11. DUTCH CITIZENS ON THE BIG FIVE OF CITIZENSHIP

Having introduced the research methods and the statistical results, it is now time to make an interpretation of the results and to put them into perspective. How do Dutch citizens interpret the notion of citizenship and which dimensions do they emphasise? The online survey showed quite surprising results. Contrary to what has been found before, the social engagement dimension of citizenship is not held to be most important by Dutch citizens. Instead, Dutch citizens view tolerance as the most important characteristic of a good citizen. However, tolerance was not a dimension that was taken into account in any previous empirical study on citizenship in the Netherlands. My results suggest that the inclusion of tolerance into the Big Five Model of Dutch citizenship should give a fuller account of the notion of citizenship than previous empirical studies have done.

Law-abidingness was seen as the second most important characteristic of a good citizen. It is important to realise that both tolerance and law-abidingness fit within a liberal conception of citizenship. In the analysis on item-level, the results also showed that the items regarded as most important for citizenship were items pertaining to these two categories. On the basis of these results, it can be argued that tolerance and law-abidingness are considered necessary for good citizenship; one would not be regarded a good citizen without them.

The third dimension that Dutch citizens viewed as an important characteristic was the dimension of social engagement. While previous studies found it to be the most important element of a good citizen, my respondents only listed it as third-most important. The results for political engagement reflect previous empirical research; Dutch citizens did not regard this element as very important. Surprisingly, the category of shared identity was considered even less important. This is interesting since recent government policies have stressed this element continually. The themes that have been added to the notion of citizenship in the early years of the millennium have been integration, good manners, Dutch culture and shared progressive values. Current research now shows that this nationalist interpretation of shared identity matters little to Dutch citizens. On the contrary, the respondents in the questionnaire stressed the importance of tolerance and equality.

As the sample was not representative, I cannot guarantee that the results of my survey can be generalised to the whole Dutch population. However, the fact that there was no influence of gender, level of education or age on the results, and the fact that a fairly high number of respondents participated, give rise to the suggestion that the results would not be fundamentally different in a representative sample.
These results can be explained in different ways. First of all, the results might indicate that Dutch citizens disagreed with the Dutch government about the importance of shared identity. The focus on majority culture in recent integration policies might not reflect the interpretations of citizenship by Dutch citizens. I propose that this aspect should be taken into account in future policy considerations, because there is a clear discrepancy between policy and public thought. Other interpretations of these results are also possible, however. It is conceivable that the respondents viewed citizenship as a hierarchical or pyramid model, where basic elements are first needed, before other elements can be added. Figure 11.1 shows what this pyramid model of citizenship would look like, based on the results of the online survey.

This model shows first of all, that a good citizen needs to have respect for, or be tolerant towards, other people. The category of tolerance is correspondingly shown as the elementary building block for citizenship (mean score above 6). Without tolerance, a person cannot be a good citizen. Only when this element is present, is it possible for other elements to be regarded as important requirements for a good citizen as well. Law-abidingness and social engagement form the next two blocks and are also seen as important and necessary dimensions (with mean scores above 5). The dimension of political engagement is the fourth block. It is considered an element of citizenship, but being further up the hierarchical model, it is not as elementary as the other ones (mean score around 4.5). The dimension of shared identity forms the finishing stone of the pyramid. People may regard this element as somewhat important, but not necessary for a good citizen (mean score below 4.5).

It is interesting now to see whether this hierarchical model of citizenship also extends to the interviews and whether we can elaborate on the idea of how citizenship is interpreted by religiously highly committed citizens. Indeed, I began my interviews with this in mind, and like Dekker and De Hart (2002), asked the open-ended question of what the respondents thought about good citizenship. Remarkably, social engagement was the element mentioned the most. This corresponds to Dekker and De Hart’s own research, but contradicts the results of my survey. In Table 11.1, the number of respondents that named each of the categories is presented.
The table shows an agreement between Protestants and Muslims over the emphasis on social engagement as an essential element of citizenship. However, the table also reveals differences between the groups in their opinions on citizenship. If the Protestant respondents distinguished more than one category, they highlighted (elements of) law-abidingness and political engagement, as Jacob (Protestant, male, 35 years)\textsuperscript{64} does here:

\begin{quote}
I immediately make a distinction between being a citizen of a state and civil citizenship. Citizenship as being a citizen of a state is focused on politics, and concerns voting etc., and your contribution to the common good, thinking about the organisation of society. The civil side is more focused on society in the sense of making an effort to help your fellow people, being active in voluntary service, those kinds of things. Being a good citizen, also in the sense of not throwing garbage on the street. To keep the public space in order together.
\end{quote}

Again, this comment aligns with the findings of Dekker and De Hart (2002) and it offers an interesting insight into how Dutch people think about citizenship. When people are confronted with the open-ended question of what a good citizen does, they accentuate elements of social engagement, followed by elements of political engagement, law-abidingness and tolerance.\textsuperscript{65} However, when they are confronted with specific statements about dimensions of good citizenship, they consider tolerance the most important, with less emphasis on political engagement. Apparently, there is a difference between what people

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
Citizenship category & Number of Protestants ($N = 9$) & Number of Muslims ($N = 9$) \\
\hline
Social Engagement & 9 & 8 \\
Political Engagement & 4 & 0 \\
Law-Abidingness & 4 & 3 \\
Tolerance & 0 & 2 \\
Shared identity & 0 & 0 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{The number of times the respondents spontaneously name the citizenship categories}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{64} I indicate the name, gender, age and religion of interviewees the first time they are introduced. In Appendix E, I include an overview of the respondents.

