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In the Shadow of Tolerance: the discursive context of Dutch-born Muslim youth

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ABSTRACT Despite a public discourse on tolerance, anxiety about immigrants, Islam and the preservation of Dutch values has amplified fear of Muslim youth in the Netherlands. In this context, Dutch-born Muslim youth endure social and systemic discrimination that affects all aspects of their futures, including available educational opportunities and eventually their prospects for employment. Based on a one-year qualitative study conducted in Amsterdam, this article explores the lived experience of Dutch-born Muslim youth caught at the intersection of national policies and local realities. Grounded in critical literature originating in the Netherlands and in Europe, this inquiry triangulates participant observations, focus groups with youth ($n = 25$) and interviews with youth workers ($n = 25$) to disclose the hostile discursive contexts faced by Muslim youth. Findings indicate that anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant discourses permeate the everyday experiences of Muslim youth, including the practices and structures of youth programs they attend. The study raises questions about multicultural policies that appear progressive and attempt to build social cohesion but may in fact further alienate and oppress Muslim youth. It also reveals how Muslim youth navigate oppression by agentially constructing their identities while resisting the dehumanizing categories in which they are placed.

Despite a strong public discourse on tolerance, anxieties about immigrants, Islam and the preservation of a perceived Eurocentric homogeneity have amplified fear of Muslim youth (namely, Moroccans and Turks) in the Netherlands (Essed, 2009). In this discursive landscape, Muslim youth (many of whom were born in the Netherlands) struggle for a sense of belonging. Positioned as 'other' (Said, 1979) in social and cultural spheres, they become vulnerable targets (Roes, 2008) and are classified as a problem (Lucassen, n.d.; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2009). Most Muslim youth live in segregated neighborhoods where they attend segregated schools known as *zwarte scholen* (black schools). Furthermore, Muslim youth are over-represented in the lowest academic and vocational tracks in secondary schools, impeding their access to higher education (Crul & Holdaway, 2009). This lower educational attainment (compared with their native-Dutch counterparts), compounded by discrimination in the labor market, has led to high unemployment rates (Thomson & Crul, 2007) for this population.

In recent decades, 'tolerance' as a Dutch value has framed national policies and local practices designed to address the 'immigrant problem' (Lucassen, n.d.). These include policies of integration intended to promote the preservation of immigrant languages and cultures (but aimed at the assimilation of immigrants into Dutch society), as well as policies of social cohesion aimed at creating dialogue between native Dutch and ethnic minority groups. However, it is clear that the deficit language used in these liberal policies supports the culture-of-poverty framework (see Driessen, 2001; te Nijenhuis & van der Flier, 2001) driving many local practices related to Muslim youth. Furthermore, the perception of Dutch 'tolerance' masks Muslim youths' experience of exclusion and marginalization (Opotow, 2005; Sirin & Fine, 2008). In the shadow of tolerance, young people's experience of racism and discrimination is often vehemently denied. Within this

complex and oppressive field, Muslim youth must narrate their lived realities, construct their identities, and negotiate borders of belonging and exclusion while crafting new possibilities and visions for self and community.

Based on a 12-month study conducted over three years, this article explores the contradictory discourses of tolerance and Islamophobia (Fekete, 2008; Aouragh, 2009; Allen, 2010; Shryock, 2010) that permeate the lived experiences of Dutch-born Muslim youth seeking support from educational youth programs in Amsterdam. In both the study and this article, I define 'discourse' as a social behavior mediated through language. Discursive behavior is in itself an action which 'possesses power' and 'constitutes reality' (Jäger, 1993, cited in Wodak & Reisigl, 1999, p. 193). The discursive themes of tolerance and Islamophobia as mediated by policy and history surfaced throughout the course of the study and the period of fieldwork within multiple contexts and across participant groups (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Grounded in critical literature originating in the Netherlands and in Europe (Essed, 1990; van der Veer, 2006; Vasta, 2007; Aouragh, 2009), this study triangulated findings from focus groups and interviews with young people, interviews with adults and participant observations to reveal both explicit and implicit examples of the dominant discourses (Wodak & Reisigl, 1999; Van Dijk, 2004; Goldberg, 2006; Prins, 2010) and the counter narratives (Abu El-Haj, 2009; Lavani, 2011; Rios-Rojas, 2011) present in multiple domains of the lives of youth participants. Committed to critical research from the perspectives of those who are most affected by social, historical and political turmoil (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2008), I present these findings through the narratives of youth participants and the adults who work with them. It is important to note that these discourses – tolerance and Islamophobia – are only two of the significant discourses that exist in relationship to Muslim-origin youth in the Netherlands. Other discourses, including the discourse of criminality (Long, 2011b; Martineau, 2006), are bracketed in this analysis.

