



DRACHTEN: THE PLACE TO BE?

The attitude of citizens of Drachten towards asylum seekers
explained



DWJM (2020)

10 JULI 2020
UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN
Willem Lindeboom
S3443396
Supervisor: S. Adaawen

Abstract

Worldwide, more than 70 million refugees flee from an unsafe situation and seek asylum. In the Netherlands, there has been a lot of discussion about asylum seekers. This qualitative study, conducted among citizens of Drachten, investigates the reasons behind their attitude towards asylum seekers. Culture explains their behaviour to a great extent by means of taught norms and values. According to literature there is a strong identification with nationality related to a less accepting attitude towards asylum seekers. Frisians in this study described a strong sense of belonging, which could result in othering of the asylum seekers.

Furthermore, is prejudice a cause of excluding attitudes towards asylum seekers. Prejudice is softened when people familiarize themselves with different cultures. Moreover, interaction with minorities positively influenced their attitude towards asylum seekers, in line with Allports' contact theory.

All in all, these factors mainly explained the attitudes of citizens from Drachten towards asylum seekers. One with a sense of belonging towards asylum seekers is more likely to take responsibility in the integration process of asylum seekers.

Preface

The slogan of the city of Drachten is: "Drachten wil je meemaken", which could be translated as: Drachten: the place to be. This study investigates if this also applies to for asylum seekers, by interviewing citizens of Drachten about their attitude towards asylum seekers.

Table of contents

Introduction	3
Theoretical framework	4
Conceptual model	6
Methodology	8
Paradigm	8
In-depth interviews	8
Limitations	8
Data collection	9
Positionality	9
Ethical considerations	9
Data analysis	9
Results	11
Descriptives	11
Contact theory	11
Citizenship	12
Cultural dimension	12
Prejudice	13
Interaction	14
Familiarity	15
Othering	15
Belonging	16
Conclusion	18
Revised conceptual model	19
Recommendations and future research	20
Bibliography	21
Appendix	23
A: Informed consent	23
B: Code tree	24
C: Interview guide	25

Introduction

In the last couple of years, the terms “refugee” and “asylum seeker” have been all over the news. In 2015, it was even called an official “refugee crisis” (European Commission, 2015). It is a timely subject because more than 70 million people have fled their place of residence (UNHCR, 2020). All the attention on the subject produced many discussions about asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers are not allowed to learn the language or work, therefore they are killing their time in the host country (et al., 2019). This is problematic because speaking the language of-, and working in their host country will help them to get integrated (Strang & Ager, 2010). This creates a barrier between the asylum seekers and the local population, whilst the support of nationals of the host country is necessary for immigrants to integrate (Strang & Ager, 2010).

From personal experience, controversial opinions about this subject are observed. Often, prejudice about asylum seekers seems to be determinant for their -negative- attitude towards asylum seekers, while others talk about asylum seekers as people that should be accepted just like everyone else. This aroused interest in the researcher about what factors in one's life determine his or her attitude towards asylum seekers.

The topic is relevant in Drachten, because of the asylum centre (AZC) which was established in 1995 with room for about 600 asylum seekers. When a new asylum centre was established, the CBS (2018) found out that 64% of the local residents would consider objecting. However, most of the resistance to an AZC disappears over time, which makes it interesting to see whether asylum seekers are accepted in society by individuals of Drachten over the years (Lubbers, 2006).

This study is unique. So far, no qualitative research is conducted in a Dutch city with an asylum centre, with the focus on the underlying reasons for an individual's attitude towards asylum seekers. Zorlu (2017) performed already an extensive, quantitative research about the attitudes of local Dutch citizens living close to an AZC. They found that attitudes are shaped by the socioeconomic position of a person, his international orientation, his perception if asylum seekers are a threat to Dutch culture, whether it has any economic benefits for him and whether he has personal contact with asylum seekers (Zorlu, 2017). Based on a literature review, the explanation could be found due to the Dutch culture, prejudicial beliefs, and the impact of contact (Brons, 2006; Mancini et al., 2018; Allport, 1954).

Hence this study focuses on the following research question:

"To what extent do culture, prejudice, and interaction explain the attitudes of citizens of Drachten towards asylum seekers?"

It is expected that people with a positive attitude towards asylum seekers are more likely to be involved in the integration process of asylum seekers. For this study, a theoretical framework is created to elaborate on the concepts that will help to answer the research question. Subsequently, the methodology will be discussed followed by the results of the data collection. Thereafter, the study will be concluded.

Theoretical framework

The underlying reasons for the behaviour of citizens from Drachten towards asylum seekers are researched. At first the meaning of citizenship will be determined, followed by the influence of culture on attitudes towards minorities. Besides culture, the concept of prejudice will be discussed as an explanation of one's attitude towards asylum seekers. Subsequently, the impact of the of the contact theory on the previously mentioned factors will be discussed.

An asylum seeker is someone who requested asylum at the immigration- and naturalization service known as the IND (UNHCR, 2020). The IND researches the situation of an asylum seeker to see if that person can be considered a refugee. If so, the IND can give the asylum seeker legal status. A refugee is someone who is not able to return to his country of origin because that would mean returning to a life-threatening situation (UNHCR, 1953).

Alongside asylum seekers, there are citizens. Citizenship is associated with democracy. To be a citizen means to have civil and political rights. Moreover, citizenship is strongly related to individual freedom (Singer et al., 2008). One becomes a citizen when the legal status is acquired. There is no need to be involved in politics to be a citizen (Singer, 1996). However, Smith (1989) states that to be a modern citizen, a status on its own is not sufficient. To be a citizen from a nation-state includes commonalities in culture or ethnic background.

Culture is inseparable from language. Language covers the historical and cultural background of a people. Besides, it represents their current behaviour (Jiang, 2000). Culture can be seen as meta behaviour, in which actual behaviour is influenced by culture (Brons, 2006). This means laws, habits, norms and values differ per culture. One can only become a member of a society if its culture is acquired, since culture can be socially transferred (Brons, 2006).

There can be regional differences within a culture. Especially in the case of the Frisians and their own language. Research from Serlie (2004) showed that the north of the Netherlands is more introverted. Furthermore, in the municipality of Smalingerland certain facets of culture show signs of relatively high individualistic behaviour (Brons, 2006). This includes a high degree of post-materialism among the residents, which means there is a focus on autonomy.

