Communicating anti-racism

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Notes

1 I once heard this joke in a class in international development studies in the late 1990s. I was unable to locate a source for this joke and therefore regard it as part of our shared common sense knowledge about academics.

2 The Dutch expression used was ‘kutallochtoon’.

3 ‘Negro kisses’ are a kind chocolate coated, cream filled candy. The Dutch manufacturer recently changed its name to ‘Kisses’ after allegedly receiving complaints that the name was offensive to blacks.

4 Percentage was calculated on the basis of respondents that scored 4 or 5 on the five-point Likert scale that was used. A score of 4 represents a predominant agreement, and a score of 5 represents a total agreement with either the campaign’s worth or its effectivity.

5 Only respondents answering all relevant items were included in the model; 5 respondents were removed because their ethnicity was unknown and one because their educational level was unknown.

6 The ‘We are Londoners, we are one’ campaign was issued in the aftermath of the bombings of the London underground on July 7th 2005. The campaign ‘We Amsterdammers’ was set up in response to the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a Muslim radical.

7 In the Amsterdam focus groups, participants were asked to discuss ‘real’ Amsterdamer identities. These discussions were not expected to result in arbitration of the true Amsterdamer identity. Instead, they consistently served to trigger animated discussions over people’s own relation to their city.

8 The term immigrant here is a translation of the Dutch word ‘Allochtoon’, which is widely used in Holland to denote people with a non-white ethnic background.

9 Almere is a town near Amsterdam. Large parts of the white working class population living in Amsterdam’s city centre moved out to Almere and a number of other towns as the inner city gentrified over the last two decades.

10 We are using the terminology of Liebes and Katz here but are aware of other authors who have come to similar conclusions in their own studies using slightly different terms such as ‘inferential’ and ‘attributial’ (Worth & Gross, 1974, cited in Michelle, 2007), ‘analytical’ and ‘interpretive’ (Neuman, 1982, cited in Michelle, 2007) or ‘official’ and ‘personal’ (Dahlgren, 1988, cited in Michelle, 2007). We recognise the commonalities in these various approaches and decided to use the terminology of Liebes and Katz because they fit most with the data and are arguably the most well known.

11 Interpersonal contact is understood here as (non)verbal exchanges between individuals that are in each others’ physical presence.

12 The central ‘optimal conditions’ are, among others, equal status between the groups, shared goals, intergroup cooperation and the support of authorities (Pettigrew, 1998). This point is elaborated below.

13 Similar campaigns have been launched in London after terrorist attacks. A comparison between the Amsterdam campaign and the London one is part of a follow up study to this paper. (Muller, in progress)

14 Participatory observations also confirmed that especially among organizers and volunteers, ethnic minorities were strongly in the minority to the point of complete absence in many of the weekly editions of the Speakerstone project.
Geert Wilders is a Dutch extreme right politician who is mainly concerned with the perceived threat of Islam to the Dutch nation. After the murder of van Gogh he received extensive police protection because it was feared that he would be assassinated. He has recently commented that the Netherlands is under threat from a ‘Tsunami of Islamization’.

Only the official discourse of the ‘Spreeksteen’ deviated from these accounts by emphasizing the role of the project in the promotion of the freedom of expression and debate. However, in interviews with volunteers working at the project, it became clear that they too subscribed to the belief that interpersonal contact and dialogue would improve understanding between different groups.

Survey data were collected by Dave Mook for a BA dissertation and re-analysed for this paper by the authors. Mook analysed this data himself in a SWOT analysis of the tournament in 2005 in which ethnicity was of minor interest (Mook, 2005). The cross-tabulation of ethnicity and reasons for participating shown here does not appear in his work. Data are used with permission of Mr. Mook.

This quote and all subsequent quotes were translated from Dutch by the first author.

The other two goals are to counter radicalisation of Muslim youth and fight terrorism. Both these goals are generally either thought to be realised through stimulations of urban citizenship, which will be addressed in the following or, alternatively, addressed with other measures such as increased security measures, which are beyond the scope of this paper.

However, the 6-year old tournament is evolving. Plans have been drawn up for next year’s tournament to include a separate women’s tournament and a children’s tournament to supplement the already existing tournament. Although arguably conservative in design, it remains to be seen how such an alternative engagement with gender will play out in practice.