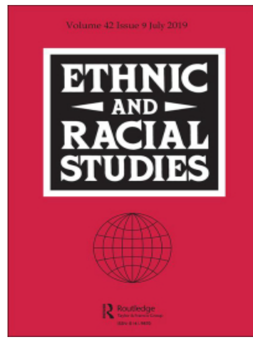

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Culture as politics in contemporary migration contexts: the in/visibilization of power relations*

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ABSTRACT

In the 1990s, an essentialist, bounded understanding of culture delimiting (ethno-national) groups based on allegedly discrete sets of natural characteristics came to structure politics in North Atlantic migration contexts, justifying migrant exclusion or celebrating inclusion. Yet, how this idea of "culture-as-defining-attribute" works among *people situated in everyday life* remains understudied. We develop an analytical framework centred on discursive repertoires, sources of relational meaning-production, anchored in historical contexts, and embedded in power. Analyzing 125 essays written by Toronto and Neuchâtel undergraduate students, we demonstrate that using culture-as-defining-attribute results in an *in/visibilization* of power relations. Toronto students hypervisibilize a positively inflected conviviality across multicultural diversity, while invisibilizing racism and settler colonialism. Neuchâtel students visibilize the production of migranticized others, invisibilizing nativism and non-migrant/white structural privileges. We end with a plea for context-specific analysis of culture-as-defining-attribute and a deeper understanding of in/visibilization as a significant "missing link" in current analyses of culture and ex/inclusion.

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Introduction

> …my Ukrainian culture defines me. Without my Ukrainian customs, beliefs and traditions I think I would feel out of place in today's multicultural and ever-growing society. (Student, University of Toronto Mississauga, T20)

> As soon as we talk about a person who does not live completely like us, who has a different lifestyle than ours, we will say that they are from a different culture. (Student, University of Neuchâtel, N33)

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Statements like these, made by undergraduate students in Toronto and Neuchâtel, raise many questions: What do they understand by culture? How come that in Toronto students use culture to label the self, and to indicate positive feelings of belonging and diversity while in Neuchâtel culture is used to described "others", often in a negative way? What work is the idea of culture doing in the two contexts and how does this work relate to power? And most importantly: How do workings of power become visible and invisible through these uses of culture?

In 1999, Kuper (1999) opened his book with "everyone is into culture now". His statement reflects both surprise and an important transformation in public debates: While within anthropology the concept of culture underwent important revisions since the 1970s (Abu-Lughod 1991; Hannerz 1992; Sahlins 1993), a historically outdated idea of culture had become an established part of everyday life and politics. This essentialist, bounded idea of culture, what we will call here "culture-as-defining-attribute" delineates (ethno-national) groups based on an allegedly discrete set of apparently natural characteristics. In other words, while *within* social sciences culture became a concept to describe and analyze nuanced processes of meaning-making, an old-fashioned idea of culture had become part of the *Zeitgeist* of this epoch. Particularly popular in public discussions of migration, the allegedly different culture of migrants became not only an explanatory force to justify inequalities and anti-immigration policies, but also an important tool in integration policies and multiculturalism (Razack 1995; Vertovec 1999). As Stolcke (1995) argued in a much-read article, talking about culture had turned into a new rhetoric of exclusion in Europe, though for some, in Europe but also in the US and Canada, recognition of cultural difference was celebrated as a force for inclusion.

This non-academic use of culture has remained an important object of study within migration studies since the 1990s: Scholars mobilize a wide range of theoretical approaches – from the fields of ethnicity (i.e. Wimmer 2009), gender and sexuality (Farris 2017; Puar 2007), critical race and post-colonial studies (Keskinen and Andreassen 2017; Lentin 2005) – outlining in detail how culture-as-defining-attribute became not only deeply anchored in politics of immigration but simultaneously an important element in excluding migrants and minorities.

Though very valuable, in this article, we hone in on two aspects which have often remained underdiscussed in existing scholarly work. First, most of this work focuses on *politics*, or *different political fields*, to show how culture-as-defining-attribute is mobilized and instrumentalized to exclude migrants. In contrast, we are interested in what we call *people in everyday contexts*, their use of culture-as-defining-attribute and the consequences in terms of power. Second, existing work has clear merits in outlining that culture-as-defining-attribute is mobilized to foster complex exclusions in contemporary

migration society. Yet, we maintain that current academic work lacks a nuanced analysis of the *work* culture-as-defining-attribute does beyond accepting its potential for exclusion. We miss a fine-grained tracing of how people *use* culture-as-defining-attribute to make sense of the world and how this usage is enmeshed with power.

We approach this idea of culture-as-defining-attribute as an empirical phenomenon and object of study, as a *category of practice* (Brubaker 2004) in which people use culture to make sense of the world. We argue that people draw on what we call *repertoires of meaning*, in which culture is linked to a series of other concepts. The work of culture can then be captured by noting what other concepts it calls forth. The resulting repertoires are relational, contested and deeply anchored in historical contexts. Furthermore, these repertoires are fundamentally *discursive* in Foucault's (1972) sense, where language as practice is imbricated with knowledge production and embedded in power.