Methods

The stories of young people and the concerned adults who worked with them revealed the multiple layers of exclusion and racism young people face. I had not anticipated such a high level of complexity and contradiction, and many issues alarmed me, including the commitment (and loyalty) to the status quo expressed by some, and the numbness and normalcy with which others responded to oppressive daily realities. Throughout our interactions, it was clear that participants wanted to help me, the 'foreign' scholar, understand just how bad it really was. Early in my fieldwork, I talked to adults about the experiences of Muslim youth in the context of supplemental education programs (Zhou & Kim, 2006), the goals of the organizations for which they worked, or the issues facing Muslim youth in the Netherlands. In these conversation concerns, contradictions or worries about tolerance, social cohesion, and the representation of Muslims (and in some cases specifically Moroccans) inevitably surfaced. Believing, as Josselson (2004) conveys, that 'a told story conceals an untold one' (p. 13), these early conversations led me to question further the ways in which these discourses affected the lives of Muslim youth.

Epistemologically, my study positioned young people as experts of their own lives (Freire, 1993; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Torre, 2009); therefore, the methods used focused on soliciting their perspectives on the discursive currents in the Netherlands. In an effort to view 'social phenomena holistically' and provide 'panoramic views rather than micro-analyses' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.112), I used the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) to situate participants in their socio-cultural, political and historical contexts. The youth participants, supported by the adults and my observations, provided the counter story – one in which they constructed their own identities, negotiated borders of exclusion and resisted being framed as a problem.

Sample and Data Collection

Youth participants. This study employed ethnographic methods: interviews and focus groups with youth participants ($n = 25$); interviews with mentors and program administrators ($n = 25$); and participant observations conducted at youth programs and community events ($n = 21$). The 25 youth participants in this study all belonged to the second generation (i.e. they have at least one

foreign-born parent). All were children of North African immigrants (mostly Moroccan), and at the time of the study all were between 11 and 17 years of age. They self-identified and were identified by others as *allochtonen*, the Dutch word for foreigners, and as Muslims. Therefore, the categories of immigrant-origin (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) and Muslim (Brubaker, 2012) served as units of analysis. Youth participants completed demographic questionnaires in Dutch that focused on multiple dimensions of religious, ethnic and linguistic identity. All participated in six focus groups (Wilkinson, 1999) in which they were asked about: (1) their participation in youth programs; (2) the educational support they received; and (3) the perceptions of Muslims they believed were part of the Dutch imaginary. A research assistant conducted the focus groups in Dutch while I recorded field notes. The audio recordings of the focus group discussions were transcribed and then translated into English.

Adult participants. To contextualize the youth narratives, I conducted interviews with adults. Of these interviews (all conducted in English), 13 were formal (using a semi-structured protocol) and 12 were informal. The formal interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and the informal interviews were documented in field notes. The majority of the adults interviewed had years of experience as youth workers (the general designation used in the Netherlands). In addition to their professional experiences, their positionality (i.e. immigrant status, age, class, gender, ethnic origin and religious affiliation) provided a range of lenses that informed their responses (Denzin, 1989). For instance, the adults who were first-generation immigrants had different perspectives about the discursive context and the role of the state from their second-generation counterparts.

Sampling strategies. Participants were recruited in 13 youth programs that served as sampling sites. While the selected programs were not individually evaluated nor a representative sample, the range and variety of the programs in terms of scale, location, and goals typified the plethora of educational support programs available throughout the city of Amsterdam. This range of programs in my sample added to the conceptual generalizability (Bhavani, 1994) of the study's findings. It is important to note that many of the youth programs sampled for this study received state funding that resulted from integration policies and concerns about the radicalization of Muslim youth (Martineau, 2006). Therefore, the sampling sites served as microcosms reflecting the dominant narratives present in Dutch society.

