumption that polarization is a result of a lack of information. Despite good intentions, however, they uphold the conversation in terms of opposing identities, and consequently fuel polarisation. Scapegoats are mainly found in case of sharply increased tensions. When tension increases, individuals in the role of silents or bridgebuilders, can be forced to pick sides.

3.1.2 Affective and Ideological Polarization

Various disciplines have analysed, studied and theorized polarisation: sociology, psychology, philosophy, economics, politics, etc. In conceptualizing polarization, a distinction can be made between ideological and affective polarization. Ideological

polarization is conceptualized as disagreement, in which the *extend* of disagreement is relevant (DiMaggio, Evans and Bryson, 1996). Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes (2012) argue that, instead of looking at opinions per se, research should address affective polarisation. This refers to the extent to which people feel connected to certain groups and at the same time feel aversion towards other groups. Mechanisms of alienation between groups are combined with mechanisms of identification within these groups (Esteban & Ray, 1994). While opinions and attitudes in society might remain stable and seem to not diverge further away from each other, the extent to which people feel affiliated to certain groups can nevertheless become increasingly polarised (Iyengar et al., 2012).

Similarly, in the Netherlands a difference between the objective and the experienced gap can be found. autochthonous and allochthonous communities increasingly share the same values, the experienced gap between the groups is growing (Moors et al., 2009). In order to create understanding in current polarization dynamics, this thesis tries to gain insight in both affective and ideological polarization, and how the two interact, amongst citizens with a migration background.

3.1.3 Potential contributions and risks of polarization

Historical (Lucassen, 2009) and cross-cultural (van de Vijver, 2009) comparison show that polarization is a phenomenon that can be found in all times and places. Although polarization has a general negative connotation, it is normal and not necessarily problematic for a society to have a certain extend of tensions or polarization between groups present (van Wonderen & van den Berg, 2019). Polarization can serve as a driving force to stimulate change in society, but it can also result in increased segregation and might stimulate tensions and social conflict between groups.

Polarization stimulates group formation and bonding, because differences between groups are emphasized (RMO, 2009). This can be positive, because groups are essential in the development of identity of individuals. Groups can also play a role in representing the interests of group members. On the other hand, a clear demarcation of groups can

limit the freedom of individuals – with multiple identities - when one collective identity becomes too dominant and absolute. When certain groups are considered inferior, and when the attributes of a collective identity are unchangeable (like ethnicity, origin, gender), this may lead to stigmatization. This will lead society to use this group identity as an explanation of everything that is wrong.

3.2 Othering, power and exclusion

Polarization, as a dynamic in which contrasts between groups are exacerbated (Gorashi, 2009), should be understood as a process of inclusion and exclusion. There is a great body of academic work that theorizes systems of in- and exclusion and related power structures. In this thesis the concept of ‘Othering’ from postcolonial theory is used as a starting point. Othering refers to the discursive production of the ‘Other’, through the construction of a clear line between opposite or distinct entities: the ingroup vs. the outgroup, us vs. them (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002; Newman, 2006). This creates a system of social differentiation that affirms the superiority and legitimacy of the powerful group and reinforces the powerful position of this group (Jensen, 2011).

Representations that construct the Other as morally inferior and subordinate create a difference that will come to be perceived as a ‘natural’ difference in human or racial material (Spivak, 1985). Those who are Othered are essentialized and reduced to few negative characteristics. This enables hierarchical and stereotypical thinking, which is why the effect of Othering resembles racism (Bendixsen, 2013). The ‘Other’ is described in terms of non-conformity with the socio-cultural and normative standards and is thus placed at the margins of society (Bendixsen, 2013). Once a group is defined as the Other, a cognitive frame for subjective signification is created, through which further perceptions of the group are likely to be distorted (Van Oudenhoven, 2009). New information that confirms the image of the Other is perceived stronger, whereas information that indicates similarities is missed or judged as an exception.

3.2.1 *Othering and nationalism, colonialism, the history of slavery*

Current Othering of non-western migrants can be understood in the light of how nationalist ideology and the construction of national unity developed in European nation-states in the eighteenth century. Cultural identity politics, or politics of differentiation helped the nation develop into an imagined community (Anderson, 1983; Bendixsen, 2013). National unity and mutual solidarity required dependency of citizens upon the state, and the limitation or even elimination of other loyalties and uniformity. Uniformity was encouraged through norms that define the nation and constructed an idea of a continuous homogenous national population. Deviation in cultural practices was regarded as a potential threat to solidarity and national unity.

The European history of colonization and slavery must also be considered in current Othering of non-Western migrants. Said's *Orientalism* (1979) revealed how the West constructed representations and portraits of the East as the Other. Reductionist, distancing and pathologizing descriptions of the Orient in art and literature, formed the ideology of Othering that helped construct systems of colonial subjection. In order to affirm legitimacy of the European colonizer, negative patterns of behavior were assigned to colonized and enslaved subjects, to construct an image of inferiority compared to so-called Western superiority (Said, 1979, Bendixsen, 2013).

3.2.2 *The Established and the Others: Autochtonen & Allochtonen*

Within communities othering can serve established groups aim to maintain their powerful position over newcomer-outsiders (Elias & Scotson, 1994). Processes of social classification are always exercised in existing power structures. Established groups in societies are embedded in existing structures, social order and networks of interdependencies. These are built around norms and ways of life that are associated with self-respect and status and are transmitted over generations. Groups of newcomers lack this embeddedness, and have a lower status. As such, established groups occupy a dominant position in society and it is in their interest to maintain this position in the established order. Stigmatizing beliefs about whole groups of outsiders serve to confirm

the superiority of the established group and to exclude outsiders. These beliefs are modelled on observations of its worst sections (ibid.).

In the Netherlands, this was reflected in the term ‘allochtoon’, which came into use in the 1970s’ and could translate as ‘allochthonous’ (Essed & Trienekens, 2008). Allochtoon came to signify the opposite of autochthonous (indigenous, native, authentic). The terms constitute two mutually exclusive categories that set apart ‘us’ from ‘them’; the established, real Dutch (autochtoon), from the newcomers, outsiders, not quite Dutch (allochtoon). The term allochtoon acquired a negative connotation over the years and is therefore officially replaced in 2016 by the term ‘a person with a migration-background’². The official definition of allochthone used in the Netherlands, is a person of whom at least one of the parents is born abroad. However, in practical use, the term refers to a mix of cultural and racial factors; it appears to refer to persons with a ‘non-western’ migration background (Essed & Trienekens, 2008). This comprehends further generations of immigrants from non-western countries, and excludes migrants from so-called ‘western’ countries.

Over the past years, politics and media display an increased occurrence of discourses that problematize the presence of ‘Others’ in the imagined national community of the Netherlands. Non-western immigrants have increasingly come to signify ‘the Other’ and “categorized as inherently different outsiders” (Bendixsen, 2013, p. 114), that threaten the perceived cultural and societal homogeneity. National citizenship is increasingly defined in terms of common history and heritage instead of civil rights and duties. This creates invisible social barriers between the in-group and the out-group and to whether a person is perceived Dutch. New and old communities of ‘non-western migrants’ are targeted over their alleged culture, which is constructed in terms of problematic differences and opposed to civilized Dutchness and its progressive values, like for example women and LGBT emancipation (Fennema & van der Brug, 2006; Jensen, 2011). Along with these discourses, Dutch reactions have become more ethnocentric, attitudes towards minorities have grown more negative, and perceived threat from ethnic minorities increased (Jaspers, Londen & Lubbers, 2009).

² see: <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/faq/specifiek/wat-verstaat-het-cbs-onder-een-allochtoon->

3.3 Identity

Group identities play a central role in polarization dynamics, making theory about identity construction a valuable source to help understand polarization dynamics. In this thesis identities are addressed from a social constructivist approach, rather than primordialist approaches that regard identity as grounded in unchangeable and essential characteristics (Fearon & Laitin, 2000). From a social constructivist perspective identities are regarded as a context-dependent social construct, with fluid boundaries. This is not to say that identities are unimportant or fake; they play an important role in how we make sense of the world and are often experienced as primordial. It does, nonetheless, imply that immigrants' experiences are highly intertwined with societal and political discourses that influence their identity construction (Kian & Gorashi, 2018). Othering discourses shape power structures that condition agency and frame the possibilities at hand for negotiating identities (Jensen, 2011).

3.3.1 Negotiating identity

Identity is developed within and in relation to the specific context and circumstances of each individual. These processes take place in social worlds, through dialectic between self-attribution (internal) and other-ascribed, external aspects (Vertovec, 2001). The social worlds of migrant communities are stretched between physical places and communities in two or more nation-states, leaving them with diverse 'habitats of meaning' that influence processes of identity construction. "... the multi-local life-world presents a wider, even more complex set of conditions that affect the construction, negotiation and reproduction of social identities" (Vertovec, 2001, p. 578). The formation of identity can be complex for people with a migration background, especially when the various life-worlds they have to negotiate are not in harmony with each other. As a result of negative discourses about identities of migrant communities, self-identity and other-identity become increasingly removed from each other.

Since individuals typically categorize themselves into multiple groups, an important question concerns the hierarchy of group affiliations; which affiliations provide the most meaningful cues? Social identity theorists posited identity salience as the basis from which to predict the extent of inter-group prejudice (Iyengar et al, 2012). “*The more salient the affiliation, the more biased the individual’s beliefs about in-group and out-group members*” (*ibid.*, p.408). The information environment constitutes an important factor for identity salience: the number of times an individual is reminded of his or her affiliation to a certain group. This implies that salient societal discourses affect how individuals construct their multiple identity positions, and their emotional connectedness to the contexts they are part of (Kian & Gorashi, 2018). The current emphasis in the public debate on ethnic identities, can push people with a migrant background towards their migrant community and stimulate aversion against autochthonous groups and individuals.

3.3.2 Citizenship

“*In the contemporary world, virtually everybody is forced to take on an identity as a citizen – we are living in Leviathan.*” (Eriksen, 2002, p. 122). It is argued that the nation-state has become a crucial denominator in identity-formation, hence being part of the imagined national community is important. However, attaining an identity as a Dutch citizen is more complex for migrants than naturalization procedures suggest. Kremer (2013) argues that the common understanding of Dutch identity is based on ethnicity, roots, cultural practices, and moral disposition. These characteristics are not easily acquired and therefore this notion enables distinguishing between “us” and “them”. This idea is furthered by current culturalist discourses that reframe the issue of migration as a cultural issue instead of a juridical and legal issue and posit the most “natural” link for migrants (and their descendants) to be to their countries of origin (Gorashi, 2017; Kremer, 2013). This results in an exclusionary notion of Dutch national identity, through which national citizens with a migration background (specifically “non-western”) are not considered to be part of “us”.

This rigid and “thick” notion of national identity is contrasted by America’s “thin” concept of national identity, which can be characterized as more fluid and open (Gorashi, 2003). This allows for other forms of identification, such as emotional identification with the country, normative and functional identification. Furthermore, it allows diversity and cultural differences within a national identity and will enable people to cultivate a sense of belonging to multiple identity categories.

Additionally, Schinkel and van Houdt (2010) argue that full citizenship is only attained when formal citizenship is complemented by moral citizenship. Today’s integration policies are clearly influenced by the inclination to fix national culture, which shapes a paradoxical approach of integration. In these policies the right to be different is replaced by a duty to be the same. The result is a virtualization of citizenship, as moral citizenship can only be achieved by immigrants through active citizenship and assimilation. But the latter implies a community to assimilate to, whose existence is debatable, or at least should be seen as a moving target. Hence, achieving full citizenship becomes a possibility that is impossible to achieve.

Active citizenship implies an active contribution to the public sphere and government affairs. In current othering discourses, a division is built between Europe’s Judeo-Christian tradition and non-Western migrants. Non-Western migrants are depicted as backward and incapable of embracing modern norms, values and behavior, such as understanding democracy, gender equality, homosexuality (Mepschen, Duyvendak & Tonkens, 2010). These discourses implicitly draw a line between those entitled to be critical or decide about cultural norms and values and the appropriateness of these: citizens with a non-western migration background are supposed to conform to ‘Dutch’ standards, otherwise they’d better get out (as Dutch prime minister said with his infamous ‘hoepel op’-statement).