Based on an analysis of 125 essays written by undergraduate students in two distinct migration contexts, Toronto and Neuchâtel, we will demonstrate that culture-as-defining-attribute is not only used to create differences and hierarchies – as established in scholarly work – but that specific uses of this idea of culture result in an *in/visibilization* of power relations. Among the students in Toronto, the use of culture visibilizes a positively inflected and unproblematic conviviality across so-called diversity, while invisibilizing racism and settler colonialism. Multiculturalism is a powerful structuring force in this discursive repertoire. In Neuchâtel, migranticization, the ascription of migration to people that re-produces non-belonging regardless of Swiss citizenship status, is the structuring force in the discursive repertoire. Culture-as-attribute visibilizes the production of the migrant others, while it invisibilizes students' own implication in nativism and non-migrant or white structural privileges. In neither context does culture call forth social class or socio-economic inequalities. By analyzing the work that culture does in everyday narratives, we are able to show how in/visibilization is a "missing link" in current analyses of culture and exclusion.

In the following we will first review the literature on culture and migration before outlining our analytical framework. After discussing our methodology, we present the analysis of our two cases. We argue in the conclusion that these results have serious implications for future academic work, making a plea for context-specific analysis of culture-as-defining-attribute and a deeper understanding of processes of in/visibilization.

Culture-as-defining-attribute in the literature

The 1990s saw a dramatic increase in scholarly publications discussing the usage of culture to understand a range of political phenomena. The notion

of culture had been scrutinized and revised *within* social sciences – mainly within anthropology and to a lesser extent, within sociology – since the 1970s, with social scientists developing nuanced articulations of the concept of culture and its uses in analyses of social relations, practices, symbolic processes, or societal stratifications (for an overview see Hammersley 2019; Hannerz 1992; Jenks 1993). Scholars also provided careful studies of culture as everyday practices of meaning-making in migration contexts (e.g. Baumann 1997; Bhatia 2010; Levitt 2005). Yet, in the 1990s a different debate coalesced around a critique of the use of culture outside academia: Social scientists were concerned with the incredible success of a particular essentialist idea of culture in *public and political realms*. Wicker (1997, 31) argued that few concepts have been "as pervasively effective […] as the often-quoted passage from E.B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1958, I) which describes culture – and civilisation – as … a complex whole which includes knowledge, religious belief, art, morals, laws, and customs – in other words, all the skills and characteristics human beings acquire as members of a society". Indeed, this idea of a "complex whole" came to proliferate outside academia, leading to a conception of human beings as "bearers of a culture, located within a nationally bounded world which defines them and differentiates them from each other" (Grillo 2003, 158). Politicians and journalist, migrants, minorities and majorities started to use this idea of culture in order to describe not only their own belonging, behaviour, life styles, food, music, identities or ways of thinking but also that of "other" people and "groups" (Eller 1997; Nieswand and Drotbohm 2014). We label this idea of culture *culture-as-defining-attribute*: a reified and bounded understanding of culture that delineates groups based on a set of naturalized characteristics and that equates culture with groups defined along ethnic, national, or racial lines.

These uses of culture also filter back into academia, for example, in work focused on so-called (American) immigrant assimilation (e.g. Portes and Zhou 1993; Waters et al. 2010) or European integration practices (e.g. Ali and Fokkema 2015; Potarca and Bernardi 2018). US work focuses on race and (segmented) assimilation, and European work articulates integration into the nation-state through welfare state programmes targeted at mitigating immigrant difference (Favell 2022; Schneider and Crul 2010). In spite of these differences, these works share a reliance on culture-as-defining-attribute, linking culture tightly to ethnicity, religion and intergenerational reproduction, particularly in the US, inflected by race. The US literature on assimilation positions culture as a resource, where facility in "American" culture or in another "culture" is an achievement or a hindrance depending on which part of culture people assimilate into (lower or upper class) (Alba and Foner 2015). Similarly, European discussions about the danger of "parallel

societies" and "Islam" reflect the idea of culture-as-defining-attribute (for a critique, see Ghorashi 2017).

These versions of culture also became very prominent in the field of migration policy, with many actors using them for claims making: On the political left, scholars show that culture was mobilized to revendicate models of multiculturalism and of cultural diversity and pluralism (Kymlicka 1995). In multicultural politics, culture was normatively charged as a *good,* and the right to cultural difference as well as group rights based on culture became a form of social justice (Fraser and Honneth 2003; Modood and Werbner 1997; Taylor 1992), an essential part of citizenship (Bosniak 2006). These scholars also analyzed how on the political right, culture was *negatively* normatively charged in order to take an anti-immigration stance by equating culture with national or ethnic culture directly related to a nation-state territory. Scholars of multiculturalism critiqued the idea that migrants or minorities' "culture of origin" threatened "our" culture.

As different as the objectives of these 1990s debates were, they were anchored in a similar idea, namely in culture-as-defining-attribute: This version of culture appears as essential baggage, a second skin which accompanies people during their lifetime. In this use of culture-as-defining-attribute, culture determined cognition, behaviour, and the daily practices of people, whether they form a so-called majority, or are labelled minorities or migrants. The world was then described as a mosaic of different (territorially demarcated) ethnic/national cultures, reproducing the logic of the nation-state on a global level, while within migration societies, majorities or minorities each have their own culture defined by a natural solidarity and close-knit networks (Wimmer 2009).

Within migration studies, these uses of culture in public, political and academic fields were – ideal typically – scrutinized in four ways.[1] First, theories of ethnicity problematize reified uses of culture by underscoring the constructed, relational, subjective, and interactional nature of ethnicity. Referencing classic works of scholars like Frederik Barth (1969) or Max Weber (1980 [1922]) scholars demonstrate that ethnic boundary work occurs *without* being causally grounded in the cultural contents of these groups. Scholars question public and political discourses where ethnic, national, or religious groups are treated as total social phenomena whose boundaries of culture/identity/communities automatically coincide, explaining cultural borders in a quasi-natural way, from one ethno-national or religious cultural system to another (among many Alba 2005; Wimmer 2009). Ethnicity approaches, in contrast, focus on how people use "cultural stuff" (Barth 1969, 19) to mark, blur, brighten or transgress boundaries in migration contexts.