Method of Analysis

I coded transcripts and field notes, identifying the dominant narratives about and the counter narratives from youth participants in terms of their status as immigrant origin, working class, and Muslim. The prevalent discourses that emerged framed Muslim youth as being intolerant relative to the Dutch value of tolerance. Moreover, discourses in regard to young people's religious affiliation and/or practice were also prevalent across multiple data sources. To generate a framework of discursive patterns, I crosschecked these two major themes and findings across the adult and youth sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and then further triangulated (Webb, 2000) using participant observations. With the intent of conducting 'cross-cultural research ... grounded in the communities in which the research emerges' (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2008, p. 15), I engaged participants and members of the immigrant community in member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) to verify my analysis of the discursive practices.

Presumed Tolerant

Tolerance is always expressed towards the tolerated ... from the tolerating agent's position of power. I have the power and position to tolerate you. I am active; you the tolerated passive, powerless to affect me in my tolerating save to get under my skin, make me even less accepting of your distinction. My social power to tolerate you turns on all those like me likewise disposed towards you. (Goldberg, 2006, pp. 338-339)

The value placed by the Dutch on tolerance is recognized worldwide. For example, the Netherlands is internationally respected for its vanguard policies legalizing same-sex marriage, and

as the country that hosts the International Court of Justice where crimes against humanity are prosecuted. These and other concrete displays of tolerance have shaped the self-perception of the Dutch populace (Wodak et al, 1999), who believe they are a nation accepting of difference where multiple cultures and faiths live in harmony (Aouragh, 2009; Essed, 2009; Long, 2011a). But who is tolerated and what is tolerated is subjective, making tolerance an abstract and often repressive concept (Brown, 2006; Goodey, 2006). Moreover, as Goldberg (2006) noted (above), tolerance is an expression of acceptance in which the person doing the tolerating holds the power to decide who is to be tolerated and who is not, resulting in a binary that creates a category of 'other' (Said, 1979; Brown, 2006).

Historically speaking, the Dutch have not demonstrated tolerance toward new immigrants. The Muslim second generation in the Netherlands are the descendants of immigrants who migrated in the 1960s and 1970s (mainly from Morocco and Turkey) through 'guest worker' programs that were commonplace in Europe in the post-World War II period (Koopmans et al, 2005; Lucassen, 2005). The experience was contentious, and Dutch society denied recognition of Muslim immigrants as permanent settlers (Lucassen, 2005; Ersanili, 2007). Despite poor working conditions, many made the Netherlands their home. Family reunification policies in the 1970s made it possible for women and children to join men who had emigrated without them. Today, the Dutch-born children of Turkish and Moroccan Muslim immigrants make up the fastest-growing ethnic groups in the Netherlands (a country of 16.5 million inhabitants, of which about one million are Muslim [FORUM, 2010]). The passing of decades has not eased antipathy toward these immigrants. According to the Pews Global Attitudes Project (2005), *Islamic Extremism: common concern for Muslim and western publics*, which compared popular views about Jews, Christians and Muslims within countries in the West, of nine countries listed, including the United States, people in the Netherlands had the most unfavorable view (45%-51%) of Muslims in their society.

Although the Dutch Constitution begins with an anti-discrimination statement, the level of tolerance towards immigrants and their Dutch-born children, in practice, has contradicted that promise and cannot be considered as an exemplar for other nations. For example, the 1981 Minorities Memorandum, a policy undergirded by the Dutch value of tolerance, introduced the concept of integration, but the meaning of integration remains widely contested. The notion of diversity, according to Ersanili (2007), became 'increasingly seen as something that obstructs integration' (p. 1). What began as an effort to help minorities maintain their cultural identity eventually morphed into a policy centered on assimilating immigrants into Dutch society by stripping them of their language and requiring them to abandon their loyalties to culture and religion (Vasta, 2007; Buijs, 2009).

An Intolerant Reality

During my fieldwork, tolerance as a Dutch value (however riddled with contradictions) was often raised in interviews and focus groups. All of the young people in this study expressed concerns about the prevailing negative stereotypes of Muslim (specifically Moroccan) youth. They recounted how these stereotypes could lead to them being excluded and shunned in school, on the playground and in the labor market. For example, they were tired of watching old women grab their bags tightly in fear or cross the street to avoid them. Musa, a 12-year-old boy attending an after-school homework group, expressed, 'I really don't want them [native Dutch] to think negative about me ... otherwise I will be refused job applications or something, and, uh, friendships.' He later added:

They [native Dutch] said ... a big part of Moroccans steal, and they involve all of us in it too ... and, yes, sometimes you just can't go to the playground, for example when all Dutch people play soccer together and, uh, and you ask if you can join, they usually all refuse.