3.3.3 *Minority ethnic identity*

In current polarization dynamics, a focus on ethnic identity can be observed. According to Eriksen (2002) *“Ethnicity is an aspect of social relationships between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom*

they have a minimum of regular interaction. It can thus be described as a social identity characterised by a metaphoric or fictive kinship” (p. 12-13). Ethnicity is situational and societal characteristics are of major influence on the extent and the ways in which ethnicity is communicated. This includes, among others, the encouragement or discouragement of ethnic incorporation by a state, levels of (in)equality and the level of ethnic tensions between groups.

Several studies emphasise the role of fear and insecurity in the activation of ethnic loyalty. Ethnicity can be seen as a socially and discursively constructed ‘imagined community’ that, within a context of insecurity and fear, can be mobilized (Oberschall, 2001). Political elites often strategically use fear to manipulate ethnic identities, thereby setting the stage for polarization and exclusion (Fearon and Laitin, 2000). Acts of exclusion by majorities in society, in turn, have the potential of activating minority identity (Eriksen, 2002). Furthermore, several studies suggest that inequalities along cultural or ethnic group lines, or so-called ‘horizontal inequalities’, play an essential role in mobilization of ethnic identity (Langer & Steward, 2014).

There is a tendency to think about groups and group membership as mutually exclusive (Eriksen, 2002). This opposes a view on identity as shaped by multiple layers, which holds that individuals are not determined to a singular identity, but belong to a variety of groups (Sen, 2006). When diverse ethnic identities are promoted as complements with compatible interests, ethnic divisions and conflict can be overcome. It will enable people to cultivate a sense of belonging to multiple identity categories.

The idea of dichotomous³ ethnic categories is problematic for citizens with a migration background. They often consider themselves simultaneously a member of two groups. Dichotomous ethnic categories, or categories that are partly defined through mutual contrasting, make it psychologically and socially difficult to claim double group membership. The autochtoon - allochtoon and western – non-western categorization is an example of such dichotomous categories. This especially affects second and third generation immigrants, who have been referred to as ethnic anomalies, betwixt and between, neither-nor or both-and categories of ethnic identity. They often have a

³ Eriksen uses ‘digital categories’. Dichotomous covers the definition, is more common in social sciences and less confusing.

stronger identification with majority values, but social categorization not always allows them this group-membership.

Other strategic options are either assimilation into the dominant group in society or ethnic incorporation (Eriksen, 2002). The choice for assimilation is, however, not always available. As explained in the previous paragraph, the ‘thick’ notion of Dutch identity excludes migrants from the imagined national community (Gorashi, 2003). Ethnic incorporation holds two possibilities: loyalty to (grand)parents' ethnicity or branching off in a new ethnic category. When immigrants with black skin organize in associations and clubs and share a mutual sense of solidarity based on their shared skin colour, they can be regarded a new ethnic category within the host-society.

3.3.4 Power, exclusion and stigmatization

Categorization is not necessarily problematic, and academics seem to agree that people in general have a natural desire to belong to a group (Smith, 1991). However, theory of stigmatization emphasizes the far-reaching influences of other-definition on individuals. Processes of social classification are always exercised in existing power structures. Stigmatizing beliefs about whole groups of outsiders serve to confirm the superiority of the established group and to exclude outsiders. These beliefs are modelled on observations of its worst sections (Elias & Scotson, 1994). By connecting groups of people to negative attributes, individuals are reduced from normal and full persons, to impaired and inferior (Goffman, 1986; Catthoor et al., 2003). This instigates prejudice, discrimination, dehumanization and exclusion but also impairs the self-image of the outsiders.

Self-stigmatization refers to the internalization of prejudices when an individual identifies with the prejudiced group (Scheff, 1966). This results in identities and behaviours that are shaped by prejudices. *“They can often enough induce even the outsiders to accept an image of themselves which is modelled on a minority of the worst and an image of the established which is modelled on a minority of the best”* (Elias & Scotson, 1994, p. 159). In addition, expected discrimination and the refusal of a

majority to allow minorities assimilation may enforce separation between groups, as a defence to avoid discrimination (Link et al., 1989, Eriksen, 2002)

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out concepts that are relevant in understanding polarization dynamics. Polarization is understood as a two-sided process that increases the gap between opposite groups. It consists of both the communicative act – polarizing language -, and the process of groups becoming increasingly opposed to each other. The first can be understood as othering, a concept derived from postcolonial theory. Othering discourses create a distinction between us and them, that is used to affirm the superiority and legitimization of the dominant group in society. This difference becomes perceived as natural.

Othering discourses put a central emphasis on group identities and the social identities of individuals, as social constructs, are affected by these discourses. As a result of salient othering discourses and experienced inequality and exclusion, minority's ethnic identity becomes increasingly relevant. Additionally, othering discourses stimulate racialized and dichotomous concepts of national and ethnic identity, which exclude minorities from the imagined national community. This restrains minorities from multiple identifications based on both Dutch national identity and ethnic identity. Assimilation becomes near impossible and ethnic identification is reinforced. Othering discourses thus constrain the possibilities at hand for identification and create a social differentiation that excludes ethnic minorities from the imagined national community.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research philosophy

This research explores individual experiences and perspectives that help understand the complex dynamics of polarization. I do not aim to discover an external reality or clearcut empirical facts; instead I seek explore experiences, perceptions, meanings, emotions, intentions and values “that make up our taken-for-granted life worlds” (Clifford, Cope, Gillespie & French, 2010, p. 5). The epistemological starting point of this study corresponds with a constructivist philosophy: In contrast with a positivist approach, which looks at human action as essentially determined and predictable, subject to causal laws and regulations, a constructivist approach emphasizes that human behavior is context-specific and actions can only derive meaning when understood within this context (Demmers, 2012, Russell Bernard, 2006). I perceive the world as a complex whole that cannot be defined or predicted with numbers and figures. Especially within our field of research: social processes, human behavior, it is my opinion that we cannot exclude the social, historical, geographical context. At least, I think it’s much more interesting to involve this context

In ontological sense, this research should be positioned somewhere between structuralism and individualism. I start from the structuralist idea that the social world contains powerful structures, discourses, institutions and systems that influence - to a certain extend - the way people act (Demmers, 2012). Nonetheless I believe this does not single out individual agency, but I believe structures have a significant impact on agency.

4.2 Data collection

This study is based on qualitative data that I collected through semi structured in-depth interviews. I wanted to collect stories and narratives of how members of black migrant communities experience polarizing dynamics, how they cope with it and how it influences their position within migrant communities. I explored the spaces that are

available for discussion and nuance and in how far these spaces are put under pressure as a result of polarizing dynamics.

In contrast to quantitative methods, qualitative research is more concerned with the meaning of things (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The research method allows getting a comprehensive picture of complex social realities. The choice for qualitative research is a choice to display some of the diverse stories of which social reality consists, instead of trying to present representative results. Different stories are valuable and important to understand; they offer context to quantitative numbers and figures.

The choice for in depth interviews allowed me, as an interviewer, to build a relationship of trust with the respondent. Showing true interest for the respondents story and maintaining an open-minded and non-judgemental attitude, helps against the feeling of respondents that they should give desirable answers. Therefore, in depth interviews are considered the best way to deal with sensitive information, to explore power relations and social processes (Gordon, 1998; Clifford et al., 2010). In these types of interviews, it is important for a researcher to reflect on his/her own role in qualitative research processes; he/she is part of the respondents' reality instead of an objective or anonymous observer.

An interview guide provided a guideline for these interviews, with themes, main questions and follow-up questions listed. This allowed the interviews to unfold in a conversational manner; there was no strict chronology and space was offered to respondents to explore additional input or information that was considered important. The semi-structured character of the interviews allows for on sight improvisation, in order to fill in knowledge gaps. This suited the explorative character of this research. The developments that form the basis of this thesis are relatively recent: the increase of anti-immigrant discourses has taken place over the last 15 years and the debate about Zwarte Piet emerged about 8 years ago. Research on effects of these polarizing developments so far mainly focused on other groups, and on the relation between radicalization and polarization. In this research I focus on Surinam, Caribbean and African communities in the Netherlands and I explicitly choose to expose the perspective of the middle group, which is generally less visible.

One of the main critiques on qualitative research is that it is less objective, compared to quantitative research (Clifford, Cope, Gillespie & French, 2010). This is in accordance with an interpretativist research philosophy, which looks at objective and subjective social reality as intrinsically linked (della Porta & Keating, 2008). The concern for objectivity is mainly addressed to the researcher. The open character of semi-structured in depth interviews, leaves much to the interpretation of a researcher.

4.3 Respondents

For this study I interviewed key-figures of Surinam, Caribbean and African migrant communities. Besides their individual perspective, I expected these respondents to be able to identify and explain current dynamics in their communities. In hindsight I would say it might have been better to either focus on individual experiences or on a respondents expertise of it's community. To interview someone on their personal experiences and as a key figure can be confusing and lead the interviews to last longer. Furthermore it was my intention to bring forward the perspectives of the middle group in the polarization continuum. Therefore I selected respondents that either position themselves as moderate voices in the public debate, or keep themselves outside the public debate. This does not mean that the selected respondents regard themselves as part of the middle group.

For the selection of respondents, I used three different canals. I used the network of KIS and members of the advisory board of KIS (individuals with a migration background) to approach respondents. I used the Internet, including social networks such as LinkedIn and Facebook, to map diaspora organizations, social organizations and interest groups involved with the research population and approached these to find respondents. Once I started interviewing, I used the snowball technique to find additional respondents (Clifford et al., 2010).

The selected respondents do not display a representative sample of the research population. In general, the aim of an interview is not to be representative, but to understand individual perspectives and experiences (Clifford et al., 2010). This is in line with my research philosophy. It is not my intention to present representative results,

instead I aim to offer greater context, which can contribute to better understanding of the complex dynamics and processes involved.

I agreed with my respondents to process the information anonymous. Although some respondents didn't have a problem with their name being displayed in this thesis, others did appreciate anonymity, so I decided to equally maintain anonymity for all respondents.

	Occupation	Country of origin	Age	Gender	Years in the Netherlands
Respondent 1	Business + social organization	Congo	56	Male	25
Respondent 2	Writer / journalist	Sierra Leone	46	Male	24
Respondent 3	Science	Eritrea	46	Male	40
Respondent 4	Communication + social organization	Surinam	47	Male	42
Respondent 5	Politics & social organization	Curacao	43	Male	33
Respondent 6	Business, law & social organization	Congo	39	Female	25
Respondent 7	Politics & Interest organization	Congo	34	Male	25
Respondent 8	Business & social organization	Cameroon	37	Female	25
Respondent 9	Business & social organization	Surinam	44	Female	28

4.4 Positionality

Besides my respondents' identities, my own identity should not be effaced as an important factor in this research: it shapes the interactions (Clifford et al., 2010). My positionality as a white, elite researcher, without doubt makes me an outsider of the group I focused my research on. This positionality brings along a certain discomfort – 'who am I to write about these communities? – especially in the light of colonialism, the history of slavery, and unequal power relations that are still present in today's reality. I am not only an outsider, but an outsider in a privileged position that allowed me to say things about a group I am not part of. I can try to justify this by saying that I give a voice to these people, but I am still the one who has the power to decide who I involve in the research, which topics are included, which information is relevant, how the information is interpreted, etc. My participants could choose whether they would participate, but I am presenting their perspectives as part of their communities, which consists of so many other perspectives that are not included. My positionality thus not only shapes the interactions with participants, it shapes the whole research.

The awareness of these dilemma's helped me shape the research process. It made me extra careful and weigh all my considerations and decisions three times. It made me actively look for input and feedback of one of the members of the advisory board of KIS who has an African background. These actions do not take away the uncomfortable feeling, but I consider this a positive thing. I try to embrace the discomfort and see it as a critical reviewer that keeps me sharp and aware of my biases.

4.5 Data analysis

With consent of my respondents I audio-recorded the interviews, to prevent important information getting lost, while still being able to fully focus on the interaction. Directly after the interviews I made a short summary of the interview, in which I also documented the general tone of the interview and things that were specifically notable. Afterwards, I transcribed the recordings.