Second, scholars scrutinize the "positively charged idea" of culture in multiculturalism. Critiques mainly target the downside of its inherent culturalist approach in terms of creating new forms of exclusion (Bannerji 2000; Phillips

2007; Vertovec 1999; Volpp 2001). Lentin (2005) for example identifies a shift from "race" to culture, which enables a positive celebration of difference. Yet, she argues that culturalist approaches cannot counter racism effectively, because they depoliticize anti-racism.

Third, scholars provide a critical analysis of what they call "new cultural racism" (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991), in which culture turned into an instrument of exclusion through "cultural fundamentalism" (Stolcke 1995). Recent scholarly work shows how this use of culture gets hitched to uses of gender and sexuality. Across the political spectrum, political actors position gender equality and women's rights as accomplished facts in Western countries, genuine "Western Values" directly resulting from their liberal cultures. They then define others through their culture's presumed incompatibility with these values, seeing them as threatening and illiberal (Dahinden and Manser-Egli 2022; Farris 2017; Hadj Abdou 2017; Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009). A similar pattern can be observed with regards to sexuality (Puar 2007; Fassin and Salcedo 2015).

Fourth, in other recent developments, critical race and post-colonial perspectives have become part of the analytical repertoire in migration studies (Erel, Murji, and Nahaboo 2016; Grosfoguel, Oso, and Christou 2015; Mayblin and Turner 2021; Murji and Solomos 2005; Schinkel 2018). This work critiques the use of culture-as-defining-attribute, arguing that essentialized understandings of culture are entangled with biological racism and historically-justified colonial exploitation, with this historical legacy expressed in contemporary orientalist representations about western (white) cultural superiority (Bonilla-Silva 2018). The part of this literature focusing on migration articulates the linkages between race, racialization, and post – and neo-colonial trajectories (Keskinen and Andreassen 2017; Tudor 2018). Culture-as-defining-attribute creates a notion of abject others, for example, depicting Muslim subjects as culturally backwards in relation to their religion and ejecting them from membership in society (Razack 2008).

Despite the merits of this encompassing body of literature, we argue that current academic work has two shortcomings which we tackle in this article. First, while this literature demonstrates that culture *is* indeed mobilized to foster complex exclusions in contemporary migration societies, it does so by mainly focusing on *politics or political fields*. Scholars discuss *grosso modo* the exclusionary side effects of multicultural or right-wing politics, they are less likely to investigate how *people in everyday contexts* use these ideas of culture. In this article we aim at explicating how people understand culture-as-defining-attribute, how they mobilize their understandings, and how these structure contemporary politics and power. Second, we argue that current academic work lacks a nuanced analysis of culture-as-defining-attribute beyond accepting, and then critiquing, its existence. We want to set out how, when and where culture-as-defining-attribute is used by

people who are not positioned as politicians or opinion makers. Many studies investigate the way people use or do *ethnicity*, or how ethnically framed worldviews are produced (Fox and Jones 2013; Lamont and Fournier 1992; Wimmer 2008). However, there is much less work focusing on how people in everyday contexts make meaning by using culture-as-defining-attribute under conditions of highly ethnicized and racialized migration contexts.

In brief, we aim at making an original contribution to this encompassing literature through a nuanced account of the work of culture-as-defining-attribute. What this reveals is a process of in/visibilization of culture-as-defining-attribute's exclusionary impacts.

Analytical framework

In our analytical framework, we distinguish between empirical phenomena and our analytical toolkit. We propose to treat the uses of culture-as-defining-attribute as an empirical phenomenon and object of study, as a *category of practice* (Brubaker 2004, 36). This opens up the possibility to ask what people are doing when constituting and mobilizing culture-as-defining-attribute. From this angle, our analytical framework is embedded in three different theoretical traditions.

First, we draw on traditions which understand culture in analytical and heuristic terms as *meaning-making* (Weber [1913] 1995; Swidler 1986). Baumann (1997, 211) argues that

> culture is not a real thing, but an abstract and purely analytic notion. In itself 'it' does not 'cause' behavior, but denotes an abstraction from it, and is thus neither normative nor predictive but a heuristic means towards explaining how people understand and act upon the world.

Following this approach, the question becomes how people interpret the world when using culture-as-defining-attribute. In line with Hall (1997, 236), we assume that meaning-making involves categorization and classification. This in turn generates hierarchies of difference that produce a given symbolic order, which then structures societies. These processes also echo Barth's (1969) arguments that groups come into being by people categorizing themselves as distinct from others. From this vantage point, it makes sense to consider the uses of culture-as-defining-attribute as forms of micro-politics constitutive of power relations given that meaning-making is embedded in hierarchizing categorization.