His groupmate, 13-year-old Ahmed, worried that the negative stereotypes led native Dutch people to 'only think about the problems they have with us. And, they don't look at the good things about us.' Like her peers, Inas, a 14-year-old participant, recognized that intolerance was not simply a social ill with which Muslim youth must reckon – it was an exclusionary force that affected their ability to attend school, to feel a sense of belonging, and to dream and envision their future

possibilities. Inas shared, 'I don't want to go to school because [name of school] is disorganized and they are a bit racist.' Like the other youth participants in this study, Ahmed, Musa and Inas articulated the ways in which they were affected by the negative perceptions about Muslims in the Netherlands.

The Dutch rhetoric of tolerance also undergirds judgmental attitudes toward the behavior of Muslim youth, who are accused of lacking tolerance for Dutch holidays and traditions. During one of my observations, I joined a group of mentors and immigrant-origin youth on a field trip to an event commemorating the Day of Remembrance, a holiday honoring Holocaust victims and the Dutch citizens who died in World War II. The purpose of attending this event, as leaders of the organization told me, was to teach immigrant-origin youth about Dutch history and, most importantly, to teach them to respect Dutch traditions. Hundreds (mainly middle-aged native Dutch people) marched in silence from Museumplein to Dam Square. When the young people in our group (aged 11 to 13) whispered to one another, several adults not involved with the organization shushed them. I found it odd that with Queen Beatrix and other dignitaries in attendance, it was the young people in our group who garnered the most media attention, particularly the veiled Muslim girls in the group. At Dam Square, the young people waited patiently for their turn to lay flowers on the monument as numerous dignitaries spoke in honor of lives lost. The mentors complained that it was too cold to have the children outdoors for that many hours; still, the young people watched excitedly as Queen Beatrix walked through the crowd. An older Dutch woman, curious about their presence at the event, asked one of the boys in the group if they were Moroccan, to which he replied, 'Some of us are. But we're all *allochtonen* [of immigrant origin].' One of the mentors commented to me that their presence challenged the stereotype native Dutch had about rowdy and disrespectful Muslim youth (an idea that had been fueled the previous year when several youth were seen on surveillance cameras kicking around one of the flower wreaths placed at the monument). As a result, the young people I observed were burdened with the responsibility of demonstrating in front of TV cameras and the nation's dignitaries that they were indeed tolerant. The idea that Muslim and other immigrant origin youth needed to be taught tolerance did not sit well with several of the mentors with whom I spoke. Further, Karim, another mentor at the event, shared that acknowledging racism and discrimination would be viewed as victimization; therefore, youth workers were discouraged to discuss these issues openly with young people.

Unraveling Tolerance

Dutch tolerance began to publicly unravel in 2004 after the public and brutal murder of Theo van Gogh (Goldberg, 2006). Van Gogh, a filmmaker and media personality whose murder was considered 'a threat to openness and social cohesion' (Buijs, 2009, p. 422) was regarded as edgy and admired for being controversial. His references to Muslims left many with mouths gaping and gave others permission to freely use profane hate speech, including calling Muslims 'the secret column [1] of goat-fuckers' (van der Veer, 2006). Although van Gogh was sued for libel and slander on multiple occasions, his freedom of expression was upheld time and again.

Van Gogh was murdered by a Dutch-born Moroccan man who had been raised in Amsterdam. The fact that van Gogh's murderer was Dutch-born and considered 'well-educated and well-integrated' was cause for generalized panic and fear about the potential of 'home-grown terrorism' among Muslim youth (Buijs, 2009, p. 423). Those in favor of tougher laws and more restrictive policies against immigrants and Muslims used the murder as evidence that a multicultural society had failed (van der Veer, 2006; Vasta, 2007).

Many of the participants in this study described firsthand experiences of the aggression and intense scrutiny that ensued after van Gogh's murder. Aliah, a well-educated and successful second-generation Moroccan mentor in her early twenties, shared that her experience of struggle and exclusion took a turn for the worse after van Gogh's murder. Although Aliah had lived in the Netherlands her whole life, she no longer felt Dutch; rather, she felt like an unwanted outsider in the country she called home. The tension, the stares and the questions were a continuous barrage of micro assaults. After van Gogh's murder, she was asked why she would not stand in his memory at an event commemorating his life, and her response was that she did not need to; after all, he was

a racist. She was told that her position was not very tolerant, to which she responded, 'He wasn't very tolerant was he?' Instead of being protected from hatred, she was questioned about her own tolerance as a total contradiction to her freedom of expression.