A sample in Australia showed that people who strongly identify with their nationality are less likely to display positive behaviour towards asylum seekers (Nickerson and Louis, 2008). When asylum seekers are perceived as a threat to values or habits of the culture in the host country, people are more prejudiced towards asylum seekers (Mancini et al., 2018). To be prejudiced against something or someone is to have a judgement without the information required to assess the situation.

Religion is part of a culture. In another Australian sample religion played a part in the perception of asylum seekers. Perry et al. (2015) showed that Christians were less likely to be prejudiced against asylum seekers than non-religious participants.

Allport (1954) researched prejudices between groups. This resulted in the 'contact theory'. It states that prejudices between groups can effectively be reduced via

interaction under optimal circumstances. Contact should be personal and not conflicting. Circumstances are optimal when the groups have common goals, abide to social norms that stimulate intergroup cooperation, have equal status, and the presence of institutional support (Allport, 1954). Pettigrew et al. (2007) found that personal contact, even without optimal circumstances, is key in reducing prejudices.

When people have never been in contact with asylum seekers, their opinion can be shaped by the media, because the media form an influential social force (Finney and Robinson, 2008). The way the media frames asylum seekers is likely to correspond to the view of the majority of the people (Fowler, 1991). In the United Kingdom, this resulted in the framing of asylum seekers as criminals and people that live of governments' money (Lynn and Lea, 2003).

Another factor influencing ones perception of asylum seekers, is whether they are genuine which means that they have fled a dangerous situation. People from the host society are likely to get angry when asylum seekers are not genuine (Verkuyten, 2004). Hercowitz-Amir et al. (2017) found that the perception of asylum seekers being disingenuous leads to exclusionary attitudes towards them. Therefore, the perception of a citizen towards asylum seekers determines their attitude. Resulting in the concept of othering or the concept of belonging.

In this specific situation, othering towards asylum seekers is the result of a clash in culture, a perceived threat, a lack of a genuine reason to be here or one or more prejudices as a consequence of not interacting with asylum seekers (Nickerson and Louis, 2008, Hercowitz-Amir, 2017; Mancini et al., 2018; Allport, 1954).

Having the feeling of belonging towards asylum seekers is most likely the result of interaction with asylum seekers and this feeling grows when people in the host country are religious. This results in the willingness to help the asylum seekers integrate. Integration is the process of becoming an accepted part of society (Garcés-Mascreñas and Penninx, 2016). The aim of this process is citizenship while trying to familiarize the other with aspects of 'us' that are different from 'them' (Strang and Anger, 2010).

Conceptual model

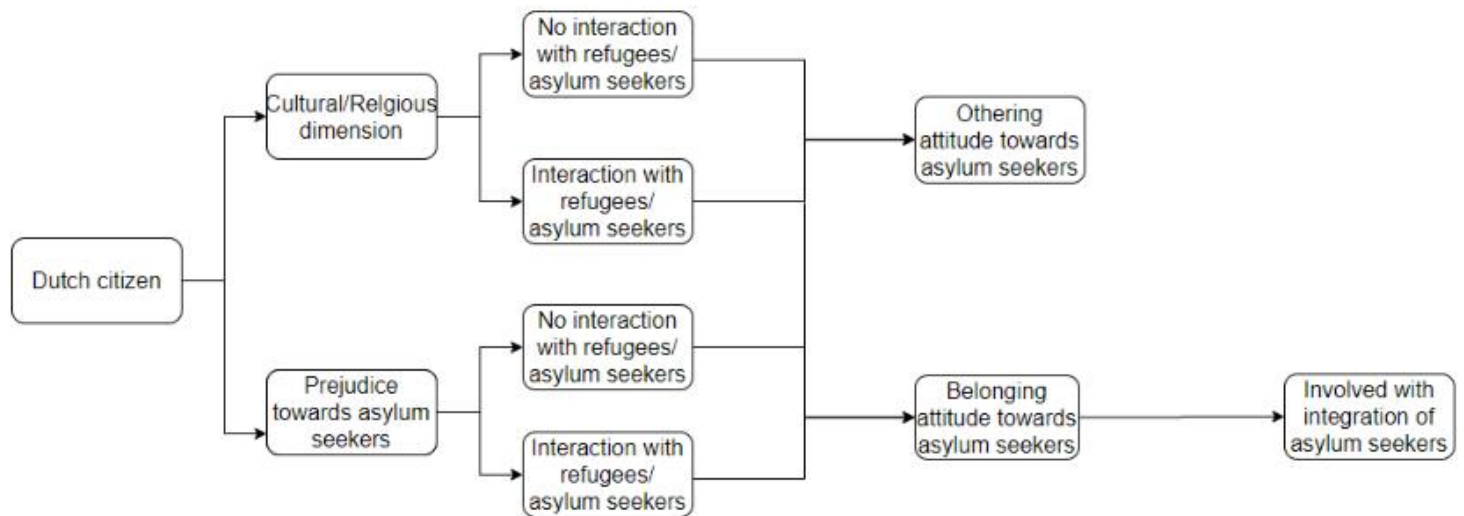


Figure 1: Conceptual model

The starting point of the conceptual model is on the left with the Dutch citizens. All participants of this research are Dutch citizens, and it is interesting to know what their opinion is on the meaning of being Dutch.

The fact that they are Dutch, determines the culture that has been taught to them. Therefore, the cultural/religious dimension, as one of the 3 dimensions discussed by Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx (2016), will be explored. The behaviour of the individual is influenced by culture (Brons, 2006) because this is something that all individuals that belong to that culture, have in common. People that belong to the same cultural group have matching traditions, norms, and values. Therefore, actual beliefs and behaviour can be partly explained by culture. All these beliefs and values can be socially transferred (Brons, 2006). However, for this to happen properly, language is the binding factor (Jiang, 2000). Furthermore, religion can impact on the beliefs and values of a person. Therefore, this will be taken into account in this dimension.

The typical Dutch culture will be discussed. Furthermore, the research is conducted in Drachten, Friesland. The Frisians have their own language and are therefore likely to deviate from Dutch standards in some ways. The Frisian culture is known to be more introvert (Serlie, 2004), which could turn out in the research as more distancing towards asylum seekers.

Besides culture, opinions are shaped by everything people hear and see. These are most likely stories, without experiencing the situation themselves. For example, the way the media frames the subject of asylum seekers is influential in one's opinion

(Finney and Robinson, 2008). These assumptions are known as prejudices, which can be overcome when one interacts with the subject of prejudice.