Second, we turn to theorizing that understands meaning-making as an empirical practice in which people draw on (and create) *repertoires of meaning* to interpret and motivate action (Abji, Korteweg, and Williams 2019; Ferree 2003; Steinberg 1999). Swidler (1986, 273) talks of "culture as a 'toolkit' of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people may

use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems", also labelling this toolkit a "repertoire". Adopting the latter term, we argue that these repertoires are "relational" in that the meaning of the elements that make up a repertoire are created through dialogue (Steinberg 1999). Individual actors employ elements for manufacturing versions of actions, self, and social structures and this allows for contradictions, exceptions, and transformations within a delineated repertoire (Steinberg 1999, 751). The analysis of the uses of culture-as-defining-attribute in terms of meaning-making will give us indications about the content of these repertoires and their deployment. Furthermore, these repertoires are deeply anchored in local contexts, though always informed by historical, national, and transnational forces. Moving beyond the migration literature's observation that culture-as-defining-attribute appears in many different geographical contexts, we argue that researchers need to be deeply familiar with the contexts that inform repertoires of meaning. In the field of migration studies, these contexts pertain to differences in naturalization and citizenship regimes, border regimes, colonial legacies, and ways of nation-state building.

Third, we theorize these repertoires as fundamentally *discursive*. We analyze the accumulations of meaning-making in repertoires through the lens of Foucault's (1972) analysis of discourse and power, which approaches discourse as language and social practice that constitute knowledge as power. Power is productive (and not simply repressive) and operates at the most micro levels of social relations (Foucault 1976). Translating these ideas, we argue that repertoires of meaning are discursive repertoires, historically contingent social systems that generate knowledge and are produced by effects of power within a social order. Situating people's participation in meaning-making in discursive repertoires thus offers a way to operationalize an analysis of power structures, a critical component of our analytical framework: meaning-making can, in this Foucauldian perspective be understood as "doing power".

Methodology

Talking on a train ride from Neuchâtel to Zurich in Summer 2019, we realized that while working on two different continents, in two different educational as well as migration contexts, we were both teaching courses where the notion of "culture" is central. We decided to integrate our teaching, guest-lectured in each other's classes and engaged students in our research. At the beginning of term, we both started our course by asking the students to write a brief essay answering the following questions: What does culture mean to you? Can you give an example of how culture is used, or what it means, from your everyday life (i.e. discussions with friends or family members, in political or media debates, etc.)? We asked students to do this

after the introductory class session when they had not yet been exposed to all that we meant to teach about culture.

The Toronto students are largely fourth-year students in the Sociology or Criminology, Law & Society programmes at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM), one of the two suburban campuses of this large, public institution. These students may have taken a second-year course in culture, and notions of culture likely have come up in other coursework. Most Neuchâtel students are in their second year of study, enrolled in a Bachelor in social sciences, including social anthropology, sociology, and geography. All students likely took courses that use the concept of culture, such as history of anthropology, human geography or psychology. In our analysis, we paid attention to echoes of this coursework, treating it as part of the discursive repertoire we were mapping.

We received ethics approval for using these essays, and did not begin the analysis until after the courses had ended and final marks had been uploaded.[2] All essays were anonymized and we do not know the names of the individual students. All identifying characteristics derive from the information they gave in the essays themselves.

Each of the students wrote approximately a page of text, with 43 students in Toronto writing almost 22,000 words (in English), and 72 students in Neuchâtel producing 40,000 words (in French, one in English).[3] We analyze these essays for meanings and uses of culture, applying discourse analysis and building on inductive interpretation of text in and of itself, and then placing it against existing literature, while comparing and contrasting the findings in each site. This method is based on approaches to textual analysis rooted in critical discourse analysis (Wodak and Meyer 2015). Critical discourse analysis focuses on the role of language in the formation of relations of power and the resulting institutional matrixes (Fairclough 2010). We used Atlas.ti and NVivo for coding.

We approached the conditions of the "production" of this data reflexively. We see the essays as embedded in and based on students' prior studies and also on everyday life discourses and practices they are confronted with and in which they participate. Students' articulation of culture in these essays is therefore a reflection of the complex amalgamation of their coursework and everyday life. This amalgamation allows us to arrive at conclusions about their use of the idea of culture, what they understand by it, and what other concepts it calls forth. Second, we are mindful that the students wrote these essays for us as their professors. However, rather than seeing this as a problem of receiving "biased" data, we argue that the performative element of these essays illuminates the contours of discursive repertoires in each site. Students create meaning with available discourses – that they wrote these essays for their professors illustrates how they articulate culture in the context of the status hierarchies that also shape everyday life.

Deep familiarity with context is critical for our analytical framework. The two countries have different border, migration, naturalization and citizenship regimes. Canada has complex and at times difficult entry requirements but, in line with ongoing settler colonialism, a relatively easy path to citizenship once permanent residency is achieved. Switzerland, a participant in colonialism without being a direct colonizer, has a border regime which is currently aligned with the EU (despite not being a member). It has one of strictest naturalization regimes within Europe.[4]

The Toronto student body reflects the immigration-related diversity of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) where many students live. Population data from the 2016 census shows that the GTA is 51.4 per cent what Canadian census calls "visible minorities", with people labelled South-Asian, Chinese, and Black the three largest categories. Furthermore, a little over 46 per cent of residents in the GTA were first generation immigrants to Canada.[5] Anecdotally, the Mississauga campus where this course was taught reflects this diversity. While we did not ask students to identify their racial or ethnic category in their essays, racial-ethnic categories and self-ascriptions do come up prominently, as discussed in our analysis below, and again reflect the categories of the larger population in the GTA. We also learned from their essays, that all students in this particular course were either first- or second-generation immigrants to Canada, with 19 students of Asian background (including South, East, and Middle East), seven Black, five Latinx, 11 White (with two of those ethnic Northern European, the others Balkan, and south or eastern European).