A 'Backwards' Religion

Being religious is not hot in this society. If you have a religion you are medieval. That is the problem in dealing with the Islam discussion and also with Hindus and Christians. People don't have respect for people who live by their religion. When we talk with our children the first thing they say, 'The main thing in my life is Allah.' And I respect that. But, the people around them, they don't give a damn about religion. So they can never understand their way of thinking. For example, when they wear hijab, the Dutch people always ask a hundred times – that is typical tolerance of Holland – 'Can you explain to me why you wear this hijab?' They know the answer but don't listen to the answer. And our children they explain and they explain 'Oh, I do it for Allah.' But do you think the Dutch people listen to these answers? Never because they have only one thing in mind, 'I want you to say that it's a way to repress the women. That is why you wear the hijab.' So they are not interested in the answer at all. (Lars, a Dutch Surinamese youth worker)

When asked to compare how they felt in their youth programs compared with how they felt in the outside world, youth participants in all of the focus groups raised concerns about the level of religious intolerance to which they were subjected in the larger social sphere. They indicated in multiple ways that religion was a significant part of their identity. All of the youth participants ($n = 25$) clearly identified as Muslim on the demographic questionnaire. Additionally, they were asked to indicate on a scale of 0 to 10 their level of religiosity (with 0 being secular and 10 pious). The average level of religiosity for the 25 participants was 7.3, with more young people likely to check off 10 for pious ($n = 7$) than those identifying strictly as secular ($n = 2$). This internal variation in levels of religiosity among Muslims is conflated and deemed static by Dutch society, where they are thought of as a homogeneous group. During a focus-group discussion, 13-year-old Ibrahim worried that Islam was generalized as 'a religion about violence'.

While the majority talked about feeling accepted in terms of their religious beliefs by adults in the youth programs they attended, the young women's group (aged 14 to 17) talked about feeling shame and anxiety and being misunderstood for their religious beliefs in other spaces such as school. Their shared experience of religious intolerance came through very clearly during a focus-group discussion as the girls chimed in to finish one another's sentences and add to their collective narrative. For instance, Samira and Suha cringed at the thought of having to explain to a native Dutch teacher why they might not be able to attend an overnight international field trip; in their perspective, the teacher would inevitably misrepresent their reasons for not being able to go and blame their religion. Reem, who spoke the least in the group, contributed that 'there were other girls who didn't want to go, or were not allowed to go by their parents. Then the teacher thinks ...' Samira finished her sentence, saying, '... she's being oppressed, blah, blah, blah,' indicating she had heard this many times before. Suha continued explaining why this scenario was problematic, 'because you don't like to explain things all the time'. Yasmin interrupted, demanding her right, 'Yes, it has to be respected.' And Suha continued getting to the crux of the issue, 'And then defend again. You know!' They were adamant about not wanting to be put in a position of having to defend their reasons for not attending a field trip or any other school event. Being asked over and over again about an issue or circumstance was emotionally burdensome.

Also responding from a place of self-protection and preservation, 12-year-old Ahmed reported his approach to dealing with religious intolerance. 'If they think bad about us, we can think bad about them too.' He linked religious intolerance to *Fitna*, a film produced by parliamentarian Geert Wilders that had yet to be released, but whose effects were being nervously anticipated by the Dutch media (Cherribi, 2011). This inflammatory short film (de Vries, 2010) was meant to be a follow-up to van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali's film, *Submission* (Essed, 2009). In it, Wilders equated Islam with violence, terrorism, mass destruction and death, and warned viewers of the dangers of Islam. Ahmed rejected Wilders' (and society's) claims that Islam was repressive to women:

Geert Wilders says that the movie will come because he wants to tell the truth, but that's not the truth at all. Because the woman, women that wear a headscarf choose for it. They are not really forced to do so, because uh when they leave the house, they can do whatever they want, they are not being stopped by someone or something.

The outrage and dissent the film ignited led the Dutch prime minister to publicly denounce the film, claiming it did not represent Dutch society's view about Islam. Ahmed's wisdom and ability to respond in an articulate matter to these complex and painful issues were indicative of the weight of Islamophobia young people must carry.