\textsuperscript{65} Statements about respecting other people and that stressed non-discrimination were classified under tolerance, whereas Dekker and De Hart classified these under the category of decency.
associate with the notion of citizenship and elements they think are important for good citizenship.

It needs to be noted that Jacob mentioned elements of citizenship that Dekker and De Hart had classified as *decency*. Statements such as ‘keeping the neighbourhood clean’ and ‘behaving decently’ were heard often in the interviews with Protestants, as Ruben (Protestant, male, 29 years) also showed:

I think that [a good citizen] is someone who contributes to society as much as he can. Eh, who behaves decently and does not bother others in society. So I guess … a contribution. And, according to me, a good citizen is someone who, eh, makes sure that he is economically productive, he at least makes sure that the country progresses. Eh, of course … that he takes good care of his family. So, he raises his children in a good way, that kind of thing. I think he takes care of the environment. So, eh, no garbage on the street and those kinds of things. And no stealing from others, eh, yes. I think that’s what good citizenship is for the most part. To me.

Since *decency* did not remain as a separate factor in the Factor Analyses (in Chapter 8), I decided to maintain the Big Five structure and discuss the results in the five remaining categories, as has been done consistently throughout this book. Statements like the ones mentioned above thus fall under *social engagement*.

Interestingly, the category of *tolerance* was not spontaneously named by any of the Protestants in the interviews, nor was the category of shared identity. In order to find out whether the respondents found these elements unimportant for good citizenship or whether they just did not think about these dimensions, we will look at the results of the individual dimensions later in this chapter.

An examination of Table 11.1 reveals that none of the Muslim respondents spontaneously identified *political engagement* as an element of Dutch citizenship. The Muslim respondent group did identify the dimensions of *law-abidingness* and *decency* in their interpretation of good citizenship. However, *law-abidingness* in particular was less prominent when compared to the Protestants. Interestingly, two Muslims cited the importance of *tolerance*, or respect for other religions or other people, as essential for a good citizen. One of them was Semra (Muslim, female, 34 years), who stressed that a good citizen should:

Be concerned about his fellow people, truly towards the people closely around him, I think. And well, there we have it again: have respect for all other people [laughs]. Regardless of belief, religion, race. And yeah, being open, being open to each other.

That some Muslim respondents mentioned tolerance, while none of the Protestants did, might indicate that the topic of tolerance is more vividly explicit in the personal situation of some Muslims than Protestants.
Nonetheless, there were many similarities in how the two groups responded to the open-ended question of good citizenship. Mohamed (Muslim, male, 30 years), also pointed to the importance of social engagement by emphasising similar aspects as his Protestant counterparts, Ruben and Jacob, did above:

A citizen takes care of … where possible, you should not oblige anyone, but then that’s my opinion of it, that you should just take care of the people around you, you help them, support them, your neighbours. A small, specific example, easy example is to keep the street clean. Well, I live in an apartment, so that’s a bit difficult. Well, that you have a job, and aren’t dependent on others. That you stand on your own two feet and in that way contribute to your — to society. And mostly, I think, doing voluntary service work is very important. Whatever you can do, wherever you can help, they always need manpower somewhere. Yes, well, that is at least the commitment that I ask of myself.

As these interview excerpts show, several Muslims and Protestants explicitly mention voluntary service as an example of good citizenship. Although it is unknown whether a similar result would be found in non-religious persons, this finding complements the picture of the socially active, religious citizen, who spends much of their time in voluntary service activities (Sluis and Van Oudenhoven 2009, 17).

These spontaneous reactions to the open-ended question of what good citizenship entailed give us, together with the first results of the survey, an insight into how Dutch citizens interpret the notion. Since we cannot yet conclude whether there is a distinction between how citizens respond to the open-ended question and how they respond to specific statements, or between Dutch citizens in general and religiously highly committed citizens in specific, we must turn to the follow-up results of both the survey and the interviews.

The survey data have been analysed in order to answer the question of whether there are differences between people from different religious backgrounds in their judgement of good citizenship. By using a rough division of non-believers, Catholics, Protestants and Muslims, the general answer to this question is ‘yes’. The results showed significant effects of the religious background of the respondents in several categories of citizenship. Figure 11.2 displays the scores of the different groups on the five citizenship dimensions.