This combination of the initial view on asylum seekers and one's personal and cultural characteristics can lead to interaction with asylum seekers or refugees. This can be a choice with motives from personal beliefs. However, interaction with this minority can also occur without prior notice. The reason interaction with asylum seekers and refugees is included, is because the distinction cannot be made on various occasions. This is where the contact theory (Allport, 1954) comes in to play. He states that the perception of a minority will become less prejudiced and more substantiated when one interacts with the members of the minority. This contact is likely to have a positive impact, but could also turn out negative.

All aspects discussed above have their impact on the perception of asylum seekers by Dutch citizens. Their perception determines their attitudes towards asylum seekers. If they are perceived as the other, this means they are ignorant about this situation or they could even practice exclusionary behaviour towards asylum seekers. However, when they are accepting asylum seekers and feel like they belong to the host country, they are more likely to include them. Therefore, this research expects that when one feels that asylum seekers belong here, they are more likely to be involved with the integration of asylum seekers. Unterreiner and Weinar (2014) described the importance of the receiving society in the process of integration, which is the process of becoming an accepted part of society (Garcés-Mascreñas and Penninx, 2016).

Methodology

Paradigm

The paradigm applied in this research is the interpretivist paradigm. As part of this paradigm is the relativist ontology, which is the belief that reality is a finite subjective experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Meanings and understandings are socially constructed. Therefore, the interpretive paradigm focuses on narrating and recognizing the meaning of human actions and experiences (Fossey et al., 2002). In line with this paradigm, a naturalistic approach is most appropriate. Therefore, a qualitative method is used to establish an interaction between the researcher and the respondents. Qualitative research is a way to study social reality, which is represented in the methods and data collection (Punch, 2014).

In-depth interviews

In order to investigate the research question, in-depth interviews have been conducted (Appendix C). Interviews give insight in the interpretations and representations of our world (Anderson, 2015). Furthermore, they seek to discern the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of the respondents with asylum seekers (Anderson, 2015). To achieve this open attitude of the participant, interviews were conducted in the language the interviewee was most familiar with. Therefore, half of the interviews were conducted in Frisian, the others in Dutch. The interviews aimed to learn more about the influences of cultural differences and interaction with people from a foreign background to explain one's perception of asylum seekers. The structure of the interviews was semi-structured, which allowed to ask probing questions. Moreover, topics appropriate for the interview could be delved into, while the focus was kept on the information relevant for this research. This way of questioning offers insight into an individuals' explanation of their behaviour, attitudes, and motivations (Hakim, 1987).

Limitations

A general aspect of interviews is the benefit of a physical meeting. When meeting in person, the researcher is more aware of non-verbal communication, like a closed attitude or nervousness. These attitudes can offer valuable information to explain certain arguments (Bernard, 2006). Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, the interviews could not be conducted physically. Therefore, a solution had to be found in order to still be able to conduct the interviews the most physically as possible. After a successful pilot interview using the WhatsApp application to video call, this option was proposed to the participants. However, the preference and accessibility of the interviewee were taken into account. Therefore, one interview was conducted by a phone call while the other interviews were videocalls.

Data collection

The study aims to investigate the perception of citizens from Drachten on asylum seekers. Therefore, the following criteria were applied to the recruitment of interviewees:

- They have the Dutch nationality.
- Their residence is in Drachten.

To recruit participants for the interviews, a convenience sample was chosen. This is a type of non-probability sampling (Battaglia, 2008). The selected cases are accessible to the researcher (Burt et al., 2009). The strategy to approach interviewees consisted of snowball sampling. Several acquaintances of the researcher were approached to contact their social network to recruit interviewees (Sadler et al., 2010). Resulting in a sample of 8 cases of people that were unfamiliar to the researcher.

Positionality

The choice of participants the researcher was unacquainted with ensured the objectivity from the researcher's perspective. The researcher is familiar with the research area and the current situation of the asylum seekers in Drachten. To strive for objectivity, the participants therefore had to be unknown with the researchers point of view. Besides, the knowledge of the area was a benefit to have more insights in the stories of the participants. However, the challenge was to avoid a line of questioning that would hint towards a certain opinion. Therefore, open questions were of great significance.

Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations had to be adapted due to the changed situation. In advance of the interview, an informed consent was sent to the participants (Appendix A). At the beginning of each interview, the informed consent was repeated briefly by the researcher. Because there was no physical meeting, interviewees only verbally agreed on the consent. The consent explains the participants that they are not obliged to do anything and that the anonymity of their answers will be ensured by not using their real names. This topic asks for sensitive information of respondents because their opinions about asylum seekers could place them in bad daylight if it became public. To prevent this, the rights of individuals, communities, and environments involved in the research are protected (Mitchell and Draper, 1982).

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed in Dutch, and this could be done without losing valuable information thanks to the similarity in languages. An open coding system was used to analyse the transcriptions of the interviews without neglecting valuable information (Bernard, 2006). The data were analysed inductively, to see what codes emerged from the data. After coding a few of the transcriptions, axial coding was applied. The codes from the different transcriptions were compared to see if there were similar codes. Consequently, code groups were created using the theoretical framework. The codes are presented in appendix B. After the process of coding, the

results were compared to the conceptual model. This resulted in the revision of the conceptual model, including the new data. Quotes are used to present the motives of the interviewees concerning their attitude towards asylum seekers. All quotes are translated in English to promote understanding for non-Dutch readers.

Results

Descriptives

As Punch (2014) points out, people experience situations differently, due to their different characteristics. Therefore, it is beneficial to provide descriptive information about the interviewees (table 1).

To have a representative sample, the divide between male and female participants is equal. Furthermore, the participants are in several life stages which represents a broad view on the subject.

The interviews lasted between 20 and 54 minutes with a mean of 35 minutes per interview. The main difference in the length of the interview is whether the interviewee has had much interaction with asylum seekers.

Table 1: Descriptives of the interviewees

	Age	Gender	Nationality	Interaction with refugees/ asylum seekers	Residence/ location	Date of interview
<u>Interviewee 1 - Maria</u>	82	<u>Female</u>	Dutch	Yes	Drachten	23/4/2020
<u>Interviewee 2 - Robbin</u>	78	Male	Dutch & <u>Frisian</u>	No	Drachten	30/4/2020
<u>Interviewee 3 - Bas</u>	22	Male	Dutch & <u>Frisian</u>	Yes	Drachten	24/4/2020
<u>Interviewee 4 - Klaske</u>	58	<u>Female</u>	Dutch & <u>Frisian</u>	No	Drachten	28/4/2020
<u>Interviewee 5 - Hannah</u>	59	<u>Female</u>	Dutch & <u>Frisian</u>	Yes	Drachten	29/4/2020
<u>Interviewee 6 - Jan</u>	23	Male	Dutch	Yes	Drachten	4/5/2020
<u>Interviewee 7 - Tomas</u>	24	Male	Dutch	Yes	Drachten	6/5/2020
<u>Interviewee 8 - Alie</u>	52	<u>Female</u>	Dutch	Yes	Drachten	1/5/2020

Contact theory

Starting from the contact theory (Allport, 1954), interaction with asylum seekers expects to reduce prejudice and result in a more accepting attitude towards asylum seekers. The contact theory implies that optimal conditions facilitate the effects. The first condition is that the majority- and the minority group should have the same status, which is not the case with asylum seekers and citizens. The following condition is that both groups abide by the norms of society. As discussed by Brons (2006), these social norms depend on the culture.