The transcription of the interviews served as the basis for data-analysis, which is done with help of manual coding. Coding helps to evaluate and organize qualitative data in order to identify categories, connections and patterns (Clifford et al., 2010). This was a circular process of reading, re-reading, formulating codes, refining them several times, etc. I coded in 2 stages: first I applied open and descriptive codes, that reflect respondents' words in order to make a first selection of important sections. In the second stage of coding I used axial codes that followed key categories in order to test their relevance. The third stage of coding involved analytic codes, derived from theory.

I choose not to use a coding program, but instead simply used Microsoft Word. Organizing the data in tables occurred to me as uncomplicated, offering a clear organization that could easily be done from diverse locations and computers and didn't require additional training or getting used to a coding program after not having used it for over 5 years.

5 How are current polarization dynamics described?

This chapter presents an image of how current social developments are perceived and experienced by respondents of my research. How do they describe polarization dynamics? Which actors play a central role? How do they encounter polarization in their daily lives? As expected, the group of respondents shows great diversity, but clear similarities are found as well. I strived to display these similarities with respect to the differences.

5.1 Type of polarization

In line with my expectations, respondents generally regard polarization based on ethnicity as currently most present and relevant. This polarization is described in terms of a divide between ‘allochthones’ versus ‘autochthones’, ‘black’ versus ‘white’, ‘migrants’ versus ‘indigenous’, ‘Dutch’ versus ‘not-Dutch’, ‘Western’ versus ‘non-western’, ‘one’s own ethnic group’ versus ‘all the others’. In this chapter this category will be referred to as ‘non-western migrants’. One respondent describes the occurrence of this polarization:

“In the 25 years that I live here, I’ve seen the fading of the difference between left and right. I’ve never researched it, but I think this happened due to the fact that left and right increasingly started seeing a common enemy. And this common enemy is the Other, that doesn’t share much in his identity with the original inhabitants of this country. Then I saw a new polarization - a process and not a fait accompli - that of allochthones and autochthones.... The polarization in general of the west, of western groupings against non-western groupings.”⁴ Respondent 1

The descriptions of respondents display a clear frame of us versus them occurs, which is mainly established from the perspective of the dominant group in society. In this classification non-western migrants are labelled as outsiders and marginalized. An imaginary homogenous Dutch, European or Western culture and identity is set as the national norm and is fixed in time and place, with a non-western culture and identity as

⁴ Quotes from the interviews are translated from Dutch into English. All interviews were held in Dutch, in the translations I tried to remain as close as possible to the Dutch words, while still creating understandable English phrases.

opposed to this. The practical use of the term *allochtoon* articulates this categorization, and although the term was officially banned, the term was widely used in the interviews. The practical use of this concept, which deviates from the official definition, represents a categorization that is still experienced by respondents today. It sets apart all that is considered ‘non-western’.

“Everything that is considered developed: Japanese, Americans, Europeans, South-Koreans, Australians, Indonesian people, they are at the same level as the Dutch and are thus considered ‘autochtoon’”. Respondent 6

This shapes an ‘othering discourse’ (Jensen, 2011), that puts emphasis on the ways in which non-western groups are thought to deviate from the Dutch standards. The divide captures a mix of racial thinking and cultural hierarchies, although the Netherlands pretends colour-blindness (Essed & Trienekens, 2008). The next paragraph further elaborates on this othering-discourse.

5.1.1 Othering discourse

All respondents agreed that one side of these polarization dynamics is related to anti-immigrant sentiments and far right politics. They consider this side as the main driver of current polarization dynamics. Respondents experience that the emergence of far-right parties like LPF, PVV and FvD caused a radical shift in Dutch politics. The shift comprehends a discourse that promotes an exclusive nationalist identity and cultivates a clear distinction between those framed as ‘native citizens’ and ‘the others’ comprehended as ‘non-western migrants’.

“All that comes from within European borders is an acceptable culture for everyone and is regarded as part of ‘us’; it then doesn’t matter where you’re born. As soon as you go outside Europe’s borders, even though you’re born here⁵, it is made a big deal.” Respondent 6.

Although this categorization has been used in the 1980s and 1990s, it is only since the new millennium that respondents increasingly observe it as representing the main split

⁵ in the Netherlands

in society. This othering discourse increasingly came to problematize the presence and position of non-western migrants in Dutch society. Some respondents emphasize that differences are abused to evoke negative judgements about a group.

“I tell my daughter: you’re Dutch, you’re born here, whatever people say. She expects difficulties later, because they will see her color. And that’s not even problematic, as long as it doesn’t trigger negative reactions. That’s the problem. We’re not transparent, color is fine [...] Let there be difference and diversity, but let’s celebrate it, instead of abusing it.” Respondent 4

According to all respondents, polarizing language is now found among many different political parties and the complete Dutch political field is considered to have shifted towards the right. Thus they perceive the discourse to be normalized and accepted. Politicians are no longer confronted with their racist or polarizing statements. One respondent, who is involved in local politics articulates this development:

“People are no longer confronted, now they just say: ‘well, that is my opinion, I am allowed to have that opinion, right?’ Before there were only a few individuals with such opinions. Janmaat⁶, and he was immediately excluded: ‘Stop, we don’t do that in the Netherlands.’ And now it is common, almost all political parties make racist statements, as though it is nothing. That is how normal it has become. To play groups groups out against each other.” Respondent 7

“In public debate it is stated that the presence of certain ‘groups’ should be restricted. Hence, there is a group of us versus them. Migrants being the other group. This is an increasing trend; it is the result of the democratization of this discourse. Such statements were previously only made by Centrum Democraten⁷, but meanwhile you can hear it in the whole parliament by almost all political parties. For me this feels as growing polarization.” Respondent 1

As a result of the political shift, left-wing parties that previously represented migrants are losing their credibility to represent this group and their interests. Respondents see

⁶ Hans Janmaat was active as a politician in the 1980s and 1990s as part of the Centriumpartij and the Centrum Democraten (CD).

⁷ CD, political party that ceased to exist in 2002

how these parties also quail under the pressure of anti-immigrants sentiments, and thus no longer represent migrants interests. The feeling of not being represented in Dutch politics prevails amongst people with a migration background.

“I remember that Wilders⁸ called the PvdA⁹ the Party for Allochthones. As a result, the PvdA changed their minds, resulting in the party basically not being there for migrants anymore. You can see this in their representation; migrants were no longer listed on electable spots, because the party was afraid that this would be used by Wilders. There is less room for the vision of colored people. That’s why there is divisiveness. If I look at the parliament, I don’t see a single black person. Migrants no longer see these parties as parties for them.”

Respondent 2

Some respondents point out that it results in double standards being applied, for example in relation to the amount and type of attention for right-wing terrorism compared to Islamic terrorism or in questioning politicians loyalty in case of a double passport.

“It’s visible in situations like for example when Aboutaleb became mayor; his loyalty was questioned, because he has a second passport. But he can not discard his Moroccan passport. For Baudet and Ollongren, their loyalty is not questioned, whilst they also have a different origin. That’s where the difference is made.” Respondent 6

Away from the political arena, respondents agree that the othering-discourse has spread to the rest of society, thereby creating an increasing gap between us and them. Certain respondents emphasize how extreme-right groupings, like NVU and Pegida, feel strengthened by the political shift. It gives these organisations the idea that they have a seat at the table. Pushback against such organizations is decreasing. Nationalist thought – ideas that reflect similar sentiments as prior to World War II – are granted a podium, whereas previously these ideas were problematized, by media, politicians etc.

⁸ party leader for the PVV, Party for Freedom, eds

⁹ Partij van de Arbeid / labour party

In short, respondents experience changing attitudes towards their groups, which is shaped by discourses of difference and exclusion. They describe it as a political shift that is reflected in society, which creates a clear categorization that excludes non-western migrants from the established community. Double standards, everyday experiences with classification, underrepresentation in politics are some of the factors that make respondents feel excluded from the imagined Dutch community.

How this fixes the social identities of individual members of these groups and limits their agency and the possibilities at hand for identity formation, is further dealt with in the next chapter.

5.1.2 Counterdiscourse

Counter to the othering-discourse described in the previous paragraph, respondents identify a counterdiscourse, which is related to a movement of emancipation of migrants. This discourse expresses feelings of not being fully accepted as Dutch citizen and challenges this position. Respondents describe a general sense among members of their communities of not being allowed to have a say about the architecture of society. Gradually, they start speaking up for more equality; migrants no longer accept being the underdog, or second-class citizens.

“We live here, we pay taxes here, so we want to have a say. Basta. If we’re the subject of discussions, we want to be part of these discussions. We want to have an equal say. You can’t say: you’re allowed to live here, but we remain in charge. No, we do that together. This will give some friction, but that’s fine. Sometimes it’s like fireworks, but that will stimulate people to start thinking.” Respondent 3.

The growing numbers of people born and raised on Dutch soil, constitute a driving force of emancipation. Although respondents emphasize the fact that first generation Surinam and Caribbean migrants held the Dutch nationality from the beginning, this generation was not as ‘rooted’ in the Netherlands as their children are and they generally maintained stronger ties with their home ground. According to respondent the first generation generally put themselves aside and tried to adapt in the hope to be accepted on the long run. As a result of being born and raised here, the second and further

generations are more interwoven with the Netherlands: they regard it as their home country, they feel part of this society and, unlike their parents, they don't consider Surinam or the Antilles as a 'back-up' in case they don't succeed in the Netherlands, or don't enjoy it here (the next chapter will discuss this in more detail). Thus, issues of inequality in this society are increasingly important to this generation and lead them to be frustrated. As part of this society, they claim their place in it as equal citizens that design society together. One respondent emphasizes how he thinks the Dutch word for society: 'samenleven', expresses this idea.

"These issues are important for all of us, to create a better society (samenleving), in which we can live (leven) together (samen). The word already says it: 'samenleving'." Respondent 4

Furthermore, this group recognizes the hypocrisy in Dutch society: they're born and raised with the message of equal chances and the responsibility to take these chances. At the same time, they encounter discrimination. These experiences have been confirmed by research and are quite well documented by now, but still not much seems to be done about it.

The development of migrants challenging the unequal balance at many levels in society fuels anger of the dominant group, according to some respondents. As an explanation for the emerged frictions, several respondents subsequently link these developments to the 'Dutch attitude' of 'tolerance'. Although the Netherlands praises itself for its tolerant attitude, some respondents do not share this positive assessment. Instead they see it as basically negative and unequal; the attitude assumes people not to speak out for themselves, thus, when the attitude of tolerance is met with emancipation, this gives friction.

"It's about respect. You can't keep saying to a group: stay in your corner and don't try to say anything. That's called tolerance, and I don't want to be tolerated, I want to be accepted." Respondent 4.

"Migrants are expected to be grateful that they're here and that they're tolerated. But, tolerance is not particularly positive, right? It implies that my presence is not

bothering you, as long as I don't bother you. And that's the current situation: what fuels polarization is the emancipation of migrants. Now, the majority says: how do you dare to open your mouth? We tolerate you, so sit here and keep your mouth shut." Respondent 6

Thus there is a friction between ideas of how living together in a society should look like. The dominant group asserts that existing habits, norms and values must be maintained and other habits, norms and values can be tolerated to a certain extent. The opposite side challenges this with the idea that all citizens together design society.

These descriptions display discomfort with their position in society, inequality and exclusion, their voices not being heard and with the attitude of tolerance is widely expressed within these groups with Surinam, Caribbean and African backgrounds. This discomfort can establish a breeding ground for polarization.

5.2 Increase

Respondents generally agree with the idea that levels of polarization in the Netherlands are rising. To illustrate increased polarization, several respondents refer to their open and hospitable reception, when they arrived in the Netherlands. They assume this is in big contrast with current situations.

"I miss the Netherlands where a student whose family has nothing, because you are a refugee, but you are able to study. The only thing I had to do was perform well at school. It is also the Netherlands where name-calling to black people was not done. People would look around shocked. [...] I slowly got used to the Netherlands, with nice neighbours who took us by the hand and showed us the way. I don't see much of that Netherlands anymore, and it hurts. If we would have come to the Netherlands in this time, me, my brothers and sisters would not be able to achieve what we have achieved now. I'm very certain of that and it's frightening, such a change in 30 years. I think we need to recover that." Respondent 9

The increase is experienced through the fading of nuance, making generalizations about groups commonplace at various levels of society. Debates are getting more intense and

savage, people are no longer willing to listen to each other and to change their opinion. Some respondents see the groups at the extremes growing.