The statistical analyses demonstrated that there were differences between the groups in four of the five categories: social engagement, political engagement, law-abidingness, and shared identity. Surprisingly, there were no differences in the category of tolerance, indicating that, over all groups, people thought of tolerance as the most important element of citizenship. In the following five sections, I shall discuss these results per citizenship dimension and combine the survey and interview data, starting with the dimension of tolerance.
11.1 Tolerance

The results regarding the dimension of tolerance are probably the most fascinating of my research. This element had not been distinguished as a separate dimension in previous empirical citizenship research. My survey results, however, indicate that Dutch citizens regard it as the most important element of citizenship. There were no differences between religious groups in the relative importance they attributed to tolerance, implying widely shared agreement. Notably, the first interview results showed that none of the Protestants and only two Muslims mentioned this category of their own volition. These results seem to contradict each other. However, when explicitly asked about the notion of tolerance, the interviewees did address its importance for citizenship. When I asked Ruben, for instance, to what extent should citizens be tolerant towards each other, he replied; ‘As far as possible, of course’. When I posed the question of how tolerant should one be if other opinions clashed with your own norms and values, he said:

Yes, if you, um… if [these other opinions] don’t damage you, then you should tolerate them. … By the way, some of these things fall under ‘decency’. For example, I think cursing is a matter of decency. According to me, you just shouldn’t behave like that, for example. And that’s all fine, that you — you know, if someone else curses, then I think it’s the right of that person to do so. But I also think, if someone curses in my presence, I’m allowed to ask him not to do it again. Because he hurts me. Well, if he then continues to do it, then that’s his right, although I did ask him to stop it. And I do think that you should be tolerant towards each other in situations like this — try to be.
This excerpt shows that Ruben’s ideal of tolerance, indeed, reaches quite far. He explains that he thinks he should have the right to voice his opinion over something that he does not agree with. But if the other person then deliberately denies his opinion, he should still be tolerant towards the other.

What can be gleaned from the interviews regarding tolerance is that although most of the Protestants and Muslims thought tolerance was important for citizenship, there was only one person who considered it to be the most important element for a good citizen. When asked about the notion of tolerance, Lucas (Protestant, male, 44 years) replied; ‘[Tolerance] might be the most important value. Yes, tolerance and responsibility’. When I asked him whether there were any limits to this tolerance, he responded:

Eh… not many. According to me, tolerance is — yes, tolerance for me reaches very far. In that respect I am, well … the statement that is often attributed to Voltaire, about, ‘I will defend your freedom with my life’… Although I think it’s a horrible statement, I think it’s a basic value, especially as a citizen. So yes, I think it’s horrible that women are not allowed to have an active role within the SGP, but I will always defend that [freedom]. The same goes for religious practices within Islam. I wouldn’t … well personally I don’t have any problems with headscarves. I think it’s often an expression of emancipation … but I would be very hesitant to ban the burqa. Ah, yeah, if you really go on and get to the issue of something like female circumcision, then I think you’ve reached a point that crosses a line. But that’s because it clashes with other values — central values in society.

In sum, although most respondents stressed the importance of tolerance when asked about it, Lucas was the only one whole seemed to value tolerance over social engagement as essential characteristic of a good citizen.

Interestingly, where most of the Protestants discussed tolerance with a certain objectivity, many of the Muslims referred to more personal and religious instances. In the quotes above, we saw that Lucas mentioned concrete examples, but these were examples outside his personal life, nor did these examples relate to his own religious community. Ruben used the example of cursing, but emphasised that it was basically a matter of decency. In striking contrast, many of the Muslim respondents did use personal and religious examples, as Kasim (Muslim, male, 31 years) here illustrates:

[Tolerance], that is definitely important. That doesn’t mean that as a Muslim, I am always right. It doesn’t mean either that everything that I want, well, needs to happen. And that what I don’t want is not allowed to happen. No, that’s rubbish. I think that we should accept each other anyway. Eh… but that has to be reciprocal. There shouldn’t only be acceptance from one side… that good feeling, it has to come a bit from all sides.
When I asked him whether there were limits to what should be acceptable and to what should be accepted, he answered:

Yes, we just talked about gay marriage. My belief is absolutely against it. Eh … well [laughs] if it is accepted, allowed here in the Netherlands, then I can’t do anything about it, I have to accept it. Period.

Kasim has clearly related the issue of tolerance to his own religious conviction, in which an interesting implicit prioritisation of values becomes visible: by indicating that gay marriage is not accepted in Islam, Kasim justifies his personal opinion on this matter. He then turns to the fact that gay marriage is legally allowed in the Netherlands, which gives him no other option than to accept this fact. It seems to me that he shows here a prioritisation of law-abidingness over tolerance: it is not as much the principle of tolerance that leads him to accepting gay marriage, but rather the legal status of it in the Netherlands. However, this legal acceptance does not equate with cultural or personal acceptance.