Most of the Neuchâtel students come from the surrounding cities and villages and from other parts in the French-speaking Switzerland. In the Swiss context, categories like ethnic or racial minorities are absent (yet, the term language minority is used for the different national language groups within Switzerland). Rather, the formal statistics are mainly based upon the categories "foreigners", meaning people without Swiss citizenship, or what is called "migration background", which includes first- and second-generation migrants. At the end of 2020, 25 per cent of the population of the Canton of Neuchâtel had no Swiss citizenship. Of the population over 15 years old, in 2019, 51 per cent had at least one parent who was born outside of Switzerland (38 per cent had both parents born abroad).[6] In the class, roughly half of the students indicated in their essays having a so-called "migration background": The essays suggest that their parents came mostly from Southern European countries, from former Yugoslavia, Turkey, and from other non-European countries, including the "Global South".

We would like to emphasize that we do not conduct a comparative analysis but rather have an in-depth look at two cases. Each case illuminates the way culture can be given meaning in the particularities of contemporary

migration societies, where localized discursive repertoires are embedded in specific power relations.

Making meaning, using culture in two contexts

Common ground: culture-as-defining-attribute

Analyzing the data from both research sites, it becomes clear that the students overlap in their use of culture-as-defining-attribute: They all use culture to define a recognizable, bounded membership group, rooted in shared practices, beliefs, norms and values. Both UTM and Neuchâtel students – with very rare exceptions – *start* their essays by giving us such a bounded idea of culture, associated with particular social groups. One UTM student exemplifies this general understanding:

> When I think about 'culture' I think about a group of people that share the same or very similar customs, beliefs and traditions. Often time we use this term to speak about the differences between ethnic or racial groups. (T6)[7]

Similar in Neuchâtel, for example:

> I understand 'culture' as a set of traits and characteristics (language, way of life and thought, customs, traditions, musical tastes, etc.) shared by a relatively large number of individuals in a defined territory, which allows cohesion and understanding within the community. (N1)

Students mobilize this approach to articulate how food, music, values and practices appear as main markers of how to distinguish cultures and their boundaries. Examples include doing a "siesta" (N55), cooking a particular winter soup (T31) or eating a particular kind of cracker at Christmas (T42). Furthermore, both UTM and Neuchâtel students deploy the idea of "origin" to link culture to mostly national bounded territories. UTM students narrate their definition of culture through accounts of being, among others, of Italian, Portuguese, Venezuelan, Columbian, Punjabi, or Filipino descent, while Neuchâtel students simply link country of origin to culture.

For both groups, the sense of culture is closely tied to intergenerational reproduction. Bringing all these elements of culture together, this Neuchâtel student describes culture as follows.

> For me, culture is like a manual of conduct. It is a set of elements that, if shared, allow several people to understand each other. Sharing the same culture means sharing behaviors that make sense […]. In my case, I could say that, having been born in Nicaragua but growing up in Switzerland, I have a culture that is a mixture of Nicaraguan and Swiss culture. I have habits that Nicaraguan culture has but that are not present in Swiss culture and vice versa. In short, culture can be determined from place to place. In addition, it can be transmitted from generation to generation. (N67)

It might come as a surprise that students, who have been taught critical approaches to culture in their formal University curriculum would simply reproduce culture-as-defining-attribute in ways that reflect the literature on the impact of culturalization from the 1990 onwards. While particularly the Neuchâtel students brought up more critical reflections about this meaning of culture later in their essays, our analysis shows a clear persistence of the use of this particular idea of culture. When it comes to the discursive repertoire in the two contexts, what is taught appears less deeply embedded in interpretations of the everyday world than this shared understanding.

Yet, it would be too simple to think that the students in Toronto and Neuchâtel only reproduce what we know from the literature. Rather, the students' writings reveal that the work culture does is fundamentally different in these two contexts while in both contexts power relations become in/visibilized.

The work of culture at the University of Toronto Mississauga

UTM students describe culture as something positively charged, a locus of belonging, affirmation of identity, and sense of membership. The essays demonstrate that UTM students use culture-as-attribute to demarcate differences but without a negative judgment. Rather, the essays reflect comfort and pride in their articulations of self and belonging. We argue that this process of emphasizing and centering can be understood as a form of hypervisibilization. We add the prefix "hyper" to signal that this form of visibilization simultaneously makes invisible other forces at play. It is as if certain elements of the discursive repertoire have been marked with a highlighter to push them to the foreground of meaning construction.

Students emphasize how diversity and difference are the foundations for social cohesion as they define the meaning of culture:

> One basic tenet of culture that I have personally experienced in Canada is the basic principle of acceptance. I have noticed that majority of the people are very friendly and accepting of diversity. Instead of dividing the society, we embrace each other [and] our differences. (T23)

Another student explicitly uses the term multicultural to define culture as convivial diversity:

> Canada is considered a multicultural society. For many immigrants, there is the opportunity to be able to practice the culture they grew up in as well as having the ability to participate in 'Canadian culture'. Although, 'Canadian culture' may just be a culture that allows others to take part in the cultures of others as a way of celebrating diversity. (T32)

This hypervisibilization of social cohesion and diversity as the central tenets in culture-as-defining-attribute works to make visible the idea of mutual embrace and acceptance of diversity that structures official Canadian

multiculturalism. Canada adopted its multicultural policy in 1971. The initial impulse underlying the policy was to bridge the divide between anglophone and francophone Canada which threatened to break apart the country. This is the time of the Front Liberation Quebec terror attacks in the province of Quebec and the rise of a separatist movement that continues to inform Canadian politics to this day, though now through party politics rather than terrorist violence (Crenshaw 1991). Multiculturalism as philosophy and policy orientation has been strongly supported by Canadian scholars working in liberal political theory (Kymlicka 1995; Taylor 1992) and Canadian politicians associated with the (often dominant) Liberal Party, as the best approach to producing cohesion in diverse societies.