According to respondents, public debates are characterized by reactivity, an intense and extreme tone and a lack of empathy. Public figures with controversial ideas are treated inhumane and participants in debates often lack the willingness or ability to empathize with the other side.

“It is reactive, what people say and mean is not being explored. People react, but there’s not much listening. There is a lack of empathic ability to put oneself in someone else’s shoes. And as long as you can’t empathize with another’s position you cannot take steps towards each other. This applies to both camps.” Respondent 5

Throughout society, respondents agree us versus them thinking has become more apparent: it is no longer a minority opinion and is expressed at all levels of society. Respondents increasingly encounter us-them thinking in their daily lives. One respondent stresses how the experiences of his children are different from his own:

“I experience it with my children. They’re much more occupied with: what is said in society about us, foreigners. [...] They see and hear it in the media, children absorb such things. There’s a lot of talking about us versus them, migrants versus not-migrants. Whether they want it or not, they are confronted with it.” respondent 5

Other respondents pronounce surprise, because they thought certain people would not be affected by these discourses. One respondent describes how she encounters this at her work, as a consultant in a big Dutch company:

“At first, I thought that it would not affect the highly educated Dutch people I spend my time with, because they’re all able to use reason and to reflect. In conversations with colleagues - world citizens actually, because they’ve all travelled around the world - I expected them not to be seduced by this game to oppose groups of people against each other. But apparently I was wrong, the degree of education does not matter.” Respondent 6

Another respondent shows how the discourse becomes increasingly present in her relatively white, middle-class neighbourhood, through neighbours of whom she expected otherwise:

“I even had an argument with one of my neighbours, one that I always thought of as particularly open-minded. She thought it would be a good idea if all foreigners would wear a bracelet that makes visible which side they’re on, when an attack takes place. I said: are you crazy? Based on ethnicity? Do you realize what that resembles? What is the next step?” Respondent 9

The respondent here refers to the categorization of Jews under Nazi rule that was made visible through the Star of David on their clothes. Respondents often make the comparison with the dehumanization of Jews by Nazi’s and do not always show confidence that lessons learned from the past will prevent similar things from happening.

Another respondent describes how in his personal environment he sees increased us-them thinking in the context of the racism-debate. People that sympathize with migrants and that would usually criticize racism, start defending racist actions and statements with the argument that the intentions are not racist, and defend the Netherlands as a non-racist country. According to the respondent, this defensive reflex is the result of all white people being put in the box of ‘racists’. This label is too terrible for people, and makes this group feel under attack, resulting in an attitude that is less open to criticism and self-reflection. The polarization dynamics described here, indicate the role of the scapegoat, in Brandsma’s (2016) model. This implies increased tensions, in which people are forced to pick sides.

Nuances are also expressed by some respondents: the experienced increase is partly a matter of visibility, although the people at the extremes from both sides take the stage and might therefore be most visible, the biggest group is still found in between, being more nuanced and making connections between groups.

“Mainly extreme views receive attention, while there is little attention for nuanced points of view. The problem with extreme is that there is almost no room to have

another opinion about a certain topic, because then you are wrong. It is black or white and nothing in between.” Respondent 7

Two respondents otherwise explain the increase as a shift in attention: ideas, feelings that got ignored before, are now finally receiving attention. Ideas that previously were expressed in private, are now also expressed in public.

“That polarization was always there, but it now gains visibility [...] my mother's generation was busy building up something. She came here with nothing, had to provide for the family. But my generation has a little more space. So we identify issues and bring them up. This gives rise to a perception of polarization, because there are differences in opinion. But do we need to all agree?” Respondent 4

“And I would like to ask: is it strange, if you keep on stepping on someone's toes, that he'll step back at a certain moment? I don't consider it to be strange if some black people then react on that. I think that's not polarization, but human. [...] white lads have become more extreme in their behavior. We still have the same question as Gerda Havertong, back then¹⁰. So who's is polarizing? White people: they need to change their attitudes. It's mainly white people that shifted to the right. Because we started to demand more.” Respondent 4

“Polarization... people think you can't say anything to each other anymore, that the smallest thing you say will end up in a fight.... I'm not sure whether that's the case. We pretended for a long time that everything went so well, but that wasn't the case, this isn't just emerging from nothing. And the multicultural society is supposed to have failed....no, I think, now finally everything is coming to the surface. People finally say what they really think. You can call that polarizing, I think it's a relief”. Respondent 3

¹⁰ Gerda Havertong is a Dutch actress with a Surinamese background, most famous for her role as Gerda in the childrens' television-show 'Sesamstraat', a Dutch version of 'Sesame Street'. In an episode of this show in 1987 the character Gerda explained that the character of Zwarte Piet is experienced as painful and offensive for black people and asked Sinterklaas to stop with that foolish tradition.

5.3 Relevant actors

Respondents look first and foremost at politicians and their role in furthering polarization. The normalization of the othering discourse is perceived important in instigating polarization, and respondents assign an important role to politicians. Some respondents emphasize their responsibility and express disappointment: politicians are supposed to be role-models and their behavior will be reflected throughout society.

*“It is very important that leaders show their intentions. If that leaders’ intention shows that the ranks are closed and everyone is welcome, that also reflects to the rest of society. I think that our current leaders are totally unaware of the impact it has. **They** think in camps, divide society! Our leaders should have more courage. And take responsibility and realize they don’t represent a certain group, but the whole society. It is truly a task to be an elected representative.”*
Respondent 9

Many respondents envision a leadership that takes responsibility to uphold an attitude that supports connection in society, rather than feeding dissension. According to respondents, many politicians currently do the latter in order to gain support for the following elections. Respondents showed disappointment, that politicians do not seem to bother to be a representative for all Dutch citizens:

“I have the impression that political figureheads, rather than making connections between groups in society, they instead enjoy these divisions. For instance, Mark Rutte, Wilders. Everybody, dependent on the time we find ourselves in, for instance when elections are nearing, is busy with their own marketing, instead of looking at what is good for the people.” Respondent 8

Political figures like Geert Wilders and Thierry Baudet are mentioned by most respondents as figures that nourish polarization. However, not much attention is granted to their role, because meanwhile it’s assumed common knowledge. More emphasis is put on the VVD’s role in polarization.

“The VVD is reinforcing polarization by copying talking points of the right wing. They are terrified to lose power. They keep that part of their voters happy, by

copying the talking points of Wilders and Baudet. Thereby normalizing this.”
Respondent 4

Remarkable was the amount of attention for prime-minister Mark Rutte’s assumed role in polarization among respondents. In his position as prime minister he is expected to represent all Dutch citizens, instead of one specific group. His leadership is considered to nourish us-them feelings, to divide and exclude citizens with a migration background. Several respondents refer to Rutte and his ‘pleur op’-statement, with which he’s assumed to implicitly take position.

“But Rutte should unite our society in moments of crisis, instead he has chosen a side. By saying ‘bugger off’ [‘pleur op’] he has chosen a side. And precisely because of his role as prime-minister, I expected more. Without explicitly stating support for Black Pete advocates, the way he talks and the words he uses clearly show what he really thinks. He did this in his role as prime-minister, which he will be until he resigns. He is definitely a lead character in the debate, because he is not for all Dutch people. A difference is being made, that decides who is Dutch. When he made the statement, this was terrifying for me and as if he was reinforcing polarization.”
Respondent 6

Besides politicians, media is often referred to as playing a part in polarization. This is done by their choices in reportation and presentation. The way media frames things influences perceptions in society. In recent years, migrants are often for example by linking criminality to race, ethnicity, or class. A newspaper as Telegraaf is mentioned as a paper that has an agenda to polarize society, by emphasizing and enlarging the wrongdoings of minorities. Television programs that promote an exclusive type of Dutch nationalism, nourish the creation of us and them, of white dutchmen versus non-western migrants.

On the other side, anti-racism activists are mentioned for their role in polarization dynamics, representing the other end of the poles. These actors are assessed more ambiguous: respondents generally support the goal of their fight. A few respondents think that new protest voices are often experienced as polarizing in the beginning. Moreover, it is explained that in some situations a certain degree of polarization is

functional, and necessary to change the status quo. In that sense, polarizing strategies from minority groups are considered functional.

“The dominance of one group over another, has never been disturbed by negotiations alone. [...] if you want to change the status quo, you must disturb the peace and quiet of the dominant culture.” Respondent 1

The tone of some activists is however often regarded as too aggressive, and missing the willingness to come together with the rest of society, which is why they’re also identified as a polarizing voice.

“At the side of the migrants, I would say that, it is good that things are being addressed, things like Zwarte Piet activism. On the other hand, I think they are entering full force. Maybe that is what is needed sometimes, but you can not have that as your only strategy.” Respondent 5

5.4 Conclusion

Respondents generally observe an increased polarization between so-called ‘natives’ and ‘non-western migrants’ in the Netherlands. This is mainly instigated by the normalization of the othering discourse in which the presence and position of non-western migrants is increasingly problematized. Politicians are mainly held responsible for this polarization, they have a responsibility to unite society and function as role models for the people. As a result of increased polarization, respondents increasingly encounter negative attitudes towards their group in their daily lives.

This discourse is countered by the emancipation of citizens with a migration-background. When looking at theory, this can be regarded a reaction to the increased othering that non-western migrants meet. Their ethnic identity becomes increasingly salient and discomfort with inequality and exclusion may further activate this part of their identity. From this emancipation movement, a counter discourse is promoted that challenges the second-class position of non-western migrants in society and instead argues that the perspectives of this group should equally count in our society.

The impact of these developments on the identities and opinions of citizens with Surinam, Caribbean and African backgrounds are described in the following chapter.

6 The effects of polarization dynamics

In the previous chapter I described the societal developments, as expressed by respondents, that suggest an increase in us versus them thinking. Theory indicates that these developments affect perceptions of identity and citizenship. This chapter will deal with how respondents display the impacts. In the interviews we dealt with perceptions of citizenship and equality, identity and group-affiliation. Furthermore, the interviews explored how these social dynamics influence opinions on debates about racism, and more specifically Black Pete.

6.1 Citizenship and equality

Theory explains that full citizenship encompasses more than merely legal citizenship. It requires moral and active citizenship. All respondents acquired legal Dutch citizenship through naturalization. Many of them, however describe situations in which they are not allowed full citizenship. They feel excluded from what theory would refer to as active citizenship. The renewed interest in Dutch norms and values is important in this sense. Many respondents display the experience that black people are not supposed to join these conversations.

“I am willing to talk about Dutch values, but I always shrivel when somebody is talking about Dutch norms and values, because I know I am not part of it. That is sad, because I also feel Dutch. I have lived longer in the Netherlands than in Suriname. But I know that the people who underline that¹¹, don’t mean my values. It is a shame. How am I supposed to feel united with the other Dutch, if overall I am excluded.” Respondent 9

Respondents argue that members from Surinam, Carribean and African communities feel like they are not supposed to speak out about how society is arranged.

“I look at the Netherlads as a house, in which Jan, Kees and Piet live. But the doorbell rang and there stood Jhonny Martina, as a new resident. When other

¹¹ Dutch norms and values

people come to live in your house, you cannot expect to remain doing the things as you were accustomed. But it is said nowhere ‘shall we together see how we are going to live in this house?’ That is still not happening.” Respondent 4

Members of these communities are especially not supposed to speak out about exclusion and inequality, which they encounter on a regular basis; if they do, they’re dismissed as being over-sensitive. According to several respondents, the debate about Zwarte Piet illustrates that voices of citizens with a non-Western migration background are not valued as important.

“For example, in the discussion about Zwarte Piet it is allowed to say: all children will just have to accept, it is Dutch culture and we are used to this figure for ages. Then you just don’t listen to the other side of the story and how it affects black people. When they encounter Zwarte Piet and are called names.” Respondent 8

The exclusion of the voices of non-western migrants denies them their active citizenship thus prevents them from reaching full citizenship. Regarding the notion of moral citizenship, some respondents expressed trouble with integration: society asks them to assimilate, but their dark skin prevents them from reaching this target.