An example in which the influence of religious conviction on thinking about tolerance is even more apparent, comes from a long excerpt from the interview with Tarik (Muslim, male, 36 years):

People should be very tolerant [towards others who think differently]. Except when it, it is hurtful for, for the other. And if there is really a line crossed. And then I think,…then I immediately think about those cartoons, and about the issue regarding headscarves and all that. And I think that people ah… don’t have to agree with Muslims. They don’t have to regard my prophet as a good prophet, or maybe not even acknowledge him as a prophet at all. It’s their right. And if they don’t acknowledge the Quran as the word of God, that’s their right. I can name many other things. But when you are offensive, and yes, cross a certain line, then you actually provoke others to offend you too … I think, yes, that there is a limit.

So, actually, I think that the law on blasphemy … that it really should be maintained. Because… well, unlimited freedom doesn’t exist. Unlimited freedom of speech doesn’t exist. If unlimited freedom of speech existed, which wasn’t limited at all, then there would be fights everywhere. It is especially difficult if you’re Muslim and say, ‘yes, but I have my norms and values, and you offend me now, but I cannot… I, I believe in Jesus as a prophet, that he is also God’s prophet. Although you abused or ridiculed the prophet Mohamed, I can’t ridicule Jesus; I am unable to do so’. I am not saying that the ones who made these cartoons and other things about the prophet Mohamed, that they are always Christians. It is also non-religious people, people who don’t believe at all.

And I know that in the sixties or seventies here in the Netherlands, they called Jesus ‘the donkey of Nazareth’, or something like that, and a
book was written... And, back then, the whole church was against that. But what happened? In the end, the church surrendered. So they accepted that people made fun of their prophet, of their belief. And now they expect the same thing from us, Muslims, that we also accept that. But we don’t want to, that’s our right. There are international treaties, and the United Nations… everyone has the right to practice his belief. Everyone has a certain protection, because of his belief. Eh… a right to protection. Everyone is allowed to raise his or her children according to a certain religious belief. And educate them. That's why we have these different school systems in the Netherlands. In that same ah, description of rights of the United Nations, there are things like this, but freedom of speech is also included. But that freedom of speech isn’t a total freedom. At the point where my freedom is limited because of your freedom, it actually limits your freedom too. And yes, that, that hasn’t been maintained in the past years, let me just say.

Tarik apparently thinks that there should be limits to tolerance, in the sense that the freedom of one person can impinge on the freedom of another person. What is fascinating is that he explicitly says that he thinks there should be limits to freedom of speech and that these limits are exceeded when other people are offended. However, Tarik does not seem to place similar limits on other human rights. It would be interesting to ask what he thinks about intolerant religious groups who offend other people based on their religious conviction. He suggested that there is unlimited freedom of religion, but only limited freedom of speech. In the whole quote, he related the notion of tolerance to issues relating to religion and especially to his own conviction.

Where tolerance is mostly seen as a positive value that enables different people to live together peacefully, Tarik was very ambiguous in his interpretation of tolerance. On the one hand, he thought that tolerance was a positive value but on the other hand, he interpreted the term as though it required him to give up part of his rights. Subsequently, he interpreted tolerance as the term that enabled other people to offend him and his religion. Although this example makes it very clear how personally involved some of the Muslim respondents were when talking about this topic, Tarik’s opinion was not representative. Many of the Muslims emphasised the affirmative aspects of tolerance; a positive value in a multicultural society. Tolerance as a positive value enables people to maintain their habits and identity, while still living together in a society with people who hold different opinions. It is probably this latter interpretation of tolerance as a necessary condition to live peacefully in a pluralistic society that induced the high level of agreement in the survey results.

66 He is most likely referring to the so-called ‘donkey trial’ in the late 1960s, in which Gerard Reve was accused of blasphemy.
67 It is interesting to see how Tarik turns the question on tolerance into a discussion on rights. It is, however, beyond the scope of this study to discuss this shift in detail, also because this line of reasoning did not seem representative for the group of respondents.
In sum, although many interviewees did not spontaneously mention tolerance as element of citizenship, when they were explicitly asked about this notion, both the survey results and the interviews showed that there is much agreement over the importance of tolerance.

11.2 Law-abidingness

The results of the survey showed that Muslims and Protestants considered law-abidingness, as a characteristic of a good citizen, more important than non-believers. Muslims, in particular, appreciated this dimension more than Catholics. This result corresponds with Dekker and De Hart’s (2002) results, whose research also discovered distinctions between religious and non-religious people on law-abidingness. While Dekker and De Hart did not explain these differences, the current study has investigated the possibility of the involvement of religious commitment as an explanatory force. The involvement of religious commitment is investigated by introducing two new variables: ‘religious identity’, which measured the importance of religion for a respondent’s identity; and ‘orthodoxy’, which measured the level of orthodoxy, or strictness of the respondent’s belief.