The third condition is that the groups have a common goal, which is questionable due to the different interests of the groups. The goal of the asylum seekers is assumed

to be to integrate into society, while the participants only share this goal if they have an accepting attitude towards asylum seekers. The last condition is the presence of institutional support, which is present in the Netherlands, but not elaborated on in this study.

All in all, the theory expects that contact with asylum seekers will influence the attitude of participants positively, which is stimulated when the conditions for optimal contact are present. In line with the research question will the impact of culture, prejudice, and interaction on the attitude of the participants towards asylum seekers be discussed.

Citizenship

The main legal difference between the Dutch participants and asylum seekers is the fact that the Dutch participants are citizens, and therefore have legal rights. This distinction in status does not match with the first condition of Allport (1954) to facilitate optimal contact. For some participants, being a citizen became clear by means of a passport, by another through the care facilities that could be accessed. Notably, involvement in politics was not mentioned. Singer et al.(2008) found that citizenship strongly relates to individual freedom. This is experienced by the participants:

"That you can say what you think. that you are free, but that there are also rules you have to keep, I like rules". – Robbin (78, m)

Freedom is experienced, but it is freedom within certain boundaries. Rules are inevitable, but rules are always constructed by humans. Therefore, these rules are heavily affected by culture (Brons, 2006). To be a Dutch citizen, therefore, exceeds legal rights:

"I feel at home here [in the Netherlands]". – Klaske (58, f)

Cultural dimension

To be Dutch is described as a sense of belonging. The most frequent reason to identify as Dutch was the fact that they were born in the Netherlands. Commonalities, like a background, a homeland, and culture are what determines citizenship (Smith, 1989). This emerged during the interviews:

"To be Dutch is... Shared norms and values, that you have things in common like a language, a piece of ground and traditions". – Hannah (59, f)

The importance of culture for a sense of belonging is described by this interviewee. The way people behave and communicate has reached perceived normality. This is mostly unwritten, but very typical behaviour for Dutch people. According to an interviewee Dutch people are all about arrangements:

"I fit in with the stereotype that people have about the Dutch... being well organized, being on time and honouring existing agreements". – Jan (23, m)

This is the norm in the Netherlands according to this interviewee. He would find it unacceptable when others would violate agreements, corresponding to the

condition of Allport (1954) that abiding by social norms facilitates positive effects. Alie agreed with Jan:

"The Dutch live with a plan... and I speak the Dutch language of course".
- Alie (52, f)

Speaking the language is a significant condition to understand the behaviour of a people (Jiang, 2000). In the case of Friesland, there are two official languages. Four out of eight interviewees identified themselves as Frisian. Culture can differ regionally, and this explains why Frisians distinguish itself as follows, according to Hannah:

"I find that community feeling more in Friesland, also because I live here of course". – Hannah (59, f)

It is experienced as a strong community. When this is the case, it is harder for an outsider to integrate. Some interviewees mentioned being unfamiliar with people from a different ethnic background, which led to the suggestion that asylum seekers should go to the south of the country because they would be better off there. This relates to Nickerson and Louis (2008), who state that if people strongly identify with their nationality, they are less likely to be positive in their behaviour towards asylum seekers. The opposite was found as well, Maria was more ignorant about her nationality:

"Yes, I do feel like a Dutch citizen, but I don't really think about it, to be honest".
– Maria (82, f)

Another aspect of culture is upbringing. Three of the interviewees mentioned that their upbringing taught them to be respectful towards other people. Two others, both Frisians, mentioned that they were taught to be respectful, but above all to take care of themselves. This shows signs of the individualistic behaviour Brons (2006) found.

Prejudice

Perry et al. (2015) found that Christians were less likely to be prejudiced towards asylum seekers. An interviewee strengthened this claim with an opinion based on her Christian belief:

"God says: take care of the people that flee, take them up in your community, under a few conditions. I think that has the most influence on how I look at it". – Alie (52, f)

Prejudice is one of the main explanations for one's attitude towards asylum seekers. During the interviews it turned out that prejudice from the participants towards asylum seekers was predominantly caused by the narratives they heard in the news or from others around them:

"I become a bit angry if I hear stories about people from underprivileged countries intimidate people on the bus, or that they cause a lot of crime".
- Hannah (59, f)

When discussing asylum seekers, the comparison was often made with people of Moroccan and Turkish descent, who originally migrated to the Netherlands as labour migrants in the past century:

"That you hear that Moroccans steal bikes ... if I walk past a group of Moroccans or other foreigners then I get more suspicious". – Bas (22, m)

A stereotype is therefore established. This is not necessarily the truth, but it is the way this group of people is framed in the media (Finney and Robinson, 2008). Jan noticed this:

"I think that if you see an asylum seeker, or a Moroccan or Turk, because of the image that is presented of them, that you would think: 'he probably will not have a job, or he must be a criminal'. Whilst that is not the case of course".
– Jan (23, m)

When an asylum seeker is seen with expensive attributes, most interviewees would wonder how they got it. In general, they perceive asylum seekers as people who do not do anything. Which is understandable, since they do not have the legal rights to work (Kotzur et al., 2019). They are perceived as people who just hang on the street:

"When you walk through the city-centre, and there is this group [of people with a foreign background], you shouldn't walk past it provocative, because then they will go after you". – Robbin (78, m)

Sometimes prejudices get confirmed by experiences of people. These are situations that do not meet the requirements of personal contact from Allport (1954). Several interviewees could describe a situation in which they experienced nuisance from asylum seekers. For example, two women mentioned that male asylum seekers denigrate women:

"My daughter walked on the streets in a skirt, and she was called a whore by this group foreigners" – Alie (52, f)

Interaction

Allport (1954) states that contact between immigrants and citizens is can reduce prejudice reduces. From the eight interviewees, six have had personal contact with a refugee or asylum seeker. This contact is established in various ways. One interviewee became acquainted with a refugee, through a mutual friend. He states:

"I heard negative things in the news, now I have experienced it myself and now I look at it differently [the topic of asylum seekers]" – Bas (22, m)

Personal contact reduces prejudice, even if the circumstances are not optimal (Pettigrew, 2007). Jan experienced contact with refugees in his job.