Rather than using the term multiculturalism explicitly, many students reference the multicultural principle of culture as diversity that we see in the formal history of Canadian multiculturalism. In their descriptions of culture, they highlight how acceptance of diversity fosters their positive sense of belonging and identity. The UTM student whom we quote at the opening of this article tied their membership in an ethnic group explicitly to the Canadian multicultural definition of belonging. Another student elaborates that acceptance of diversity generates a sense of well-being and security: "My culture makes me feel safe and comfortable" (T5). And a third writes "Culture provides us with that home outside of home" (T6). None of these students describe a world outside of their "own" cultures as hostile – rather they describe having a culture or belonging to a culture as a necessary part of being human, as an expression of agentic belonging in the macro context of the culture one is raised in (T5). Thus, the discursive repertoire enables descriptions of a world in which difference never transforms into hierarchy (Hall 1997) while invisibilizing the production of hierarchical difference.

Critical race scholars argue that the adoption of multicultural policy coincided with the formal overhaul of the Canadian immigration system, which transformed the country from majority white, European origin, occupying Indigenous land and expanded contemporary settler colonizing by accepting global migrants. They have extensively critiqued the Canadian multicultural narrative as providing a bulwark for continued disenfranchisement and violation of the rights of Indigenous peoples (Thobani 2007), upholding Canadian racism (Lawrence and Dua 2005), and obscuring exploitation along racial, ethnic, and religious lines (Bannerji 2000; Maynard 2017). Lentin and Titley (2011) explore how ideas about culture in general and multiculturalism in particular result in the invisibilization of racism. They focus on articulations of multiculturalism by those who deliberately work to "protect" "European" culture. These processes are reflected in the essays: UTM students demonstrate how culture works in the everyday discourses of those who may or may not have an explicit interest in safeguarding a "dominant" culture, yet participate in doing so by drawing from a shared discursive repertoire.

One student demonstrates how their definition of culture invisibilizes racial inequalities. They start their essay with "Culture to me means diversity" (T12) and then provide a description in which race comes to the fore in reference to ethnic origin:

> Culture in Canada is very diverse because we are a country of immigrants and we bring our cultures and share them with others in our society. I myself am a Nigerian who has also lived in South Africa and I have learned different aspects of culture from my everyday experiences and interactions with people. Toronto is a perfect example on how cultures are diverse and how individuals share their culture while learning and adopting aspects of other people's cultures as well. As an example, from my own personal experience I find people around my age group who are Jamaican use the Muslim phrase wallahi to swear, while Muslims will use the Jamaican phrase wagwan to great people. I myself have also incorporated Jamaican slangs since I grew up with a lot of Jamaican friends. (T12)

This student references a series of predominantly Black communities (Nigerian, South African, Jamaican) and Muslims as having discrete cultures, making "Toronto a great city" in which "diverse cultures can be shared and learned," without reflecting on the racism faced by these communities in the Canadian context (Creese 2019; Maynard 2017). Canadian racism structures labour market outcomes (Block, Galabuzi-Grace, and Tranjan 2019), overpolicing and police brutality (Maynard 2017), and health care (Dryden and Nnorom 2021), inter alia. Gunew (2004, 16) argues that " … multiculturalism is often perceived as a coded way to indicate racialized differences". We see this reflected in the references to racial categories in quotes like the one above, yet again, difference does not link to hierarchy. We emphatically do not argue that students do not see or experience racism. However, the general absence of discussions of racism in their essays reflect the power of a discursive repertoire that ties culture to a non-hierarchical understanding of diversity. Thus, when asked to write about culture, students reinforce ideas about conviviality, rather than about exploitation and exclusion.

The prominence of multicultural tenets regarding diversity as a positive good in the discursive repertoire that students draw from also enables the invisibilization of conflict around ethnicity. For example,

> In my everyday life, I find myself very immersed in Portuguese culture. My family shares the Portuguese value of being family-oriented, and I engage with that each day through interaction with my family and spending quality time together in the evenings. Oftentimes, my grandparents also make Portuguese dishes and speak to me in Portuguese, which helps to keep me immersed in the culture as well. Through this sense, culture brings my family and I together and keeps a strong sense of familiarity and comfort amongst one another. (T14)

Students also reflect on how maintaining these cultural roots requires care:

> As the daughter of immigrants, I have seen my family pour love and labor into keeping their Iranian culture intact for their family. Culture does not come automatically in this way, it's thought out with care, within temporal and spatial dimensions to make sure we just get to celebrate who we are in the best way we can. (T31)

This student continues: "When I think about culture, I feel maternalistic, as in "this is a part of my culture", and I feel a responsibility to nurture it" (T31). This student's observation that she works to ensure her connection to what she sees as her cultural roots is reflected across student essays, in descriptions of how their family's ethnic or national origins influence their own sense of self and identity. Some students recount how they experience some tension as they distinguish between "Canadian" values (e.g. dating before marriage or being carefree in social interactions) and their "family's" cultural values (e.g. arranged marriage or being quiet and polite when around elders). The students' insistence that they can express their ethnic identity and claim belonging to various collectives suggests that their ethnicity cannot be taken for granted but needs to be achieved. What is absent in their accounts, however, are mentions of tension around being different along the lines identified by, for example, scholars working on the use of gender equality as a sign of cultural incompatibility.