The results of the follow-up analyses that included these variables revealed that the differences on law-abidingness between the religious groups can be explained by differences in level of orthodoxy: the more orthodox people are, the more they emphasise law-abidingness as essential for good citizenship. This signifies that Protestant and Muslims prioritise law-abidingness more, not because of something inherent in their belief, but because they are stricter in their belief. A possible explanation for this finding could be that Protestants and Muslims have a more literal approach towards their holy books, and obedience to authorities is an explicit element of their conviction. Both in the Bible and in the Islamic tradition, it is said that people should show obedience to laws and authorities, as long as these are not incompatible with God’s will. In several of the interviews, respondents referred to this religious obligation to explain their

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68 There were no significant differences between Muslims and Protestants, between Catholics and Protestants, and between Catholics and non-religious people.

69 In the Sahih al-Bukhari, one of the six major hadiths in Sunna Islam, the following is said about obedience to authority: ‘A Muslim man must hear and obey both in respect of what he likes and dislikes, unless he is commanded to do a wrong action. If he is commanded to do a wrong action, he should not hear or obey’ (Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 2796, as cited on http://www.sunnipath.com).

In the Bible, several verses talk about obedience to authority. As Julian’s quote shows, the fifth Commandment can be seen as commandment to obey authority (‘Honour your father and your mother as the Lord your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you’, Deuteronomy 5:16), and obedience to authority is also emphasised in Romans 13:1: ‘Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God’.
emphasis on law-abidingness, as Julian (Protestant, male, 35 years) here does:

To me, it’s very clear. That also comes straight out of the Bible. The fifth Commandment, that you should respect authority. Eh no, there is no doubt about that. What can be debated is, well, sometimes a government can exceed limits, and then they ask things of citizens that they are actually not allowed to, or that they shouldn’t ask, based on our religious conviction … Yes I think, for example, that it’s very clearly the case with that whole discussion about the conscientious objections from a public civil servant. Then, I think that the government goes too far when it asks a public civil servant to do things that go against his deepest convictions, while you can practically solve the problem by saying; ‘Hey, let another colleague register the marriage.’

This type of reasoning is quite common, especially among the Protestant interviewees, in that they referred to the Bible to emphasise the importance of law-abidingness and also that they stressed that their religious belief can be a valid exception to law-abidingness. The example of conscientious objections was also a typical example that the Protestant interviewees used to show the tensions between government policies and their religious conviction. I pay more attention to this issue in Chapter 12, where I discuss the interview results with regard to opinions on the role of religion.

A similar argument can be found in Kasim’s answer to the question of law-abidingness:

Abide by the Dutch law? Yes, that is very important. That can also be found in our Quran … You have to — you have to adapt to society, to the laws of the country where you live. So, if here in the Netherlands, just for example, right? — I’m just naming something — if I’m not allowed to drive through a red light, then I’m not allowed to do so. I’m not allowed to according to Islam. So that means, if there is a law, I should abide by that … Unless it contradicts your belief. So, if the Dutch law says, you should eat pork once a month… [laughs] then, just say, then I won’t abide by that law. But if it’s just a reasonable law, if it is understandable, logical, then I should just abide by that. That’s it.

Kasim was the only Muslim respondent who explicitly connected the importance of law-abidingness to his religious belief. Several other Muslims emphasised the importance of this element, but they did not refer to their religion here, as the quote from Rahmi (Muslim, male, 39 years) demonstrates:

I think, good citizenship, responsible citizenship, that… then you should also abide by the laws. But whether someone who consciously doesn’t abide by the law is a good citizen or not, I leave that aside. I don’t want to exclude people from citizenship. However, I do think that following the rules is part of citizenship.
11.3 Social Engagement

The results of the survey regarding social engagement show precisely the same trends as those regarding law-abidingness. In terms of characteristics for a good citizen, both Muslims and Protestants perceived social engagement as more important than non-believers, and Catholics considered this element as less important than Muslims.\(^7\) When the level of religious commitment is also taken into account, the results show that both the level of religious identity and the level of orthodoxy play a role, although the effect of religious community still remains. This means that, independent of the level of religious commitment, there remain differences between the religious groups in the importance they attach to social engagement.

We know from previous research that religious citizens tend to donate more money to charity and do more voluntary service than non-religious people (Bekkers 2004; Scheepers and Te Grotenhuis 2005; Ruiter and De Graaf 2006; Reitsma 2007; Sluis and Van Oudenhoven 2009). It is unclear whether this is also the case in this survey sample, but it is conceivable that people who donate more money and do more voluntary service place a greater emphasis on the social engagement element of citizenship. When looking at religious differences at an item level (instead of a dimension level), one of the two items that show a significant and moderate effect is: ‘Donates money to charity’. Protestants and Muslims find this aspect more essential for a good citizen than Catholics and non-believers. The fact that both Muslims and Protestants regard donating to the poor as an important aspect of their religion could explain this effect. Although the same might be true for Catholics, it is conceivable that in the Netherlands, Muslims and Protestants interpret their holy books more strictly and therefore emphasise the importance of this item. Another interpretation of the results could be that there was a relation between one’s religious community and the level of social cohesion within the community. This in turn led to the differences in scores on social engagement. As such, Muslims and Protestants perhaps belong to more exclusive (religious) communities than Catholics and non-religious citizens, and that within such tight-knit communities, social engagement is valued more.