“It is said that you should integrate, but what is meant is assimilation. But it is impossible for me to assimilate. There are migrants that completely assimilate, but they are still being questioned: where do you really come from? Just because your skin has a different colour, you will always be perceived as different.” Respondent 6

Respondents mainly emphasize the importance of ethnicity in this sense. Their ethnicity is visible through their dark skin, and respondents experience this as an externally imposed obstacle to be accepted as a full citizen. It should furthermore be noted that ethnicity is mainly problematic for national identification when this ethnicity is classified as non-western and thus far away from neutral.

In addition, the othering discourse that problematizes their presence and position in society, makes them question their citizenship. Respondents explain that members of

Surinam, Caribbean and African communities increasingly come to the conclusion that they are not, and will never be accepted as full member of Dutch society. Policies that implicitly say that they are not welcome and regular confrontations with statements that display aversion towards non-western migrants sent out a message that it's impossible for them to be fully accepted as a Dutch citizen. They feel unwelcome, not at home and question their place in society.

“You start questioning whether you’re really Dutch, apart from my legal Dutch citizenship... Where I’m from, whereto I have to ‘pleur op’ [bugger off], I’ll have to give that more attention, because I don’t feel safe here anymore. I see this with many migrants. At first, they are willing to do everything to make this their country, but every day they bring the message that this is not our country. Politicians and other people tell them this is not their country: their color disqualifies them to be Dutch.” Respondent 2.

Another issue that several respondents raise, is political representation; members of Surinam, Caribbean and African communities see their interests no longer defended by the dominant group. Furthermore, political parties did not put members from their groups on electable spots, meaning their voices are not represented in the parliament. Despite the idea that the government is supposed to protect all Dutch citizens, respondents observe decreasing levels of trust in the government to protect their group.

Respondents describe how within their communities disappointment and anger is expressed that the Dutch promise of equality is not fulfilled. For example, when it comes to discrimination or racism, respondents observe that many members in their communities experience the disadvantages of this day by day: in education, finding a job, etc. Despite plenty of research that support these experiences, it does not appear that authorities give much priority to achieve changes in this respect.

6.1.1 National identification?

Within that frame of salient discourses problematizing their presence and position in society, their voices being excluded from debates about society and their skin-color

disqualifying to be part of the imagined national community, how do members of Surinam, Caribbean and African communities perceive their space for national identification?

According to many respondents it occurs that the general conclusion of migrants about the country changes. The Netherlands is increasingly dismissed for being a racist country. The initial admiration for this country makes place for disappointment, for a part of their communities this leads to the fading levels of national identification in their communities.

“These youngsters¹² say literally: ‘no, I am not Dutch, I am 1104, Holendrecht¹³. And you are also not Dutch, you are Curacaos”. Respondent 4.

At the same time, by speaking out for more equality, a significant part of these communities claim their position as Dutch citizens, and challenge the unequal position of non-western migrants.

“It’s a dilemma: sometimes you are really aggrieved about the discussions in which your loyalty is being questioned. But at the same time you are going to fight hard to show the established that you belong here. [...] The migrant now starts to open his mouth; the community starts saying: we are here and we are part of this society.” Respondent 6

This reflects a national identification and an attempt to take up active citizenship, despite general discouragement.

6.2 Dichotomized identities

Respondents experience that identity increasingly perceived as one-dimensional instead of consisting of multiple layers. This is reflected in terminology: you are either allochtoon, or autochtoon, you either have a western background, or a non-western background. An example that several respondents mention is the question of loyalty,

¹² Respondent refers to Caribbean youngsters that live in segregated neighborhoods.

¹³ Referring to the neighborhood they live in.

emphasized in the context of citizens carrying two passports, contributed to this. Again, loyalty only seems to be problematized for citizens with a non-western migration background and for this group of people, the question of loyalty continuous to be problematized for the following generations, despite the fact that they were born in the Netherlands.

“Loyalty is being claimed exceptionally, you are supposed to have only one loyalty, you can not have two, three or more loyalties. What is requested from us: leave your group and come to us. But for migrants, surviving in one identity is impossible. I have to survive in multiple identities. If you choose for one identity, this means betrayal of the other identities.” Respondent 1

Similarly, within Surinam, Caribbean and African communities there is a trend in which identities are defined increasingly as dichotomous.

“They say: you should make a choice for your own group, I am forced to make a choice that I don’t want to make. I don’t have to belong with only one group, against the other group. My colour should not determine which group I am part of.” Respondent 2

Thus, both within Surinam, Caribbean, African communities and in the broader societal context, identities become increasingly defined as dichotomous. Subsequently, increased ethnic identification might be encouraged.

6.3 Identity salience

The interviews display the experience that ethnic identity is increasingly accentuated through the normalization of the far-right othering-discourse. The categorization into non-western migrant puts emphasis on what makes them different. This displays in daily situations as well as in politics where group stereotyping is increasingly present.

“If there are certain discussions, people ask my opinion as ‘the other’. What is your opinion on the Zwarte Piet discussion? At work, while at that moment I do

not feel like talking about it, I am there to work. You are considered as different, while instead you wish to be seen as a normal employee.” Respondent 8

Respondents also experience that it becomes more common to be judged based upon (negative) group stereotypes, which makes respondents feel pushed into a corner based on their skin-color. Statements that emphasize their otherness and even racist statements become increasingly visible, open, direct and shameless, making ethnic identity more salient. This comes on top of the experience that people with a different skin-color will always be questioned where they are really from, despite being born and raised in the Netherlands.

6.4 Ethnic identification

Respondents described several effects of polarization on how identity is perceived and which possibilities are at hand for identity construction. Othering discourses and group judgement increase the salience of ethnic identity, identities have come to be perceived as more dichotomous, national identification and full citizenship is complicated. Theory predicts that these factors contribute to the activation of ethnic identity.

Respondents emphasize that many citizens with Surinam, Caribbean and African roots identify with both the Dutch identity and the identity linked to their country of origin.

“I reckon I am both. Admittedly, I was not born in the Netherlands, but I have accepted the Netherlands as my home.” Respondent 6

Respondents, however, admit that ethnic identification is encouraged as a result of the described factors. As a result, respondents generally observe decreased orientation towards the Netherlands, which is substituted by increased orientation towards subgroups.

“Because people feel that they are not accepted as Dutch, they increasingly focus on their own group. If someone talks about Dutch norms and values, and I am not acknowledged in this conversation, I’ll have to focus on my other norms and

values and my other identity. So, my Afro-Surinam identity becomes more important. Respondent 9

“If I cannot be part of society, if my presence is always problematized, can I then be myself? When I came to the Netherlands, I tried to blend as much as possible, to not look exceptional. Although I inevitably look exceptional. Now I am prouder of my Congolese background, I always have been, but now I stopped styling my hair, I have my curls the way they grow.” Respondent 6

Stereotyping by other groups has lead to increased accentuation of groups, which consequently has lead to increased identification with the subgroup. Often these subgroups are related to the countries of origin, but this can be broader or organized around other topics. An example mentioned by several respondents is the black hair movement, that celebrates natural black hairstyles and contributes to the emancipation of the self-image of black people.

“Black woman find each other in the black hair community. They exchange experiences, help each other. That’s where people find connection, apart from their ethnicity and where they come from.” Respondent 8

Religion is also mentioned as an important orientation of group-affiliation. In the movement against racism, bonds are created between Surinam, Caribbean and diverse African communities.

“They increasingly seek each other’s support in the fight for better. Because we see this is a multi-headed animal, and on your own, you will not make it. Thus, Caribbean Dutch’ increasingly work together with Surinamese and Africans.” Respondent 4

Hence, new ethnic categories are created in the Dutch context. Mainly people who have lived in the Netherlands for a long period, appear more flexible in their group affiliation.

Some respondents refer to a difference between citizens with a Surinam and Caribbean background, and those with an African background, as a result of colonial history. Coming from former Dutch colonies, the first group already held Dutch citizenship before arriving in the Netherlands. Although feelings of not being fully

accepted also prevail in these communities, they express a strong awareness of their right to be accepted as a full citizen. Surinam and Caribbean reactions are more likely to express anger and frustration towards Dutch society, and display a motivation to change Dutch society. This indicates a strong connection with the Netherlands.

6.5 Affective polarization

Affective polarization refers to the extent to which people feel connected to certain groups and at the same time feel aversion towards other groups. Respondents observe an increased focus on subgroups within communities, which indicates increased levels of affective polarization. Respondents observe that subgroups have increasing close bonds and similarly take distance from the rest of society.

“People with these experiences pull towards each other, so the group becomes closer. Within the group there are more close bonds and the group, as such, takes distance from the rest.” Respondent 5

This is encouraged by external factors, such as the othering discourse.

“If the Dutch identity is increasingly emphasized by institutes, black people will increasingly pull back, whether they want it or not. This also applies for those who wish to connect. Their loyalty will also decrease, because they cannot permit to remain loyal. It has no benefits; they are simply not wanted.” Respondent 9

At the same time, respondents feel internal pressure, which requests them to unconditionally choose the side of the subgroup.

“Fear is being used to say: you should belong to your own group. The choice for this group is then supposed to offer safety: if you belong to the group, you can receive protection against the other group, who intends to stigmatize you.” Respondent 2

Respondents describe the appearance of a with-or-against us rhetoric: who is not with us, is against us. And if you do not choose for your group, you get condemned to the other group, whilst these others - citizens without migration background- do not

completely accept you. Most respondents maintain a position that resists the dichotomous categories; they occupy some sort of 'in-between identity'. Respondents assert that resisting the social pressures to belong to a group, requires much confidence or independence from group membership. As polarization and social pressure increases, space for these identities, will decline.

6.6 Ideological polarization

Ideological polarization is the aspect of polarization which describes increased disagreement. It is thought that polarization can play a positive role in how the interests of specific, and especially minority, groups are looked after (RMO, 2009). It can stimulate the process of uncovering problems and its causes, and activate people for change. At the level of opinions, respondents describe developments. Most respondents think that polarization dynamics influence opinions and the expression of these opinions by members within their communities.

According to respondents there is a part of the group that becomes more careful. First of all in order to protect the image of their group, because this image is already stigmatized. They are aware that their individual actions can come to represent their whole group. In addition, some members of their communities may be careful in expressing their opinion, in order to protect their professional career. It is mentioned that Jerry Afriyie, one of the leading figures in the movement against Zwarte Piet, lost his job for his role in this debate.

Despite this, respondents have the impression that in general, members of their communities are coming to occupy more extreme positions. This indicates increased ideological polarization. An important external cause is the normalization of the othering-discourse that instigates feelings of not being fully accepted. Also, the increased encounters with inequality, discrimination and exclusion contribute to extremer opinions.

“If you look at all this research, about employment rates of migrants and the almost constant discrimination of members of their group, I notice that people take in extreme positions, because they say: I will never be accepted.”

An important internal cause is the before-mentioned social pressure of the with-or-against rhetoric. It was remarkable that almost all respondents referred to this rhetoric. This social pressure is related to the anti-racism activists, who request unconditional support, without nuance. Respondents experience little acknowledgement for people who fight for the same cause, but with different strategies. They experience that people with a different or more moderate opinion are being excluded. A few respondents even mention that activists drop friends because of their deviant opinion. A bridgebuilding role is also difficult and makes unpopular: bridgebuilders are regarded as traitors, naïve, or as sell-out. Moderate views are also difficult, because they are not completely loyal to that of the activists.