"That I thought: he will probably hardly speak any Dutch, it will be hard to communicate with him. But I experienced this is often not to be the case".
– Jan (23, m)

Similarly, two other interviewees had a colleague that is a refugee. For one of them, this contact led to the start of voluntary work with asylum seekers. She taught her

colleague the Dutch language, and she ended up teaching women Dutch at the AZC after her retirement. She likes to be useful and has fun doing it. However, contact with asylum seekers does not always result in a more accepting attitude. Tomas met asylum seekers on the street, and some seemed reliable to him with whom he interacted. However, this contact ended up harming him:

"Those people are troubled, I have been in a fight with asylum seekers a couple of times" – Tomas (24, m)

Over the years, his perception of asylum seekers is slowly changing again. In his job, he is in contact with colleagues from a refugee background.

"At first I thought: they are all lazy scum, but now I see more and more who are working hard for it, like my colleagues. I am refining my opinion". – Tomas (24, m)

Familiarity

Overall, personal contact with refugees seems to have a positive impact on the perception of the interviews with regards to asylum seekers. From the interviews, another factor came forward that influences the perception of the participants, which cannot be covered by the contact theory. In this study, it will be called the familiarity of the interviewees with other cultures. When they have been interacting with people from different backgrounds, they seem to be more understanding of cultural differences. Alie was raised in Friesland, but moved to Rotterdam to study:

"In Rotterdam, they are your friends [people from a different ethnic background]. I don't have that here. There I found out that you are raised differently, with other norms and values". – Alie (52, f)

Familiarity with other cultures, therefore, seems to stimulate the acceptance of people with a different ethnic background. Consequently, Bas became more understanding of other cultures because he experienced a different culture during his time in Africa. Other experiences that increased understanding of the situation of asylum seekers was also present, like when the family of the interviewee migrated. Because he would want his family to be welcomed, he was more likely to do that as well.

Othering

All factors mentioned result in the acceptance or the rejection of asylum seekers. One thing became very clear: if an asylum seeker is disingenuous, the interviewees felt like he or she did not belong here (Hercowitz-Amir et al., 2017). According to them, an asylum seeker is disingenuous when there is no danger in their own country. Furthermore, some interviewees had more criteria for an asylum seeker to be perceived as disingenuous:

"They should get asylum, in general, we do not experience much nuisance from them [asylum seekers]. However, if they are a 'gelukszoeker' [fortune seeker], or if they can't behave, then we don't have to help them, in my opinion". – Robbin (78, m)

Many interviewees agreed that asylum seekers that misbehave do not belong here. Furthermore, some asylum seekers would be perceived as the other, until they would contribute to society. Dutch culture has a history of Calvinism, which means that people worked hard. This is argued to be the goal of the majority group, and if asylum seekers would have the desire to contribute to society it would meet the third condition of Allport (1954). Corresponding to some interviewees that said that the amount of effort that an asylum seeker shows to adjust to the host society had become a condition to accept them:

"At the moment asylum seekers are here, they should get the chance to prove them. When they are fanatically learning Dutch and motivated to look for work, so they can do something". – Jan (23, m)

The main reason for the interviewees to perceive an asylum seeker as the other is the lack of effort to adjust to the Dutch culture. Controversially, they noticed the need for integration, but no one with a similar opinion felt the responsibility to help asylum seekers integrate. They shifted the responsibility to the government:

"All they [asylum seekers] are going to learn comes from our salary. I find that crooked. It should all come from the government, we should not have to do anything for it" – Tomas (24, m)

Belonging

For most, an asylum seeker is accepted when he sufficiently adjusts to the common habits, norms, and values. An important note is that all interviewees were willing to give asylum seekers a chance, on the condition that they are genuinely seeking asylum. Some spoke very welcoming about asylum seekers:

"I think the world is from everybody. And we have it good here, so I would be willing to share that with others". – Klaske (58, f)

Following Nickerson and Louis (2008), when you do not value your nationality as very important, you are more likely to accept others, like asylum seekers. Maria explains herself:

"I accept non-Dutch people just as much. You do not have to be a Dutch citizen, I would allow other people in our country as well" – Maria (82, f)

All participants agreed that if an asylum seeker wants to integrate, they should learn the language as soon as possible. It is seen as the key to understand the Dutch culture, and it is of great importance for citizens to accept them. There were positive responses towards the integration of asylum seekers:

"Everyone can become a Dutch citizen, but it will not be easy" – Bas (22, m)

People think asylum seekers can integrate well. However, it was emphasized that there is a clash in culture, which will not be easy to overcome:

"You cannot just become Dutch just because you get the nationality, even if you want to. I think they will always be a bit uncomfortable here because of their background" – Hannah (59, f)

Even though the integration process can be hard, all interviewees perceive it as necessary. Four of the interviewees say to be willing to help with the integration of asylum seekers because they acknowledge the necessity that the Dutch population is indispensable during this process. As Unterreiner and Weinar (2014) reported, the receiving society matters for the integration of immigrants. However, at this moment only one is actively involved by the means of voluntary work. The others indicated that they are too busy.

All in all, the results that the optimal conditions for contact described by Allport (1954) were not met. Asylum seekers and citizens differ in status, they are used to different social norms and often have different goals. However, the conditions are no requirements to reduce prejudice, they only facilitate the effects. At first, the participants' attitudes are especially the result of cultural beliefs and prejudice. The participants that have been in contact with an asylum seeker or refugee, mentioned their perception changed after the interaction. Meeting them disproved stereotypes that were created to a certain extent, which gave the participants a better understanding of asylum seekers. Most participants accept asylum seekers for various personal reasons, which is the result of cultural beliefs, interactions, and experiences. However, this accepting attitude did not directly lead to action in the integration process. Nevertheless, some would be willing to help if it crossed their path.

Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, this research aimed to answer the research question:

"To what extent does culture, prejudice, and interaction explain the attitudes of citizens of Drachten towards asylum seekers?"