As could be expected on the basis of the survey results, the interview groups did not differ in their opinions on social engagement. Besides the fact that almost all of the respondents spontaneously mentioned social engagement as an essential element for citizenship (as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter), there were also no remarkable differences in the actual interpretations of the term. Both Protestants and Muslims referred mainly to the importance of helping other people, doing voluntary service work, and active participation in society.

\(^7\) There were no significant differences between Muslims and Protestants, between Catholics and Protestants, and between Catholics and non-religious people.
11.4 Political Engagement

The survey results showed that Protestants regarded the dimension of political engagement as more essential for good citizenship than non-religious citizens. No differences existed between the other groups. In the Netherlands, different Christian political parties exist, which are mainly based on Protestant ideology. This might form part of the explanation of this effect; if Protestants are politically better organised, then they may think of political engagement as more important for good citizenship. However, the explanation can also be reversed: the fact that Protestants prioritise political engagement may have initiated their political organisation into different political parties. These two directions of the effect might have mutually influenced each other.

As Figure 10.2 showed that Muslims in this sample found political engagement even less important than non-religious people, it is strange to find no significant differences between Muslims and Protestants in the survey. This is probably due to the limited number of Muslims that participated in the survey. Lack of significant differences could also be due to a relatively large variation in answers within this group. This variation is also present in the interviews. Some Muslims thought that politicians did not listen to ordinary people and that citizens did not have any influence at all, while others emphasised the importance of representatives from within the Muslim community, and a certain level of political engagement, as Hasan (Muslim, male, 30 years) argues:

> People should vote in elections, yes. Yes, of course — yes politics — you should keep up with that too. But if you aren’t interested, well, then naturally, that engagement doesn’t have to entail that much. But you should know who governs this country, you know? That you should know. At least that much.

Within the group of Protestants, we already saw that almost half of the respondents initially indicated that political engagement was part of being a good citizen. There was only one interviewee in this group who explicitly denied the importance of political engagement. Besides this one interviewee, all Protestants attached a relatively high importance to political engagement, and the interview with Esther (Protestant, female, 39 years) is only one example of this:

> I think [political engagement] is important, yes, absolutely. Because, in the end, it’s the political parties who decide. They are pretty influential actually, in the way things go in the country. They create the preconditions, so that the economy and the society can grow and flourish, so to say. So yes, it is important to be informed, to think along, and to vote. Absolutely. That has great influence.

Esther shows here that, to her, political engagement includes aspects of knowledge and action. It is about being informed and acting accordingly. It
needs to be noted that she was one of the few respondents who named other political activities than merely voting. For most respondents, political engagement did not entail that much. They mostly indicated that one should preferably have some knowledge about politics, and one should use his right to vote, and that is basically all that is needed, as this quote from Benjamin (Protestant, male, 43 years) also shows:

Well, everyone has the right to vote. You’ve got that right for a reason. I mean... either way, everyone always has an opinion about the way the country is governed and about the way things go ... Well, then I think, elections are the moment to show what you think. So, to me, that is the basis. If you have the right to vote, you should vote in elections. And if you don’t agree at all, you can give in a blank vote. That’s some kind of protest, or a signal, right?

Hardly anyone mentioned other possible expressions of political engagement. In general, the impression I received from the respondents was that political engagement was not one of the most relevant elements for a good citizen. This reflected previous empirical research on citizenship in the Netherlands (Dekker and De Hart 2002; Hurenkamp and Tonkens 2008), and contradicts the importance that is attached to this dimension in the political philosophical tradition. In the Synthesis, I will elaborate further on this result.

11.5 Shared Identity

The survey results showed that Protestants valued the dimension of shared identity more than non-religious people. There were no differences found between any of the other groups, which is rather surprising, as it could be expected that Muslims, as non-native citizens, would find this dimension less important than native Dutch people.

Remarkably, an item-level analysis (as opposed to a dimension-level analysis) showed that Muslims regarded the acceptance of homosexuality as less important for a good citizen than the other groups. It is fascinating that this item, which fell out of the analysis on a dimension level, exhibited important results on its own. There was a hierarchy in appreciation of this item: non-believers and Catholics thought of this item as being fairly important for a good citizen (mean scores around 6). Protestants had a mean score of $M = 5.3$ and Muslims thought of this item as least important, with a mean of $M = 4.3$.

The differences noted with this item can best be explained by cultural and religious differences between the groups. In Muslim communities, homosexuality is probably less accepted, although the results of this study showed that the Muslim respondents were internally divided over this item.72

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71 As the Factor Analysis in Chapter 8 showed.