“I try to discuss difficult topics - like racism and injustice - without polarizing language, in a reconciling way. This made me not very popular in the black community. Some people wish that I would use a harsher voice. But I reason that we should also listen to the reasons why someone – who defends Zwarte Piet – is so connected to history. And not immediately call them racist. Some black people think I am pleasing white people. Whilst I am trying to cultivate understanding for each other. For this reason, we should not just point fingers.” Respondent 2

“You can observe this in the public debate about racism and discrimination: you are either for or against, camp a or camp b. And black people are immediately considered to be a traitor or a bounty¹⁴ if they express nuance or show understanding for the other side. I think this is unfair, because everyone should be allowed to have his own opinion. Is there then no diversity within the black community? Respondent 7

¹⁴ Bounty: black on the outside, white on the inside

Another respondent, who occupies a more activist position, also articulates this rhetoric:

“I hate the middle group, that is not possible. In a situation where someone is bad for you, you can not stand in the middle. The opponent already positioned you at the opposite pole, the middle ground is knocked away,. You are standing counter to him, because this person wants to eliminate you. You have to fight, you can not go stand in between.” Respondent 4

As a result, space for different opinions and nuance decreases within the group. People with moderate voices pull back and keep their opinions silent, because they are afraid that they will be considered to be a traitor. Respondents also mention the importance of visibility in this respect: they perceive an overrepresentation of extreme opinions in conventional and social media. The attention for extreme voices puts social pressure on people with moderate voices, because they believe their moderate opinion is not socially accepted.

“I believe most people are moderate, but there is not much attention for moderation, so the attention you see is not a reflection of the real state of mind. And because it is not reflected, influence is exerted on the moderate people.” Respondent 7

Besides silencing, respondents also observe that opinions in their communities move in more extreme directions. To resist social pressures you have to be strong and independent, according to respondents. The pressure that is experienced is in line with theory states that increased polarization will reinforce the question of loyalty.

“This is a huge harmful effect of polarization: the silent majority is forced to join one of the poles. And if you don’t choose explicitly, the choice is made for you, so you don’t belong to the group anymore. But you also don’t belong to the other group, so what will you do?” Respondent 9

At the same time, respondents emphasize that new protest voices are always experienced as polarizing and that activist emancipation of migrants is necessary to equalize unequal structures in society. Some respondents think that this emancipation needs extreme voices in order to succeed. Moreover, activism is often equal to going full-

force in one direction and respondents also see the added value of this strategy. Many respondents have the impression that activism already triggered a broader awareness of inequality in society. Nonetheless, they would be pleased to see more cooperation with people who occupy different strategies.

6.7 Conclusion

The interviews with nine respondents indicate that polarization dynamics affect citizens with Surinam, Caribbean and African backgrounds in the ways they construct their identities. The most important factor brought forward in the interviews is that these individuals do not feel recognized as full Dutch citizen, which has two important factors.

First, respondents describe how they are always recognized as ‘others’ in Dutch society. Their black skin makes up for a visibly differentiation and respondents experience this factor as an obstacle to be recognized as full Dutch citizen. This phenomenon is not primarily caused by polarization and the othering discourse; respondents regard this as inherently linked to the way Dutch citizenship in practice is expressed. The normalization of the othering discourse does, however, lead to more regular situations in which respondents and members of their communities are being pointed at their otherness. Othering becomes more constant and explicit, which makes it more relevant and harder to ignore. In addition, encounters with discrimination are more frequent, which also instigates feelings of exclusion.

These findings relate to theory in which national identification is discussed. Dutch identity is based on ethnicity, roots, cultural practices, and moral disposition, which creates a ‘thick’ notion of national identity (Gorashi, 2017; Kremer, 2013). Respondents mainly emphasize the importance of ethnicity in this sense. Their ethnicity is visible through their dark skin, and respondents experience this as an externally imposed obstacle for national identification. It should furthermore be noted that ethnicity is mainly problematic for national identification when this ethnicity is classified as non-western and thus far away from neutral.

A second factor which was clearly emphasized in the interviews, was the experience that members of Surinam, Caribbean and African communities are excluded from the national debate about Dutch norms, values and culture. When it comes to these kinds of topics, the input from members of their communities is not valued. Theory emphasizes that full citizenship encompasses active citizenship (Schinkel & van Houdt, 2010). The exclusion of citizens with a migration background from the public debate obstructs their active role to government affairs and thus forms an obstacle to active citizenship and subsequently full citizenship.

Besides not feeling recognized as full Dutch citizens, the normalization of the othering discourse increases ethnic identity salience. Respondents describe that citizens with Surinam, Caribbean and African backgrounds regularly find themselves in situations in which their otherness is emphasized. Encounters with othering have become more constant and explicit, which leads to increased salience of ethnic identity.

Citizens with Surinam, Caribbean and African backgrounds are thus denied full citizenship and national identification, and they increasingly encounter othering. Besides exclusion from the imagined national community, theory suggests that this will encourage stronger ethnic identification. Respondents indeed observe that members of their communities increasingly focus on subgroups. These subgroups are often based on the country of origin, but not necessarily. New ethnic categories are formed, for example based on a shared goal to fight racism against black citizens. Increased ethnic identification indicates increased affective polarization from the side of Surinam, Caribbean and African communities.

Besides external factors that encourage ethnic identification, the interviews also indicate internal factors for this development. Most respondents experience the presence of social pressure to explicitly choose for the subgroup. This is framed as a with-or-against rhetoric: you are either with or against us. This reproduces dichotomous categories and furthers affective polarization. Because this pressure is specifically exercised in the context of debates about racism and inequality, it also affects ideological polarization. They experience social pressure to unconditionally support the side of the activists. Although all respondents support the case for more equality and against

racism, they feel that space for nuance and diverse strategies within these debates is decreasing. Respondents observe a trend in which opinions within Surinam, Caribbean and African communities move into more extreme directions and nuanced voices become silent. This indicates increasing ideological polarization at their side.

Both the othering discourse and the counter-discourses thus constrain the possibilities at hand for identification. Despite these pressures, respondents describe that other members manage to maintain a position that escapes these dichotomous notions of identity. Respondents themselves, who have been selected for this research as representing the ‘middle group’ in polarization dynamics, mostly occupy such ‘in-between identities’. They describe themselves as ‘strong’, ‘confident’, ‘independent’ individuals, with a strong ‘moral compass’, which enables them to occupy an ‘in-between identity’. This is however not easy for all members of their communities. The increased with-or-against pressures destabilize the ‘middle ground’. Respondents observe that many individuals are more vulnerable to social pressure; they conform to the other-ascribed identity and follow the subgroup.

7 Conclusion and discussion

While finishing this thesis, the Dutch ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement gains historical momentum with protests around the country. Induced by the killing of a black man in the United States, huge numbers of Dutch citizens, Black and White, take the streets to protest against racism and demand for policy that counters institutional racism in the Netherlands. These protests take place in a time in which the political and societal climate is often referred to as increasingly polarized. This study focused on the experiences from members of Surinamese, Caribbean and African communities with polarization dynamics in the Netherlands and how this affects their identification-processes.

Participants in this study described that they experience an increased polarization between so-called ‘non-western migrants’ and so-called ‘natives’ in the Netherlands. This is instigated by an othering discourse that differentiates ‘non-western migrants’ or ‘allochtonen’ from ‘natives’ or ‘autochtonen’, and increasingly problematizes the presence and position of ‘non-western migrants’. This reflects in their daily lives, by increased encounters with discrimination, racism and negative attitudes towards their group. Respondents also identify the advancement of a counter discourse, that is related to a movement of emancipation of black citizens. This discourse challenges the othering discourse and the second-class position of non-western migrants in society; instead it promotes equality and inclusion, and emphasizes that it should be normal that the perspectives of this group count equally in our society.

The processes of identity construction of members from Surinamese, Caribbean and African communities take place under influence of these discourses that are experienced as increasingly polarizing. On one hand, salient othering discourses restrain their possibility for identification with the imagined national community. Respondents and members of their communities express that they do not feel recognized as full Dutch citizen, because they feel excluded from discussions about Dutch norms, values and culture, which restrains their participation as active citizens. Additionally, the othering discourse stimulates racialized and dichotomous concepts of national and ethnic identity, which obstructs the identification of non-western migrants with the national

imagined community and their assimilation or integration into this community. Furthermore, increased encounters with discrimination and exclusion increases the salience of their 'otherness', or ethnic identity.

At the same time, respondents describe that identity is increasingly being dichotomized within their own communities. Mainly within the context of debates about racism and discrimination, respondents perceive that a 'with or against' rhetoric is pronounced: you are either with or against us. They feel as though all black people are supposed to unconditionally support activism against racism and inequality. Although respondents stand against racism and inequality, this context hardly offers space for nuance, critical notes or other strategies to pursue the same goal. Besides that, it reproduces dichotomous notions of ethnic identities, which hinder multiple identifications in which both Dutch national identity and ethnic identity can be expressed.

Both the othering discourse and the counter-discourses thus constrain the possibilities at hand for identification. As a result, respondents generally observe an increased focus on subgroups amongst their communities. These subgroups are often based on the country of origin, but not necessarily. New ethnic categories are formed; for example by uniting for a shared goal to further the emancipation of black citizens. Besides these reactions, respondents describe that some members manage to maintain a position that escapes these dichotomous notions of identity. Respondents themselves, who have been selected for this research as representing the 'middle group' in polarization dynamics, mostly occupy such 'in-between identities'. They describe themselves as 'strong', 'confident', 'independent' individuals, with a strong 'moral compass', which enables them to occupy an 'in-between identity'. This is however not easy for all members of their communities. The increased with-or-against pressures destabilize the 'middle ground'. Respondents observe that many individuals are more vulnerable to social pressure; they conform to the other-ascribed identity and follow the subgroup.

7.1 Indications for praxis

These findings indicate that identification based on multiple identities, including national and ethnic identities, becomes increasingly difficult for citizens with Surinamese, Caribbean and African backgrounds. The polarizing ways of thinking about ethnic and cultural differences has led to increased cultural contrasts, in which it becomes virtually impossible to consider individuals as separate from their ethnic categories. Although categories are useful to make sense of the world, dichotomous categories have restraining effects on individuals. The in-between identities that most respondents occupy, are hardly recognized in the categorizations that are promoted by dominant polarizing discourses, whilst, like one respondent stated: *“You will benefit if you can embrace both cultures, it is not healthy if you push aside a part of your identity.”* Besides the restraining effects of the dichotomous categories on individual identity construction, it also results in increasing affective polarization in society. Quantitative research shows that groups of people feel increasingly removed from each other, and respondents in this study underline these findings. In addition, a part of the ‘legal national imagined community’ feels excluded this community: by not being able to participate as active citizens and by the exclusive notion of national identity, they are hindered to attain full citizenship.

Respondents express that the overrepresentation of extreme voices in the public sphere does not represent the social reality, yet it does affect individuals in how they construct their identities. If more space would be granted for moderate voices, that withhold from exacerbating group identities an us-versus-them thinking, this might already increase the space for the multiple identities of individuals.

Furthermore, it would help if all citizens, including the groups with a migration background, would be considered full participants in Dutch society, instead of second-class citizens; if their concerns would be taken equally serious as the concerns of ‘natives’ and if politicians realize that they equally represent citizens with and without a migration background. The idea that migrants should be grateful that Dutch society tolerates their presence, seems to be quite persistent and hinders to regard them as full

citizens. Policy against discrimination, on schools, the labor market, policework, etc., is needed to support the full participation of all citizens.

Most of all, I would argue that individual members from Surinamese, Caribbean and African communities would benefit from more fluid categorizations, to construct a well-balanced social identity. If the dominant discourse upholds a categorization in which Dutch culture is regarded superior to the deviant culture of non-western migrants, these groups will remain outsiders in our society. In order to approach and treat all Dutch citizens as full members of society, it will prove helpful to let go of dichotomous categorial ways of thinking about diverse ethnic groups in society. A different approach to national identity might be necessary to do so. Dutch identity is based on ethnicity, roots, cultural practices, and moral disposition, which creates a ‘thick’ notion of national identity (Gorashi, 2017; Kremer, 2013). A more fluid and open “thin” concept of national identity would allow for other forms of identification, such as emotional identification with the country, normative and functional identification. Furthermore, it allows diversity and cultural differences within a national identity and will enable people to cultivate a sense of belonging to multiple identity categories. In addition, this would also enable the beforementioned: to consider migrants full participants in Dutch society.

The national monument for the history of slavery in the Netherlands consists of 3 parts, that symbolize the past, present and future. The past stands for the history of slavery, the present for breaking the barriers. The front figure stands as a big, strong and glorious individual, symbolizing freedom and a better future. Although slavery in the former Dutch colonies was ended one-and-a-half century ago, participants in this study express that exclusion and inequality is still a daily reality for black citizens in Dutch society. The dichotomous categories that are reinforced from outside their communities and within it, restrain them from building an identity that unites Dutch elements of their identity with elements from their ethnic identity. As such, new chains have replaced the chains of slavery, and the front figure in the monument still represents a future-dream. Individuals of Surinamese, Caribbean and African communities might benefit if the chains of dichotomous categories would be broken.