Lars, one of the adults I interviewed, described religious tolerance in the Netherlands as a 'dictatorship of secularism', explaining that the notion of religious tolerance was complicated and contradictory because while the Dutch claimed to value secularity, many of the values and norms they promoted originated from Christian ideologies. The double standard and lack of acceptance of Muslim religious practices were part of the discourse that constructed Islam as a 'backward' religion and its followers as 'uncivilized' and 'uncultured'. Not only was the lack of religious acceptance a problem, there was also a clear expectation that one must renounce one's religion in order to 'integrate' into Dutch society. Not renouncing one's religion was perceived as evidence of this backward culture, and this refusal required correction (Fekete, 2006).

Lars' desire to reject an ideology that demonizes Islam and burdens young people came through during the interview. As a Dutch Surinamese man, Lars moved within his multiple identities with ease. However, when I asked him how Dutch values translated into what they tried to teach youth in their program, he moved to a more critical stance. His switch in pronouns from 'we' to 'them' signaled more than an attempt to differentiate ethnicities; he was communicating his ideological distance away from those who ascribed to the Islamophobia he depicted.

Lars' comment (quoted above) depicted what Fekete (2006) called essentialism of Muslim culture that leads to 'paternalistic justification of coercive state action' (p. 17). Under these conditions, 'the state has to act as the "good father" to liberate the Muslim child from her bad, biological and cultural father' (p. 17). This theme justified the idea that Dutch people knew better and needed to interfere in order to protect children from their families. Further, Fekete challenged the positions of liberals and feminists, like Ayaan Hirsi Ali, whose film 'was no more than the old-age Orientalist sexual fantasy – a call to white men to save Muslim women from Muslim men' (p. 16). These historically and politically entrenched layers of debate created a very treacherous path for young people to navigate.

The notions that Lars described – that those practicing Islam were 'backwards', 'uncivilized', 'intolerant' and 'repressive' – had been repeated throughout multiple levels of Dutch society and were the basis for a particular brand of Islamophobia. In the Netherlands, an increased presence of xenophobic political parties representing the right wing had emerged, beginning with the 'Lijst Pim Fortuyn', or LPF Party, spearheaded by Pim Fortuyn until his murder in 2002 (Koopmans et al, 2005). Among the most public right-wing diatribes were Geert Wilders' demands that Muslims should leave the Netherlands if they did not adhere to Dutch principles. The emergence of Wilders, and the anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim hatred that he continues to spread under the guise of free speech, has spurred a strong collective movement against racism and oppression.

United Against Racism, a grassroots organization based in Amsterdam, organized rallies, debates and lectures to stimulate action and discussion to address the anger Wilders has incited. In March 2007, I attended an event held on the International Day Against Racism to address the controversies, fears and concerns many had about the messages being discharged by the extreme right. The posters for the event read, 'Islam is not the enemy. Hate is not the solution. Together against racism.' More than 2000 people were in attendance, with a screen set up outside the auditorium to serve the overflow. United Against Racism was attacked by the extreme right for holding an event that criticized a member of the Dutch Parliament at the University of Amsterdam, a state-funded institution. Furthermore, news media and liberal groups criticized the organizers for framing the discussion in terms of racism, as this would somehow trump discussions of other legitimate social problems.

‘We Are Allochtonen!’

To be effective as a popular discourse, intolerance must have its own lexicon. This language can be used to categorize, to sort and to draw borders and boundaries that serve to exclude or include certain people or groups. In the Dutch language two commonly used words serve to sort those who belong and those who do not: *autochtoon* and *allochtoon*. The word *allochtoon* (or plural *allochtonen*) is a recent addition to the Dutch dictionary and was created to demarcate the direct opposite of *autochtoon*, meaning ‘native’ or ‘indigenous’ [2] Dutch (Essed & Trienekens, 2008). The word *allochtoon* was first used in policy documents in 1989 (Guiraudon et al, 2005), and it includes foreign-born children and second-generation children who have at least one foreign-born parent. Some have called for extending this category to include children with foreign-born grandparents. It is a controversial distinction; many are concerned that it upholds the long-standing divide between included and excluded (Ersanili, 2007; Geschiere, 2009). Those who argue in favor of the categorization cite the value of having long-term statistical data about the integration of a third generation of immigrant-origin individuals.