Resulting from the theoretical framework, it became clear that citizens are influenced in their behaviour through their culture. In their upbringing, certain norms and values have been taught to them. The most important norm that came forward from the interviews, was to be respectful to everyone else. Others had learned in their upbringing to be self-sufficient and expected this individualistic behaviour from all. This partly explained the attitude of the interviewees towards asylum seekers. Furthermore, all interviewees felt Dutch. The fact that people understand each other by similar behaviour, was one of the reasons why they felt connected. The language was therefore the most important factor to identify themselves as Dutch people. Moreover, the ones who identified as Frisian spoke of a strong community feeling resulting in more sceptical statements about the belonging of asylum seekers in Friesland. Matching with Nickerson and Louis (2008), who found a relationship between strongly identifying with your nationality and less positive behaviour towards asylum seekers.

Religion is also a part of the culture. The interviewees who explicitly stated to be Christian, said they wanted to live with an accepting attitude towards people in need, in line with Perry et al. (2015).

Prejudice towards asylum seekers was still very relevant for most of the interviewees. They said that they started with assumptions about asylum seekers, of which some were already proved to be false. The majority described stereotypes when talking about asylum seekers. In line with Finney and Robinson (2008), the interviewees mentioned the influence of the media on their perception of asylum seekers. Stereotypes were created for any foreigner, which is a consequence of a lack of knowledge of other cultures.

It emerged that attitudes could also be influenced by experiencing other cultures. When someone is familiar with other cultures, he is more likely to accept other cultures. This is added to the conceptual model, on the following page, since this does not meet the requirements for interactions with a refugee or asylum seeker as described by Allport (1954).

For most interviewees, interaction with asylum seekers or refugees gave them a clearer perception of asylum seekers, as was found by Pettigrew et al. (2007). The interviewees that have been in contact with asylum seekers, described that their attitude towards asylum seekers has become more positive after the interaction.

Besides the weighty argument that asylum seekers should be genuine to stay, half of the interviewees had even tougher conditions. They should learn the language and adjust to the Dutch culture, all at the expense of the government. I expected that if a participant described himself as very accepting towards asylum seekers, this sense of belonging would result in helping with the integration of asylum seekers. This appeared to be true for one of the interviewees, others said they were too busy.

Therefore, the conceptual model is adjusted with the condition that Dutch citizens need to have time to spare if they want to get involved with the integration process of asylum seekers.

Revised conceptual model

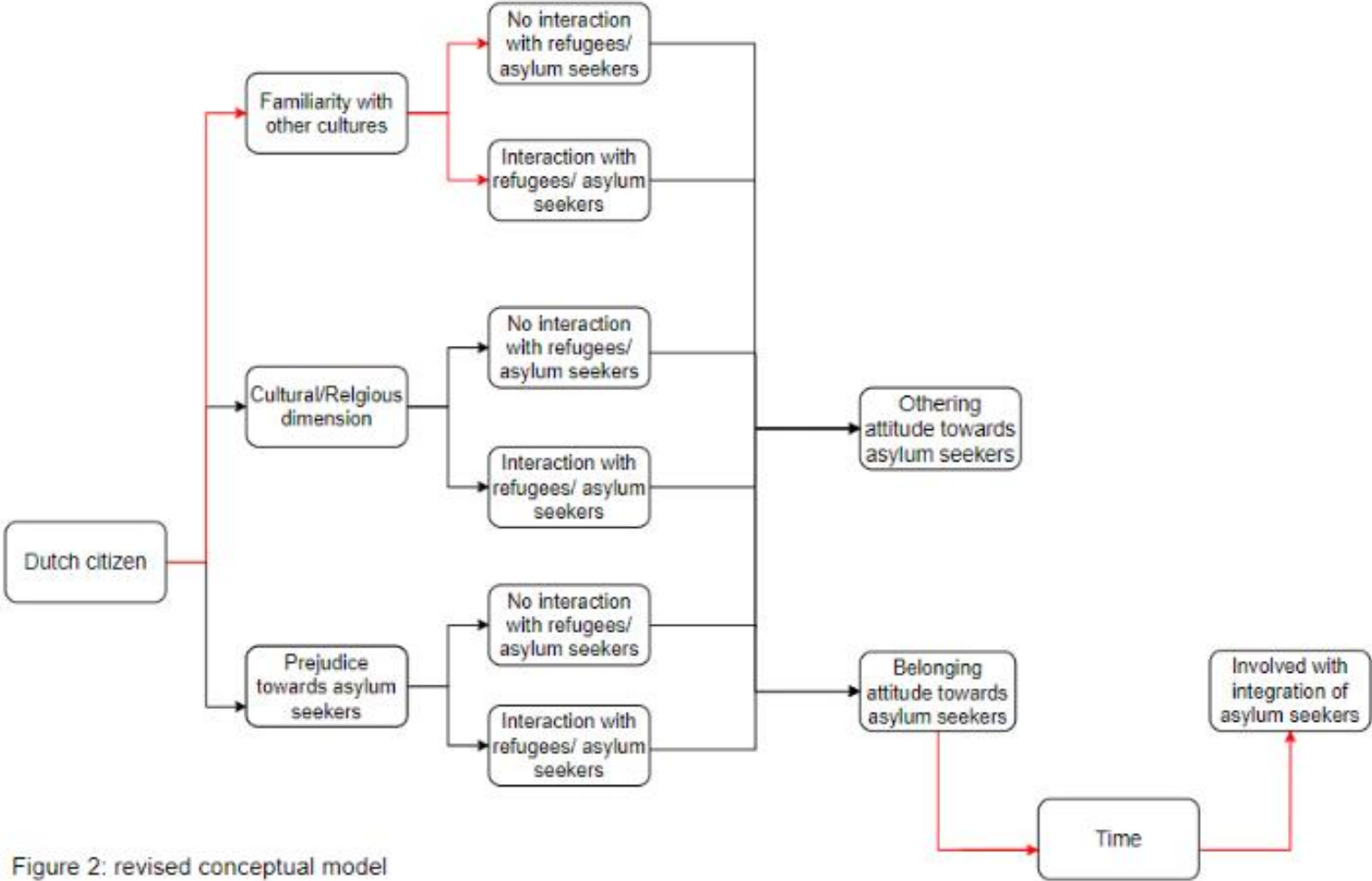


Figure 2: revised conceptual model

Recommendations and future research

Future research should elaborate on this study. The aim of this study was to research the underlying reasons that could explain the attitudes of the participants. Due to the qualitative nature of the research, it was limited to a small sample of citizens from Drachten. Therefore, to proceed on this study, quantitative research could be conducted. If a representative sample of the citizens of Drachten is collected, the findings of the qualitative research can be tested in order to look for relations. By the use of a survey, the change of opinion before and after interaction with an asylum seeker could be measured. Furthermore, it would be interesting to research if there is a relation between gender, education or age and one's attitude towards asylum seekers.