Again, these accounts of national origin and ethnicity show that multiculturalism as idea and philosophy not only shapes Canadian politics (Fleras 2009), but also the discursive repertoire that these students mobilize. The resulting repertoire creates the following equivalency chain: culture = diversity = ethnicity = positive, with some students adding race to ethnicity. In general, the almost celebratory ease with which students describe the particularities of their own ethnic culture and the joy of learning that of others suggests that this idea of multiculturalism works to make hypervisible a sense of happy togetherness in difference. We suggest that when drawing from this discursive repertoire, students can acknowledge racial and ethnic difference but not racial or ethnic conflict. This notion of positive difference is also part of the discursive repertoire deployed by government. Indeed, successive Canadian governments have articulated the sentiment "diversity is our strength" (Abu-Laban 2017, 274). In adopting these elements of the discursive repertoire when discussing culture students show how they participate in a hypervisibilization of non-conflictual diversity that bolsters this particular nationalist project.

One area of the essays provides a direct contrast with European migration debates, where religiosity, Islam in particular, has become a major fault line. In Canada, too, literature on culture and migration articulates the othering of immigrants through appellations to Islam, establishing the existence of

varied forms of anti-Muslim racism (Haque 2010; Wilkins-Laflamme 2018). However, when Islam comes up in the student essays, it is often by students who in their self-description fold being Muslim into the generic definition of culture-as-defining-attribute. One student, describing herself as Pakistani and Muslim, articulates how this shapes her everyday life:

> Personally, I drink coffee from Tim Horton's, I wear clothes from "middle-class" brands such as Urban Planet, I wear the hijab and like my traditional Pakistani food. These certain things place me in a middle class, Muslim, Pakistani culture, and this has become, in some sorts, part of my identity. (T37)

This quote reinforces how the discursive repertoire hypervisibilizes the absence of religiously-laden cultural conflict articulated in the European context and identified in the Canadian as well (Barras, Selby, and Adrianeds 2022) and invisibilizes Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism.

Generally, students tie discussions of religion to their parents and to migration in utterances that show how the discursive repertoire around the acceptance of difference takes shape. For example, one UTM student describes himself as a Punjabi-Canadian and Sikh, and then states that his "actions, beliefs and value systems … are a hybrid of both the [Canadian] society I am a part of and my ethnicity" (T4). The student goes on to describe how "I cannot marry the person I want to unless my parents agree, yet I am still able to date, showing a hybrid culture in which I exist," arguing that dating is normal in "Canadian society" but "looked down upon … in the Punjabi community" (T4). The matter-of-factness with which this student describes the context of Canadian-Punjabi life, as an easy-to-understand reality, suggests an absence of negative judgement. Similarly, a self-identified Muslim student states "For me, my culture has always been an infusion of religion with tradition. It is very normal to be accepting of the idea of an arranged marriage" (T23). Thus, even in descriptions of what are elsewhere highly charged differences related to gender and intimacy in the context of religion, we can read a positive affirmation of belonging in difference. In this narration, what unifies people is a multicultural ethos in which each can express themselves according to a wide variety of cultural norms and practices. Again, culture-as-defining-attribute becomes hypervisible, even when it regards Islam, in a positive way.

The persistent detailed articulation of culture-as-defining-attribute that can be read inter alia from references clothing, dating practices, and where you drink your coffee, practices that are in turn associated with ethnonational origins and religious affiliations lead us to conclude that these essays reflect practiced ways of seeing and speaking, that make up the discursive repertoire that organizes these interpretations of culture. This conclusion is bolstered by population surveys that find Canadians generally very supportive of multiculturalism and immigration (Berry 2013). Yet, as we have shown throughout

this section, this hypervisibilization of culture as affirmative of belonging has a flipside: the invisibilization of power structures.

While holding on to the positives of culture-as-defining-attribute, some of the students did move to discuss various forms of social inequality perpetuated through this use of culture. These students would give the same generic culture-as-defining-attribute definition in the beginning of their essays, and often recount their own positive experiences of cultural recognition. However, in other parts of their essays, they would raise more critical perspectives, often linking them to courses they had taken prior. The issues raised included the practice of cultural appropriation of Black culture by white women (T2, T15, T32) and of Indigenous culture (T42); the sense that there is a hierarchy of culture between East/West, Global South/North (T7, T13, T35), with one student arguing that hierarchy is inherent in cultural group formation where the own group is always seen as "superior" to others (T27); being taught that gender is a cultural formation that supports gender inequality (T9, T18, T25), and that culture reproduces capitalism/class hierarchies (T20). These examples begin to show what happens when students adopt a more analytical stance that makes visible how culture as meaning-making practices can obscure and reinforce power relations. However, these examples appeared in the shadow of the hypervisible elements of non-hierarchical difference that structured the discursive repertoire students drew on to articulate the self and belonging through the language associated with culture-as-defining-attribute.

The work of culture at the Université de Neuchâtel

Reading the essays, one issue is striking: Where the Toronto students talk positively about themselves and their belonging to a Canadian collectivity rooted in cultural difference, Neuchâtel students write mostly about others or about being othered, in a negative sense. Unlike UTM students, the Neuchâtel students experience a lot of conflict around the concept of culture. In the Neuchâtel context, where categories like foreigners and migration background are strongly anchored in the discursive repertoire, migranticization turns out to be a dominant structuring force for the students and their use of culture. Migranticization captures the performative practice of ascribing migration status to people, thus reproducing non-belonging, independent of whether people labelled migrants are Swiss citizens or not (Dahinden 2016; see also Anderson 2019; Tudor 2018). Importantly, migration status is often ascribed not only to non-Europeans, but also to Europeans and it is closely entangled with nation-state logic.[8] In addition, unlike in the UTM case, culture-as-defining-attribute does different forms of work amongst the students, dividing them into two groups. Those who do not speak about themselves being migranticized tend to relegate xenophobia or racism to

other Swiss, thus making invisible their own participation in the migranticizing project. Students who write that they are seen as "migrants" draw on definitions of culture-as-defining-attribute to fight for their inclusion. We discuss each group in turn.