Concerns about the terms *allochtonen* and *autochtonen* are directly related to the negative implications and connotations the words carry, as Essed and Trienekens (2008) explain:

Formal distinctions are made between western and non-western *allochtonen*, the former implicitly representing closeness to western civilization, to economic, technological and social progress. In policy practice *allochtoon* refers foremost to non-western ethnic groups considered disadvantaged or less integrated into ‘modern’ societies such as the Netherlands
Ramifications are that *allochtonen* are informally considered and treated as second-class citizens, never quite Dutch, never quite the norm, always considered as aspiring, as problem, lagging behind. (pp. 57-58)

As Essed and Trienekens (2008) articulate, the distinction is not just meant to sort immigrants from non-immigrants; it is also about history, power and class. The terms were meant to clearly define who belonged and who did not, and were later extended to designate which immigrants should be required to integrate (Geschiere, 2009). All of these connotations serve to divide the desirable immigrants from the undesirable ones.

In spite of the negative connotations, I found that the youngest participants of this study claimed the term *allochtonen*. It was clear that many among the second generation had re-appropriated the term and viewed the distinction it implied as an additive difference. In one of the focus groups, Reem said what many of her peers exclaimed in other groups: ‘I see myself as an *allochtoon*. I am an *allochtoon*.’ So even with its limitations and the criticism I heard from those representing the older generation (‘We don’t like that word’), the term *allochtoon* – often featured in rap songs and even on T-shirts – had gained currency in youth culture. In a sense, revalorizing the meaning of *allochtonen* allowed them to claim their difference.

In a demographic questionnaire completed by the 25 youth participants for this study, they were asked to choose ‘all that apply’ from a list of national, pan-ethnic and religious identities. In response, three out of 25 young people identified themselves as Dutch, while three others selected the broader term European. Although all of the youth participants were born in Netherlands, the majority of them ($n = 22$) selected non-Dutch national or ethnic identities. They did not see themselves as both Dutch and Moroccan (or Egyptian or Tunisian) because claiming a hyphenated identity was not an acceptable practice in Dutch society and was, at the time, widely contested in politics (as in ‘one cannot be loyal to two countries’). Through their responses, they rejected being Dutch just as Dutch society had rejected them. During focus-group conversations, they separated themselves from the Dutch values and practices with which they did not want to be identified. For instance, they noted that native Dutch people did not take off their shoes when entering someone’s home, a practice that they considered disrespectful. While they did not deny their ‘Dutchness’ in the sense that they introduced themselves to me as being Dutch-born, they separated themselves from Dutch people in terms of their way of life, their standards and their values. They were engaged in ‘strategic use of essentialism’ (Spivak, 1990, cited in Singh & Doherty, 2008), representing their individuality while creating an alliance with others like them. They were proud of their rich, malleable and multiple identities (Waters, 1990) that included religious, linguistic and ethnic dimensions.

Knowledge and Symptoms of Intolerance

For the young people in this study, the prevailing discourse of Islamophobia masked by the Dutch value of tolerance permeates their public, institutional and personal worlds. These youth, multiply positioned and multiply identified (Wodak et al, 1999), exhibit both the knowledge and the symptoms of what it means to hold the contradictions of a society that does not accept them. These discourses permeate the everyday lives of young people, including their experiences in youth programs, which serve as microcosms for the larger social tensions. The image of Dutch society as tolerant, open and accepting is challenged by the manifestations of racism and Islamophobia across contexts.

In this liberal and veiled setting, tolerance serves to create what Goodey (2006) describes as 'repressive regimes of control and regulation' that result in creating exclusionary mechanisms and in perpetuating social fears (Goldberg, 2006; Brown, 2008; Essed, 2009) of Muslim youth. While the language of tolerance can serve to exclude, the young people in this study reject the hierarchies of subordination, re-appropriating terms like *allochtonen* in an effort to represent themselves as individuals while creating an alliance with other immigrant-origin youth. In that it does not interrogate power, the liberal discourse of tolerance serves to further essentialize Muslims and to negate their reality. The repressive rhetoric of tolerance positions youth as culturally deficient while elevating the hegemonic culture (Yosso, 2005). Moreover, deficit culture views are subtractive (Valenzuela, 1999) and problematize important connections to family and community (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Further, the binaries created by the rhetoric of tolerance (e.g. civilized/uncivilized, liberal/fundamentalist) support the notion that autonomy and independence are the best antidotes against fundamentalism (Brown, 2006). Instead of trying to destroy the cohesiveness of ethnic enclaves (Stanton-Salazar, 2001) by forcing young people to choose and stand in opposition to their communities and their own families as if they were harmful to their well-being and social progress, the Dutch state should encourage social cohesion within and among ethnic groups (Driessen & Smit, 2007). Under the guise of protecting Muslim youth, the paternalistic approach that is applied serves to further demonize and alienate Muslims from Dutch society (Fekete, 2006).