72 As is shown by the high standard deviation ($SD = 2.09$) within this group.
This is possibly due to the fact that only a few Muslims participated in the survey and could also reflect internal differences in opinions in the group of Dutch Muslims as a whole. That homosexuality is generally accepted in the Netherlands, offers Muslims a choice to either accept it, or reject it based on their religious or cultural upbringing. These results may be indicative of the internal controversy within the group over so-called progressive Dutch values, that the acceptance of homosexuality typifies.

When considering the interview data, there is indeed quite some variation in the opinions of Muslims on the category of shared identity and on the acceptance of homosexuality. Some of them seemed to embrace a tolerant world view and emphasised respect, albeit for very different opinions. They thought that the government could demand adaptation to a certain degree and that some basic rules needed to be fixed, but individuals were free to keep their own opinions and habits, whether they were ‘typically Dutch’ or not. One example of this mentality is Aziz (Muslim, male, 30 years):

I think that, that these kinds of values, actually, that they actually are a kind of misunderstanding. I do not totally agree with them. I, well look — I already shared it with you, so it’s not a problem now: I think that homosexuality is some kind of disease.\(^73\) I am not saying that — that the government should think about homosexuality in this way, but I also don’t think that they should ah, put pressure on people; that it should be accepted — say, you see. But I think, in that respect, there is, you know, pressure nowadays.

At a different moment in the interview, Aziz said that, although he is against homosexuality, he does not act accordingly. Nor does he offend or hurt homosexuals, because he feels that he needs to be tolerant towards other people and other opinions. At the same time, the quote showed that Aziz also believed that the government should be more tolerant towards different opinions on this issue. He felt that the government placed too much pressure on the acceptance of certain values. Overall, Aziz thought that citizens should tolerate differences in opinions, including when it came to these ‘typical Dutch values’. A somewhat different approach can be found in this quote by Tarik:

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\(^{73}\) During the interview, Aziz was sometimes very aware of the fact that the conversation was audiotaped. There were several instances where he looked at the audio recorder. He once mentioned that he knew that all he said would be treated confidentially, but nonetheless, he seemed to try to say only the ‘right’ things. At some point, when we were talking about tolerance, he said that he should also be tolerant himself. He seemed to hesitate for a short while, looked at the recorder, and then said, ‘I’ll give an example, you probably won’t like this’. He went on to say that he once told his fellow students that he thought homosexuality was a disease. Due to their negative reactions, he concluded that he should not have told them what he thought. He emphasised immediately afterwards that he would not offend homosexuals if he encountered them, although he personally thinks homosexuality is unacceptable.
I oppose the use of integration if the actual meaning underneath it is assimilation. I don’t agree with that. But I am in favour of participation. But hey, what is integration? Look, if I live here in the Netherlands, and if I participate, then I’m already integrated, right? I see integration more as a… Integration is actually a verb, right? You do it, you work with it. It’s an act. But when we talk about homosexuality, or if we talk about … yes, acceptance of abortion and euthanasia, and I don’t know what else, then you are actually no longer talking about a verb, but you are talking about norms and values. Or… no, you are talking about values … And because these are values, they have something to do with belief. And I am not talking about religion. Something I believe in. I believe, for example, that euthanasia is murder. That has nothing to do with me being Islamic, because I know a heap of Dutch people who would consider that as murder, even if they are not Christians. I know a heap of Dutch people who don’t have a belief, who aren’t religious, but who are against homosexuality.

So this has nothing to do with Islam, the integration of Muslims, or the integration of minorities in the Netherlands… no, this has to do with the values of people. And I don’t understand why people still point to, to the Muslims. Because, if you gathered a number of non-Muslims in the Netherlands, and if you conducted interviews with these thousands of non-Muslims in the Netherlands, then I believe that there would be hundreds who would say: ‘I am against homosexuality, I am against abortion, and I am also against euthanasia’. So I don’t understand why the discussion is only about Muslims who are against homosexuality or against euthanasia …

So, integration should not be another stick to beat the Muslims with, in order to get them to assimilate. I am in favour of participation; I encourage Muslims to participate more actively in society; more participation — that’s what I encourage. But, as I said before, if they don’t participate, that does not automatically mean — it can — but it does not automatically mean that they are worse citizens.

Although parts of his statement are comparable to the idea Aziz put forward that the government should not force the acceptance of certain values, the tone of his statement is very different from that of Aziz. Here again, we see that a respondent is very personally involved when answering a question about citizenship. Apparently, he felt personally attacked, although the question did not specifically focus on tensions between Dutch values and Islam, but asked whether he thought that the government was allowed to emphasise these issues. The fact that he so emphatically insisted that these values had nothing to do with Islam and that he did not understand why people kept focusing on this issue as a particularly Muslim problem, actually focused more on this aspect than was intended by the question.