7.2 Suggestions for future research

This research had an explorative character, with quite a broad span. As such, it remained rather at the surface of these topics. It would be interesting to build upon findings of this study in a way that allows deeper insight. The complex process of identity-construction of individuals with Surinamese, Caribbean and African backgrounds under current polarization dynamics could be more extensively researched. This research has focused on ‘black communities’ in the Netherlands, and as such, the communities with a different historical relation to the Netherlands, have been put together. I would recommend in future research to pay more attention to these differences. Furthermore, it would be interesting to find out what factors help individuals resist to conform to dichotomous identity categories, in order to occupy an in-between identity. I chose not to include the concept ‘sense of belonging’, but the interviews indicate that belonging to the national imagined community is affected by polarization dynamics and this might form an interesting starting point for future research.

The nine interviewed respondents are (of course) not a representative sample of all the Surinamese, Caribbean and African citizens in the Netherlands. However, the results do give insight into the lives of members of these communities and further research on this topic is essential. As key-figures, respondents made statements about bigger parts of their communities, but it remains interesting whether the developments they described are experienced as such by individuals of their communities. Quantitative research could point out whether the developments are indeed reflected in more representative samples of these communities. It would be particularly interesting to focus on individuals with lower levels of education. Almost all respondents in this research had a university degree, but they did emphasize that they believe members of their communities with lower education levels to be more vulnerable for the social pressures exercised. Furthermore, local comparisons could make interesting research material. At the local level polarization dynamics are differently pronounced, which might affect how they are perceived by individuals and how their identities are affected. It would be interesting to further focus on these local differences.

7.3 Reflection on the research process

Writing this thesis has been a very educative process. I spent quite some time finding a topic that appeared interesting enough to devote my master-thesis to. Once I found my topic, I was lucky enough to find an internship organization that shared my interest and that supported me in conducting the research. However, my enthusiasm may have also led me to dive into the next steps of constructing an interview guide and conducting the interviews, without properly reflecting on how I would analyze the data afterwards. I consciously choose for an open design, that would allow me to explore new perspectives, that didn't steer much towards presumptions. This suits my open approach to phenomena: I think that by specifying and narrowing down, you might also miss the opportunity to find things unforeseen. But the broad scope of the interviews made it sometimes hard to interpret the data and to identify patterns. Narrowing down a bit more would have allowed more deepening understanding.

Another important hurdle was to somehow do justice to the rich stories that respondents shared with me, to describe patterns without falling into generalizations that didn't reflect their complex realities. Being an outsider of the community I studied, certainly didn't help. I was aware of this positionality when I designed my research and prepared on how this would or could affect finding respondents and the interviews. My sincere interest in other perspectives and experiences then my own mitigated these concerns. During the interviews I experienced some hesitation in certain situations due to my position as an outsider, but in general I didn't experience a barrier between me and the respondents. Some respondents afterwards expressed that my attitude showed true interest in their perspective and this encouraged them to share their story. Somehow I did not foresee, however, that the stage of interpreting the interviews, would give rise to discomfort about my position as an outsider. I had continuous doubts about my ability to interpret their stories in a way that they would approve.

Furthermore, questions and ideas about right and wrong played a part in this research. It was my presumption that polarization is a negative process, which steered my whole research. While in the process of interviewing, I started doubting, whether

polarization on the side of a somewhat marginalized group in society, might not be necessary to change the status quo. I saw comparisons with the feminist movement, that also used quite radical and polarizing strategies to achieve more equality. Linking the anti-racism activists to polarization dynamics did feel somewhat uncomfortable, because I also see the difficult position they occupy, in which it is hard to get attention for their concerns.

In conclusion, I am very grateful for the critical and valuable comments of my supervisor. This helped me in finding the right focus, and helped me get back on track when I got stuck in the process.

Literature

- Bellaart, H.B., Broekhuizen, J. & van Dongen, S. (2016). *Boze burgers: omgaan met weerstand tegen de multiculturele samenleving*. Utrecht: Verwey-Jonker Instituut
- Bendixsen, S.K.N. (2013). Negotiating, resisting and (re)constructing othering. In: Bendixsen, S.K.N.. *The Religious Identity of Young Muslim Women in Berlin: An Ethnographic Study*. Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill N.V.
- Bernard, H.R. (2006). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Lanham, USA, AltaMira Press
- Berry, J.W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46(1), 5-68.
- Bosma, U., Jones, G., Laarman, C., Vermeulen, F., Heelsum van, A., Alferink, M., Pattynama, P. (2012). *Post-colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Boutellier, H. (2020). <https://fsw.vu.nl/nl/nieuws-agenda/nieuws/2020/jan-mrt/13-01-nieuwe-leerstool.aspx>
- Brandsma, B. (2016). *Polarisatie: Inzicht in de dynamiek van wij-zij denken*. Schoonrewoerd: BB in Media.
- Branscombe, N.R., Schmitt, M.T. and Harvey, R.D. (1999). Perceiving Pervasive Discrimination Among African Americans: Implications for Group Identification and Well-Being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77(1): 135-149
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research: A practical guide for beginners*. London: Sage Publications ltd

- Brubaker, R. (2004). In the name of the nation: reflections on nationalism and patriotism , *Citizenship Studies*, 8:2, 115-127
- Bruquetas-Callejo, M., Garcés-Mascareñas, B., Penninx, R., & Scholten, P. (2007). Policymaking related to immigration and integration. The Dutch Case. *IMISCOE Working Paper: Country Report*, No. 15.
- Castles, S. (1986). The Guest-Worker in Western Europe – An Obituary. *The International Migration Review*, 20(4), 761-778.
- Catthoor, K., de Hert, M., Peuskens, J. (2003). Stigma bij schizofrenie: een literatuuroverzicht. *Tijdschrift voor psychiatrie*, 45: 87-96
- Clifford, N., Cope, M., Gillespie, T., & French, S. (2010). *Key Methods in Geography*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Davidovic, M., Van Donselaar, J., Rodrigues, P.R. & Wagenaar, W. (2008). Het extreemrechtse en discriminatoire gehalte van de PVV. In: Van Donselaar, J. & Rodrigues, P. R. (eds.). *Monitor Racisme en Extremisme. Achtste rapportage*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Davis, A.J. (2012). *The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties' Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism*. Retrieved 22-02-2019 from: <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/21719>
- Dekker, P. & den Ridder, J. (2019). *Burgerperspectieven 2019*|1. Den Haag, The Netherlands.
- della Porta, D. & Keating, M. (2008). How many approaches in the social sciences? An epistemological introduction. In: D. della Porta & M Keating (eds.). *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*. New York, USA, Cambridge University Press

DiMaggio, P., Evans, J. & Bryson, B. (1996). Have American's Social Attitudes Become More Polarized? *American Journal of Sociology*: 102(3), 690-755

ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance) (2019). (2008) *Third Report on the Netherlands*. Strasbourg: ECRI.

Elias, N. & Scotson, J. L. (1994). *The established and the outsiders: A sociological enquiry into community problems* London: SAGE Publications Ltd in association with Theory, Culture and Society

Ellian, A. (2009). Polarisatie als een wezenlijk aspect van politiek. In: Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (Ed.). *Polarisatie: Bedreigend en verrijkend*. Amsterdam: SWP, pp. 12-30

Entzinger H. (2003). The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism: The Case of the Netherlands. In: Joppke C., Morawska E. (eds) *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship: Immigrants in Liberal Nation-States. Migration, Minorities and Citizenship*. Palgrave Macmillan, London

Eriksen, T.H. (2002[1993]). *Ethnicity and nationalism: Anthropological perspectives*. Londen: Pluto Press.

Essed, P. & Trienekens, S. (2008). 'Who wants to feel white?' Race, Dutch culture and contested identities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31(1), 52 – 72.

Esteban, J., & Ray, D. (1994). On the measurement of polarization. *Econometrica*, 62, 819-851.

Fearon, J. and Laitin, D. (2000). *Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity*. *International Organization*, 54(4), 845–877.

Fennema, M. & van der Brug, W. (2006). Nederlandse anti-immigrantenpartijen in Europees perspectief. In: F. van Tubergen & I. Maas (Eds.). *Allochtonen in*

- Nederland in internationaal perspectief* (pp. 63-88). (Special Issue van Mens en Maatschappij; No. 81). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1986). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. New York: Touchstone
- Gorashi, H. (2003). *Multiple Identities between continuity and change: The narratives of Iranian women in Exile*. Focaal – European Journal of Anthropology, 42: 63-75
- Gorashi, H. (2009). Polariseren in het Nederland van nu betekent olie op het vuur. In: Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, *Polarisatie. Bedreigend en verrijkend*. Amsterdam: SWP, pp. 153-170.
- Gorashi, H. (2014). Racism and “the Ungrateful Other” in the Netherlands. *Thamyris/Intersecting*, 27, 101-116
- Ghorashi, H. (2017). *Negotiating belonging beyond rootedness: unsettling the sedentary bias in the Dutch culturalist discourse*. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 40(14): 2426-2443
- Gordon, R.L. (1998 [1992]). *Basic Interviewing Skills*. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press Inc.
- Herbert, D. (2014). Racism in the Netherlands: A Social Scientific Analysis of the Dynamics of the Dutch Multicultural Backlash. *Frame*, 27(2), 85-104
- Hogg, M.A., Vaughan, G.M. (2002). *Social Psychology*. London: Prentice Hall
- Hyndman, J. & A. Mountz (2007). Refuge or Refusal: The Geography of Exclusion. in: D. Gregory and A. Pred (eds.) *Violent Geographies*. New York, Routledge.
- Iyengar, S., Sood, G. & Lelkes, Y. (2012). *Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization*. Public Opinion Quarterly, 76(3): 405–431

- Jaspers, E., Londen, M. V., & Lubbers, M. (2009). Een longitudinale studie naar veranderde etnocentrische reacties in Nederland. *Migrantenstudies*, 25(2), 106-127
- Jensen, S.Q. (2011). Othering, identity formation and agency. *Qualitative Studies*, 2(2): 63-78.
- Kian, L. and Ghorashi, H. (2018). Sometimes I Feel More Moroccan than Dutch': Identity and Belonging in Second-Generation Iranian-Dutch Women. In: K. Davis, H. Ghorashi and P. Smets (Eds.) *Contested Belonging: Spaces, Practices, Biographies*, Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 333-356.
- Kottak, C.P. (2006). *Anthropology: the exploration of human diversity*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies Inc.
- Kremer, M. (2013). *The Netherlands: from national identity to plural identifications*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- Link, B., Struening, E., Cullen, F. (1989) *A modified labelling theory approach to mental disorders: an empirical assessment*. American Sociological Review, 54, pp. 400-423
- Lubbers, M. (2009). Inleiding – Ver rechts in Nederland (special issue). *Migrantenstudies*, 24(3), 168-176
- Lucassen, L. (2009). Het verleden als laboratorium: Immigratie en polarisatie in West-Europa sinds 1850. In: Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (Ed.). *Polarisatie: Bedreigend en verrijkend*. Amsterdam: SWP, pp. 12-30
- Mepschen, P. (2019). A discourse of displacement: super-diversity, urban citizenship, and the politics of autochthony in Amsterdam, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42:1, 71-88