Remarkably, within the context of limited opportunities, young people in this study have a wealth of knowledge and a sophisticated understanding of their discursive world. They illustrate a meta-understanding of their discourse-laden context as they move from objects to subjects of their own stories by naming the subjugated positions to which they are sometimes relegated (Dolby & Rizvi, 2008; Maira, 2009). They agentically and actively construct their identities (Sirin & Fine, 2008) while resisting the dehumanizing categories in which they are placed. They are aware of the fears others have of them and the obstacles they face as a result of those fears, and they speak confidently as experts of their condition.

While they are able to recognize oppression, the youth participants are left to cope with the strain, the anxiety and the complexity of it on their own. Enduring the symptoms and manifestations of Islamophobia weighs heavily on the youth in this study. Being knowledgeable about their subjugated positions means that Muslim youth need to protect themselves within a system of oppression. However, while they are able to recognize their experiences with oppression they do not often have the words to describe what that domination means. Nonetheless, in the interest of self-preservation, they counter the constant denial of their experiences within the dominant claims by constructing their own narratives. They are burdened by having to educate others in terms of their religious beliefs and cultures while trying to defend themselves from a hostile society (Zaal et al, 2007). Hypocrisy about religious tolerance leads to young people being constantly challenged about their religious beliefs and burdened by having to defend them. I argue that burdening Muslim youth with the responsibility of educating others about their culture, beliefs and practices is a misuse of power and privilege by the dominant culture. The repeated requirement of immigrant-origin youth to explain themselves and shoulder the burdens of society's oppression can have an overwhelming effect on their identity and development (Phinney, 1990; Berry, 2001).

My analysis intended to problematize and interrogate the well-accepted and normalized discourse of tolerance that burdens Dutch-born Muslim youth in inescapable ways. My goal is to contribute to an understanding of the oftentimes paradoxical ways in which the exclusion of

immigrant youth can be produced through liberal discourses aimed at being inclusionary. Furthermore, the study raises questions about policies that affect young people's experiences of belonging and/or that serve to further exclude or marginalize a minority population. By presenting the resistance and challenges to the discourses within Dutch society, I aimed to do what Wodak and Reisigl (1999) explain as one of the primary functions of discourse analysis: 'Discourse serves to criticize, delegitimize, and argue against racist opinions and practices, i.e., to pursue anti-racist strategies' (p. 176). Through this frame, I aimed to focus not on the acts, but on the implications for young people's lives (Maira & Soep, 2005).

Policy Implications

The policy implications for this study point to large, structural stress points. Policies and practices that normalize and support a culture of poverty framework with regard to Muslim youth and their families contradict efforts at creating a cohesive multicultural society. These repressive actions trickle down to the lives of Muslim youth, reinforcing and recapitulating social, political and historical inequities. In fact, the result of these contradictory practices is to assimilate Muslim youth into a permanent underclass (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). For this reason, the policy contradictions that have created the structural inequities that exist need to be examined closely, particularly within education. The 'educational attainment' gap will not decrease passively with each passing generation as some in the Netherlands predict (van Ours & Veenman, 2003) unless the injustice that has been done to the current generation of youth is redressed.

This study unearthed difficult and looming questions about structural inequities and social justice in a seemingly liberal society, such as: What would it mean for the Netherlands to become an inclusive multicultural society? Rather than develop policies that further marginalize its immigrant origin citizens, what can be done to support the future of multicultural European societies like the Netherlands? Are citizens of the dominant Dutch culture willing to embrace difference and truly integrate and live with 'others' equally, regardless of religion or ethnic background? More needs to be done at the social and political levels of society to address the negative discourses and to hold people, institutions and the state accountable for their repressive policies and practices. Certainly, these issues need to be addressed if young people are to be spared the damaging effects of intolerance and injustice. While there is no one simple answer that indicates cause and effect, the discourses presented here correlate with the ways young people experience discursive practices that diminish and devalue their lives. Therefore, even if the cause is not clear, the state and its institutions must at least agree to be a part of the solution.

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Notes

- [1] The reference to 'column' is a reference to the system of pillarization that organized Dutch society until 1960s as a system of four pillars each representing a religious or secular group.
- [2] *Native* and *indigenous* are terms that also appear in government documents and policies to refer to autochthonous members of the Dutch population.

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