Furthermore, this study showed that for many interviewees interaction with asylum seekers reduced prejudice. Therefore, asylum seekers should be more accessible to the citizens of Drachten. The municipality could start a campaign with their own slogan, aimed at the citizens of Drachten. The slogan entails that Drachten is the place to be, or at least it should be for its residents. However, some residents such as asylum seekers, seem to be left out. Awareness could be raised for asylum seekers, to facilitate the integration of asylum seekers.

Bibliography

Bernard, H. R. (2006). *Research methods in anthropology qualitative and quantitative approaches* (4th ed.). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Brons, L. A. J. O. S. L. (2006) "Indirect Measurement of Regional Culture in the Netherlands," *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, 97(5), pp. 547–566.

CBS (2018). *Opvattingen over vluchtelingen in Nederland*. Accessed on 24-2-2020, retrieved from <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/achtergrond/2018/13/opvattingen-over-vluchtelingen-in-nederland>

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research*. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*, 3, pp. 1-32. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

European Commission (2017). *Refugee crisis: European Commission takes decisive action*. Accessed on 15-3-2020, retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_15_5596

Finney, N., & Robinson, V. (2008). Local press, dispersal, and community in the construction of asylum debates. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 9(4), pp. 397-413.

Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 36, pp. 717-732

Fowler, R. (1991) *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London: Routledge.

Garcés-Mascareñas Blanca and Penninx, R. (2016) *Integration processes and policies in Europe: contexts, levels, and actors*. (1 ed.), Cham: Springer International Publishing

Hercowitz-Amir, A., Raijman, R. and Davidov, E. (2017) 'Host or Hostile? Attitudes towards Asylum Seekers in Israel and in Denmark'. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 58(5): pp. 416–439.

Jiang, W. (2000) "The Relationship between Culture and Language," *ELT Journal*, 54(4), pp. 328–34.

Kotzur PF, Schäfer SJ, and Wagner U (2019) "Meeting a Nice Asylum Seeker: Intergroup Contact Changes Stereotype Content Perceptions and Associated Emotional Prejudices, and Encourages Solidarity-Based Collective Action Intentions," 58(3), pp. 668–690.

Lubbers, M., Coenders, M., & Scheeper, P. (2006). Objections to asylum seeker centres: Individual and contextual determinants of resistance to small and large centres in the Netherlands. *European Sociological Review*, 22(3), pp. 243–257

Lynn, N., & Lea, S. (2003). A phantom menace and the new apartheid: The social construction of asylum seekers in the United Kingdom. *Discourse & Society*, 14(4), pp. 425–452.

- Mancini, T., Bottura, B. and Caricati, L., (2018). The Role of Perception of Threats, Conservative Beliefs and Prejudice on Prosocial Behavioural Intention in Favour of Asylum Seekers in a Sample of Italian Adults. *Current Psychology*.
- Mitchell, B. and Draper, D. (1982) *Relevance and Ethics in Geography*. London: Longman.
- Nickerson, A. M., & Louis, W. R. (2008). Nationality versus humanity? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 38, pp. 796–817.
- Perry, R., Paradies, Y., & Pedersen, A. (2015). Religious ambivalence: Suppression of pro-social attitudes toward asylum seekers by right-wing authoritarianism. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 25, pp. 230–246
- Pettigrew, T.F., Christ, O., Wagner, U., Stellmacher, J. (2007). Direct and indirect intergroup contact effects on prejudice: A normative interpretation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 31, pp. 411–425.
- Punch, K., 2014. *Introduction to social research* (3rd ed.), Los Angeles : SAGE Publications.
- Sadler, G. R., Lee, H.-C., Lim, R. S.-H., & Fullerton, J. (2010). Recruitment of hard-to-reach population subgroups via adaptations of the snowball sampling strategy. *Nursing & Health Sciences*, 12(3), pp. 369–374.
- Serlie, A.W. (2004), *Regionale Verschillen, Waarheid of Fictie*. Amsterdam: GITP research.
- Singer, A., Engin, F., Nielsen, G.M. (2008) *Citizenship Without Acts? With Tocqueville in America in Isin*. *Acts of Citizenship*. New York: Zed Books
- Singer, B. C. J. (1996) 'Cultural versus Contractual Nations: Rethinking their Opposition', *History and Theory*, 35 (3)
- Smith, A. (1989). The origins of nations. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 12(3), pp. 340–367.
- Strang, A. and Ager, A. (2010) "Refugee Integration: Emerging Trends and Remaining Agendas," *Journal of refugee studies*. 23(4), pp. 589–607.
- UNHCR (1951). *Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees*. Geneva: UNHCR
- UNHCR (2020). *Teaching about refugees*. Accessed on 20-4-2020, retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/teaching-about-refugees.html#facts>
- Unterreiner, A., & Weinar, A. (2014). *The conceptual framework of the INTERACT project*. Florence: European University Institute.
- Verkuyten, M. (2004). Emotional reactions to and support for immigrant policies: Attributes responsibilities to categories of asylum seekers. *Social Justice Research*, 17(3), pp. 293–314
- Zorlu, A. (2017) "Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers in Small Local Communities," *International migration*. 55(6), pp. 14–36.

Appendix

Appendix A: informed consent

Toestemmingsformulier

Betreft: onderzoek naar uw kijk op asielzoekers

Ik verklaar hierbij op voor mij duidelijke wijze te zijn ingelicht over de aard, methode en doel van het onderzoek.