- Meijer, R., de Winter-Koçak, S., Distelbrink, M. & Noor, S. (2018). *This is me: Methodiekonderbouwing*. Utrecht, The Netherlands: Kennisplatform Integratie & Samenleving
- Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties. (2011). *Actieplan polarisatie en radicalisering*.
- Moors, H., Balogh, L., van Donselaar, J. & de Graaff, B. (2009). *Polarisatie en radicalisering in Nederland: Een verkenning van de stand van zaken in 2009*. Tilburg, the Netherlands: IVA.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion. *Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 43-51
- Noor, S. (2016). *Vrouwelijke ISIS-gangers: waarom gaan ze?* Retrieved 23-02-2019 from: <https://www.kis.nl/publicatie/vrouwelijke-isis-gangers-waarom-gaan-ze>
- NOS (2019, November 7) *Rechter wijst bezwaar tegen roetveegpieten bij landelijke intocht af*. Retrieved from: <https://nos.nl/artikel/2309451-rechter-wijst-bezwaar-tegen-roetveegpieten-bij-landelijke-intocht-af.html>
- Oberschall, A. (2000). The manipulation of ethnicity: from ethnic cooperation to violence and war in Yugoslavia. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23(6), 982-1001.
- Prins, B. (2002). The Nerve to Break Taboos: New Realism in the Dutch Discourse on Multiculturalism. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 3&4, 363-79.
- RMO (Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling) (2009). *Polariseren binnen onze grenzen*. Amsterdam: B.V. Uitgeverij SWP.
- Rogers, A., Kitchin, R. & Castree, N. (2013). *A Dictionary of Human Geography*. Oxford University Press
- Said, E. (1995). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books [first published in 1978]

- Scheff, T. (1966) *Being mentally ill: a sociological theory*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Scheffer, P. (2000). *Het multiculturele drama*. Published 29-01-2019 in NRC Handelsblad. Retrieved 29-01-2019 from:
<http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Lab/Multicultureel/scheffer.html>
- Scheffer, P. (2007). *Het land van aankomst* (11th edition). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: De Bezige Bij.
- Schinkel, W. and Van Houdt, F. (2010), The double helix of cultural assimilationism and neo-liberalism: citizenship in contemporary governmentality. *British Journal of Sociology*, 61 (4): 696-715.
- Schols, H. (2019). *Keeping things gezellig: Negotiating Dutchness and racism in the struggle over 'Black Pete'*. Amsterdam, Ridderprint
- Sen, A. (2006) 'The Violence of Illusion' and 'Making Sense of Identity', in: A. Sen, *Identity and Violence; The illusion of destiny*. London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books. Pp 1-3
- Slootman, M., & Tillie, J. (2006). *Processen van radicalisering. Waarom sommige Amsterdamse Moslims radicaal worden*. Amsterdam, NL: Gemeente Amsterdam/IMES.
- Spivak G. C. (1985). The Rani of Sirmur: an essay in reading the archives. *History and Theory*, 24(3): 247-272
- Turner, J. C., & Tajfel, H. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. *Psychology of intergroup relations*, 7-24.
- Ultee, W., Arts, W. & Flap, H. (2003). *Sociologie. Vragen, Uitspraken, Bevindingen*. Groningen: Martinus Nijhoff.
- van der Brug, W., Fennema, M., van Heerden, S., & de Lange, S. L. (2009). Hoe heeft het integratiedebat zich in Nederland ontwikkeld? *Migrantenstudies*, 25(3), 198-220.

- van Oudenhoven, J.P. (2009). Polarisatie in debat, convergentie in de samenleving. In: Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, *Polarisatie. Bedreigend en verrijkend* (pp. 234-252). Amsterdam: SWP.
- van der Varst, L.P., Bervoets, E., Bouabid, A., van der Veen, M. (2011). Onderzoek naar polarisatie: dynamiek tussen burger, media en politiek in Gouda. Retrieved 4-9-2019 from: <https://lokalEZaken.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Gouda.pdf>
- van der Welle, I. & Mamadouh, V. (2009). Territoriale identiteiten en de identificatiestrategieën van Amsterdamse jongvolwassenen van buitenlandse afkomst: Over evenwichtskunstenaars en kleurbekenners. *Migrantenstudies*, 2 (1): 24-41
- van de Vijver, F. (2009). Perspectief vanuit de crossculturele psychologie: polarisatie is universeel. In: Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (Ed.). *Polarisatie: Bedreigend en verrijkend*. Amsterdam: SWP, pp. 12-30
- van Wonderen, R. & van den Berg, G. (2019). *Jongeren en polarisatie*. The Netherlands: Verwey-Jonker Instituut & Nederlands Jeugdinstituut.
- Van Wonderen, R. & van Kapel, M. (2017). *Bezorgdheid en veerkracht: Nederlanders over etnisch culturele diversiteit in de samenleving*. Utrecht, Kennisplatform Integratie en Samenleving.
- Vasta, E. (2007). From ethnic minorities to ethnic majority policy: Multiculturalism and the shift to assimilationism in the Netherlands. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(5), 713-740
- Vertovec, S. (2001). Transnationalism and identity. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27(4): 573-582
- Wessels, L. & Dijkman, A. (2012). *Radicaal (on)zichtbaar. Verkennend onderzoek naar omvang, kenmerken en oorzaken van mogelijke radicalisering onder Amsterdamse moslima's*

Appendix I: Interview Guide

Topic list expert interviews thesis onderzoek

Inleiding:

Het Verwey Jonker Instituut doet onderzoek naar polarisatie in Nederland. Een voorbeeld hiervan is het wij-zij denken, waarin tegenstellingen tussen mensen met een migratie-achtergrond en blanke, autochtone Nederlanders worden benadrukt en uitvergroot. In het kader van het Decennium voor mensen van Afrikaanse komaf, wil ik met dit onderzoek de effecten van deze dynamieken op mensen met een Afrikaanse, Surinaamse en Antilliaanse migratie-achtergrond verkennen.

Het interview duurt ongeveer een uur: om te beginnen wil ik het hebben over polarisatie in de publieke sfeer in Nederland, en uw perspectief hierop. Vervolgens ben ik benieuwd naar de effecten die u hiervan ziet binnen de gemeenschap. Afsluitend wil ik bespreken hoe deze ontwikkelingen u als individu beïnvloeden.

Het gaat in het hele interview om uw perspectief en u mag alles zeggen. Het interview zal anoniem worden verwerkt, uw naam zal niet genoemd worden in de verslaglegging of doorgegeven worden aan anderen. Om alles wat u vertelt goed te kunnen weergeven, zou ik het interview graag willen opnemen, gaat u daarmee akkoord? Hierbij heb ik nog een informatiebrief en een toestemmingsverklaring. Ik zou u willen vragen deze te ondertekenen.

Heeft u nog vragen of opmerkingen voordat we beginnen?

Enkele vragen over u

Kunt u iets vertellen over uzelf?

Leeftijd, achtergrond (LvH, hoe lang NL), werk, betrokkenheid in publieke debat?

Kunt u iets vertellen over uw migrantengemeenschap?

Hoe wordt deze gedefinieerd en afgebakend.

Kunt u iets vertellen over uw positie en rol binnen de migrantengemeenschap?

Polarisatie algemeen

Om te beginnen wil ik kijken naar uw perspectief op polarisatie.

Kunt u vertellen wat u verstaat onder polarisatie?

Welke vormen van polarisatie zijn voor u het meest relevant? Het meest zichtbaar.../
tussen welke groepen (*leeftijd, etnisch-religieus, politiek, etc*)

Kunt u voorbeelden noemen (situaties, onderwerpen)?

Er wordt vaak gesproken van toenemende polarisatie in Nederland de afgelopen 10 jaar.
In hoeverre vindt u dat er sprake is van polarisatie in de samenleving?

Waar merkt u dit aan?

Tussen welke groepen vindt deze volgens u plaats?

Hoe kijkt u tegen polarisatie aan?

Welke onderwerpen zijn voor u het meest relevant?

Wat vindt u van de manier en de toon waarop debatten over bijvoorbeeld migratie en
integratie, Zwarte Piet gevoerd worden?

- *Welke personen versterken volgens u polarisatie?*
- *Hoe zou het volgens u anders moeten?*

Wat merkt u persoonlijk van polarisatie in de Nederlandse samenleving? *Hoe merkt u het
in uw dagelijks leven?*

Kunt u voorbeelden noemen?

Effecten van polarisatie collectief

*We hebben net polarisatie in Nederland besproken. Als volgende wil ik vragen welke
ontwikkelingen u ziet binnen uw gemeenschap als gevolg van deze polarisatie.*

Hoe wordt er door leden van uw gemeenschap tegen polarisatie aangekeken? Hoe
belangrijk is het onderwerp?

Kunt u voorbeelden geven van specifieke onderwerpen die in grotere mate leven dan
andere?

Hoe worden leden van uw gemeenschap door polarisatie beïnvloed in de mate waarop ze
zich verbonden voelen met verschillende groepen in de samenleving?

Welke verschuivingen heeft u in de afgelopen 10 jaar gezien?

En in hun loyaliteit naar verschillende groepen in de samenleving?

- *Migrantengemeenschap*
- *Andere migranten*
- *Nederlanders*
- *Etc? Collega's, buurtgenoten....*

*In hoeverre worden mensen zich bewuster van hun lidmaatschap van een migrantengemeenschap door
polarisatie? Wordt dit onderdeel van hun identiteit meer benadrukt?*

Mensen kunnen verschillende rollen en posities innemen in het (publieke) debat. In hoeverre mensen zich wel of niet mengen in het debat, welke opvattingen ze inbrengen en op welke manier ze deze uiten. Denk aan de onderwerpen die we hiervoor hebben besproken.

Kunt u, ten aanzien van deze onderwerpen, beschrijven welke verschillende rollen er binnen de migrantengemeenschap worden ingenomen?

Welke verschuivingen hebben er de afgelopen 10 jaar plaatsgevonden, als gevolg van polarisatie?

- **Verscherpingen** van tegenstellingen/extremen? Aanwezigheid middengroep, ruimte voor nuance.
- Evt doorvragen op karakteristieken van 5 **rollen van Brandsma** > pushers, volgers/joiners, stille midden, bruggenbouwers, zondebok.
- In hoeverre bepaalde rollen meer of minder op de voorgrond treden, **zichtbaarheid**.
- **Omvang**: vergroten of verkleinen van de aanhang etc.

Welke ruimte is er binnen de gemeenschap voor verschillende meningen?

Op welke manier wordt deze beïnvloed door polarisatie?

- Zijn er mensen die onder invloed van polarisatie hun mening stil houden? Of juist meer naar buiten treden?
- Zijn er mensen die, onder invloed van de polen, hun mening veranderen?

Hoe verhouden mensen binnen de migrantengemeenschap met verschillende (conflicterende) meningen zich tot elkaar en welke ontwikkelingen ziet u hierin?

Hoe gaat men met elkaar om, hoe reageert men op elkaar?

Is er sprake van sociale druk? Gevoelens van niet geaccepteerd worden?

Rol van context: situaties of omgevingen?

Effecten van polarisatie individueel

Tot slot ben ik benieuwd naar de invloed van polarisatie op u als individu.

Kunt u hier iets over vertellen?

- Hoe beïnvloed polarisatie uw welbevinden?

Kunt u beschrijven hoe uw verbondenheid met verschillende groepen in de samenleving is ontwikkeld in de afgelopen 15 jaar, als gevolg van polarisatie?

En uw loyaliteit aan verschillende groepen?

Als we kijken naar de verschillende rollen en posities in het publieke debat die we zojuist hebben besproken, met welke rol voelt u zich het meest verwant?

Kunt u uw rol in het debat beschrijven?

Hoe heeft deze zich in de afgelopen 10 jaar, als gevolg van polarisatie, ontwikkeld?

Zijn er verschillen in omgevingen en situaties waarin dit relevanter is, of juist minder relevant? Kunt u voorbeelden noemen?

- voorbeelden: binnen migrantengemeenschap, in het publieke debat, in dagelijkse situaties op straat, bij familie en vrienden

Welke ruimte voelt u in deze verschillende situaties en omgevingen om uw eigen mening naar buiten te brengen?

Afsluiting

Heeft u nog aanvullingen of opmerkingen? Of vragen?

Kent u anderen mensen die ik zou kunnen interviewen voor dit onderzoek? Zo ja, kunt u mij met hen in contact brengen?

Kunt u mij in contact brengen met mensen die ik kan uitnodigen voor een focus-groepdiscussie over dit onderwerp? (*Uitleggen wat voor type respondenten ik hiervoor zoek*)

Wilt u op de hoogte gehouden worden van de resultaten van het onderzoek? Zo ja, kan ik uw email-adres noteren?

Hartelijk dank voor uw deelname!

Appendix II: Interview Transcripts

An electric version of the interview transcripts is available upon request (in Dutch).