Aside from the tone, there are other interesting things about Tarik’s quote. Firstly, Tarik problematised the misuse of the word ‘integration’. According to him — and several respondents, not only Muslims, pointed this out — the
Dutch government wants immigrants to assimilate into Dutch society. Tarik felt that the government asked too much when it focused on the acceptance of certain progressive values. Furthermore, Tarik mentioned the importance of participation for integration in Dutch society. However, in the last sentence, he also made clear that he did not think that there was a one-to-one relationship between participation and citizenship. People who do not participate actively in society are not automatically bad citizens. Participation is something that should be encouraged, but it is not a necessary condition for good citizenship.

Now that we have seen the diverse Muslim reactions on this topic, we shall focus on the interpretations of the Protestant interviewees. A notable result from the survey was that Protestants highlighted a shared national identity more than non-religious people. One possible explanation could be that Protestants value this dimension more, because they interpret the Dutch culture and Dutch values as similar or related to Protestant culture and values. They probably see the Dutch nation as a Christian-Protestant nation and as a result may place greater value on this typically Dutch, or as they see it, Protestant, culture.

Although I did not conduct interviews with non-religious people, the interviewed Protestants were not as positive about the element of shared identity as was expected on the basis of the survey results. The interviewees seemed to be divided and opinions on this dimension depended largely on the interpretation of this shared identity. To cite one example, Lea (Protestant, female, 31 years), argued that it was unnecessary to have a shared identity, as long as you abided by the rules of the country:

If you don’t love this country, that’s fine. As long as you abide by the rules about what society asks from you, about the way we live here. I don’t have to love my neighbour, for example. But I should adapt to the fact that these people live next to me. And I think too, that if I were to emigrate and I hated that country, that’s fine, but maybe I shouldn’t have moved there.

This line of reasoning was found in more interviews with Protestants. However, when the interview explicitly focused on the progressive Dutch values that are emphasised by the Dutch government and when I introduced such themes as euthanasia, abortion and gay marriage, several respondents professed that they did not recognise themselves in this portrayal of the Netherlands:

I consider the constitution to be more important than the national bond, so to say … So, you should abide by the law, relate yourself in a certain way to the constitution, and have a positive attitude towards the rights

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74 It has to be mentioned that this depended to a large extent on the interpretation that they, or I, gave to the notion during the interview. Some of the Protestant respondents acknowledge the importance of shared identity for integration, in the sense that they think it is important that people feel Dutch and speak the Dutch language. Some also mention that certain Dutch habits need to be accepted by all Dutch citizens.
and duties that citizenship entails, to put it formally. So, that is more legal culture than national culture. It is of course related to the Netherlands, but we just talked about that film by Rita Verdonk about integration, and then I start wondering; ‘Do I feel at home in this country?’ — you know? And of course this film was about drug abuse and so forth, and then I think; ‘Is this my Holland?’

We see that Jacob’s interpretation of this dimension generally matches Aziz’s interpretation mentioned above, namely that the government’s focus on certain typically Dutch issues does not make people feel more at home in this country. This feeling is true for (some) native Dutch people and for (some) migrants. When I related these results from the interviews regarding the issue of shared identity to the shifts in integration policies, many of the respondents — both Muslims and Protestants — seemed to support the transitions that were made in the late 1990s, in which the liberal approach was combined with a focus on participation in society. However, they opposed the liberal nationalist approach of the last ten years, where the government has focused more on the acceptance of progressive Dutch values.

When I asked the respondents to what extent they identified themselves with various groups, beginning with their religious group and their local community and extending to the Netherlands or Turkey, respondents unanimously identified most with their religious group. Both Muslims and Protestants specified that their religion formed the basis for their whole lives; for their social contacts, their norms and values and their opinions about important issues in life. In this sample of interviewees, I did not find clear differences between Protestants and Muslims in their appreciation of identification as part of a group at the national or local level. As we have seen, respondents were ambiguous towards the idea of national identification. They disapproved of the current focus on progressive values, although both groups simultaneously mentioned that they felt Dutch. With regard to identification at the local level, both groups did not show strong emotional bonds. The more politically active citizens from both groups felt more closely connected but in general, identification with the local community mostly overlapped, and was consequently surpassed by, identification with their religious community.

Most of the Turkish Muslims did mention their double bonds with their country of origin and the Netherlands. The ambivalent and multifaceted feelings of belonging to different nations (Stock 2014) was, for instance, brought forward by Semra, who stated; ‘I don’t feel Dutch, but I don’t feel Turkish either. I do feel a sense of belonging to the Netherlands, but I feel also a sense of belonging to ’Turkey’. While Semra interpreted this double bond as enrichment, other interviewees like Hasan mentioned that in both countries they were always seen as foreigners. He commented that:

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75 He refers to the film Coming to the Netherlands, which I discussed in Chapter 5.
It can be difficult, because in the end you don’t belong anywhere. Because here, you are a foreigner … so because of that, you actually feel like an outsider, you know. But in Turkey, there … you’re called Dutch, or European.

In the end, both groups thus showed ambiguous responses regarding identification with the national level and identified most with their religious group.