Ik begrijp dat:

- ik mijn medewerking aan dit onderzoek kan stoppen op ieder moment en zonder opgave van reden
- gegevens anoniem worden verwerkt, zonder herleidbaar te zijn tot de persoon
- de opname vernietigd wordt na uitwerking van het interview

Ik verklaar dat ik:

- geheel vrijwillig bereid ben aan dit onderzoek mee te doen
- de uitkomsten van dit interview verwerkt mogen worden in een verslag of wetenschappelijk publicatie
- toestemming geef om het interview op te laten nemen door middel van een voice-recorder op een mobiele telefoon

Handtekening:

Naam:

Datum:

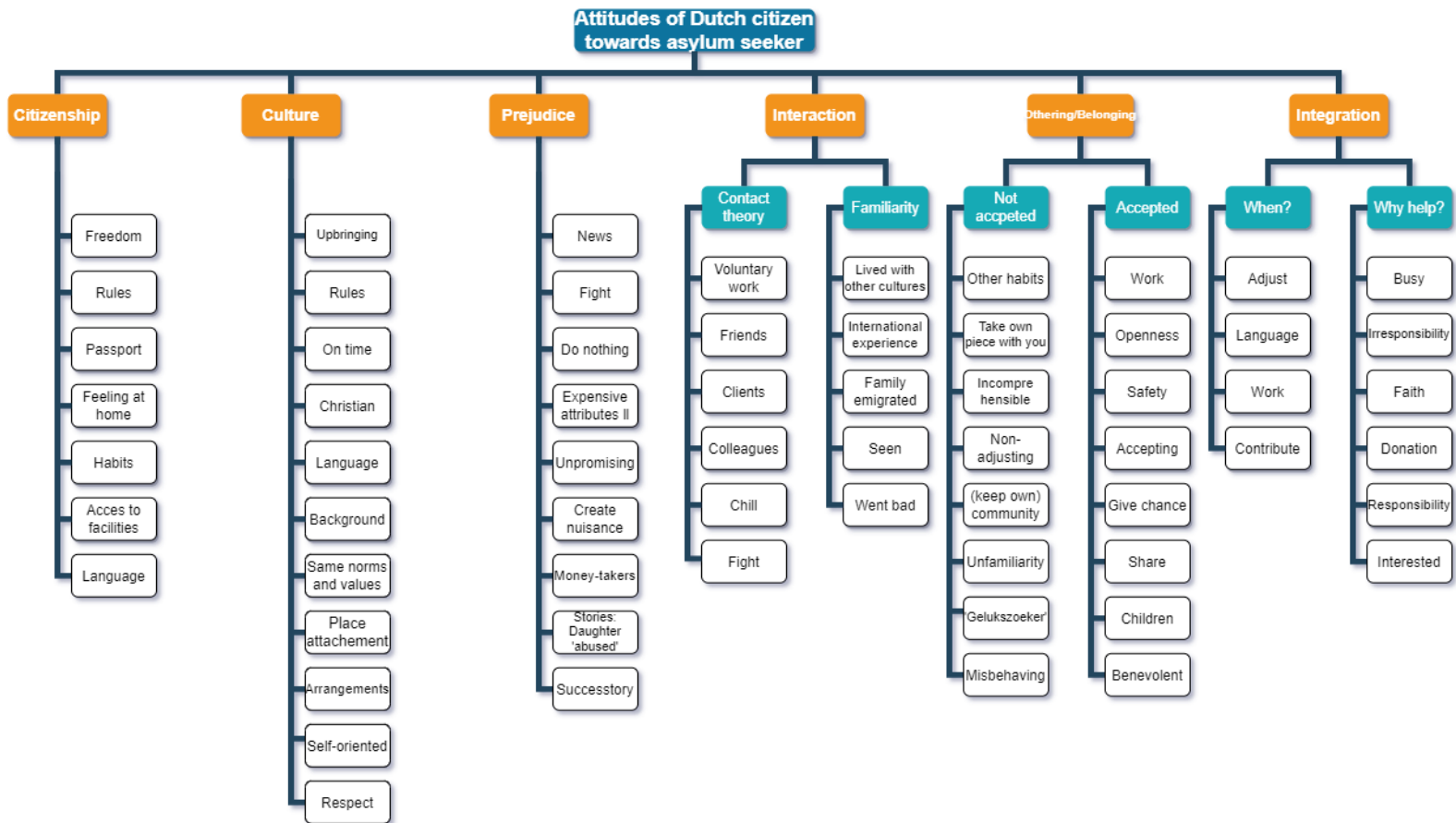
Onderzoeker Ik heb mondeling toelichting verstrekt over de aard, methode en doel van het onderzoek. Ik verklaar mij bereid nog opkomende vragen over het onderzoek naar vermogen te beantwoorden.

Handtekening:

Naam:

Datum:

Appendix B: Code tree



Appendix C:

Interview guide:

Het interview zal, zoals u weet, gaan over asielzoekers. Voel u vrij om te delen wat u wilt, het zal anoniem blijven. Allereerst wil ik wat over u te weten komen, waarna we langzaam naar het onderwerp van asielzoekers gaan.

Inleidende vragen:

1. Kunt u iets over uzelf vertellen?
- Hoe oud bent u? Waar woont u? Met wie woont u samen? Wat doet u voor werk? (studeerwerk) Heeft u hobby's? Bent u gelovig? Zo ja, welke religie? Waar kom je oorspronkelijk vandaan?

2. --> Identiteit. Voelt u zich hier thuis? Voelt u u nederlander? Wat maakt het dat je een Nederlander bent? ((Wat bepaald volgens jou dat je een (staats)burger bent?))

Centraal:

3. Kom je in je dagelijkse leven in contact met mensen van buitenlandse afkomst? - ja? Kun je beschrijven hoe dit contact eruit ziet. Waar ontmoet je ze? Op het werk? / Op school? / In de kerk? / In de supermarkt?

4. Wat is volgens u/jou een asielzoeker?

- grootste verschil tussen jou en asielzoeker?

5. Vind je dat asielzoekers deel uit maken van een gemeenschap? - maken ze deel uit van dezelfde gemeenschap als jou?

6. Tot in hoeverre vind je dat asielzoekers deel uit maken van onze maatschappij? (Geïntegreerd)

7. Tot in hoeverre zijn mensen van de ontvangende maatschappij verantwoordelijk voor de integratie van asielzoekers, volgens jou?

- Hoe vind je dat de regering/overheid er mee om zou moeten gaan?

8. Hoe kijkt u aan tegen de komst van asielzoekers naar Drachten?

9. Wat krijg je mee uit het nieuws over asielzoekers?

10.. Praat je weleens met anderen over asielzoekers?

11. Heb je ooit een situatie gehad waarin je je niet veilig voelde, wat werd veroorzaakt

door iemand van buitenlandse afkomst? (was het een asielzoeker?)

12. Wat doet u om ze te helpen integreren?

- Zou je bereid zijn ze te helpen? Op wat voor manier dan?

13. Wat had volgens u de meeste invloed op wat u van een asielzoeker vindt?

- Hoe kijkt/ omgaat, door opvoeding?

14. Denkt u dat uw beeld van asielzoekers in de loop van de jaren is veranderd?
Waarom?

15. Denk je dat het in de toekomst zal veranderen? 16. Is er nog iets anders over dit
onderwerp dat u zou willen vertellen?