Non-migranticized students: rejecting dominant uses of culture-as-defining-attribute

In strong contrast to UTM, Neuchâtel students without migration ascription struggle with the culture-as-defining-attribute idea and they bring in critical stances: "I have a somewhat conflictual relationship with the notion of culture" (N36), or: "I must have been careful not to use the term culture for a year now" (N50). These students want to interrupt the stereotyping that goes along with this idea of culture:

> I often had problems really understanding in which way I could use it [culture], because of my desire to counter certain ways of speaking using this notion in a homogenizing and reifying way. (N11)

Their critical stance can partly be understood by their former classes where they became familiar with critiques of culture-as-defining-attribute. In a way, the students are caught up in an "in-betwneeness": They draw from the idea of culture-as-defining-attribute which is deeply anchored in the discursive repertoire while they develop a critical stance. Yet, there are additional facets which also play a crucial role in their struggles.

First, Neuchâtel students' struggle can be understood against the backdrop of highly culturalized political debates about migration and, more recently, Islam in Switzerland. The students attempt to distance themselves from a use of culture-as-defining-attribute which is charged negatively and strongly associated with the othering of migrants and exclusionary right-wing politics. This use of culture-as-defining-attribute is an important part of a historically anchored discursive repertoire, which includes terms like *Überfremdung*, literally over-foreignization and *Eidgenosse*, literally "native" confederate. Originally articulated in the late nineteenth century, *Überfremdung* was successfully re-appropriated by various populist parties in the 20th and twenty-first century in order to limit immigration, be it from within or outside of Europe. At the core of *Überfremdung* is the fear that too much of certain forms of immigration will compromise Switzerland's cultural identity and integrity as a nation, with migrants seen as culturally too different to be allowed to enter (Kury 2003). The resulting discursive repertoire reflects a deeply nativist understanding of Swiss society. Nativism "holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (the nation) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state" (Mudde 2007, 19). The particular Swiss term, *Eidgenosse* (though used only in

German, it designates the official name of Switzerland "Schweizerische Eidgenosschaft"), conveys the idea of "native" "Swiss" (with common ancestry). In public discourse, this term is usually reserved for Swiss people with no immigration in their family history (ever). One effect of this nativist understanding is that while one can become formally Swiss by naturalization, one never can become an Eidgenosse, symbolically speaking[9] – this applies not only to non-Europeans, but also to Europeans, like Italians or Germans, who are called "Swiss by paper".

Students criticize this culturalist debates and nativist structure. They relate this to the politicization of Swiss identity arguing:

> Culture has become one of the most important tools for marking the boundaries between "us" and "them" in politics and therefore, by extension, in the territory. […] The extremist, nationalist and identity parties brandish it to justify […] xenophobic measures. In Switzerland, the Swiss Peoples Party provides the most prominent example of a party making the question of identity a central issue. (N26)

Second, as this quote also shows, students blame the right-wing party – which receives around 30 per cent of the vote, and sometimes, as seen in other essays, their families and friends, for using culture-as-defining-attribute to homogenize, stereotype, and exclude migrants. In other words, these students' observations render not only hypervisible the work of culture-as-defining-attribute for right-wing parties and their friends. They also render visible the work culture-as-defining-attribute does for the students themselves: By relegating its use to other people, the students place themselves outside of deeply anchored power structures. Most students do not consider themselves part of this system of power where culture-as-defining-attribute fosters nativism, and where migranticization is fundamental for the organization of Swiss society. Thus, the students engage in a process of invisibilization that is similar to what Bonilla-Silva labelled color-blind racism, but the "content" is different: Bonilla-Silva argues that color-blind racism otherizes softly and leads to a "curious enigma of 'racism without racists'" (4). In contrast, in this Swiss context, it is not only a racialized structure (see below), but also a nativist migranticized structure which is made invisible. This leads to migranticization without migranticizers.

Third, the Neuchâtel students' essays reflect another aspect of the Swiss discursive repertoire as they participate in a generalized denial of racism and racialization (Dos Santos Pinto et al. 2022), with very few essays mentioning these terms and processes. Switzerland, like other European countries, struggles with the notion of "race" and has a problem acknowledging the everyday reality of racialization to the point where debates about structural racism are largely absent from public and political discourses. The Swiss are no exception of what Goldberg (2006, 343) analyzed in terms of "racial

Europeanization": An invisibilization of "race", or racialization as socially, politically and morally relevant. Similarly, Michel (2015, 410) identified a Swiss "racism without race," meaning that in public and political discourses "race" and racism are often either externalized to other countries (mainly to the US), or relegated temporally and historically (to the Shoah or colonialism). Furthermore, racism is reduced to individual acts and not thematized in terms of its structural and systemic aspects. Michel (2015) argues further that by making the verbal use of racial categories morally undesirable, racelessness leads individuals and institutions to favour a vague or coded vocabulary, including "cultural difference," to evoke realities impacted by racialized power relations. Yet, our analysis shows a more complex way how culture relates to the idea of racialization and racism. Unsurprisingly, in line with the literature, only a handful students thematize racism when asked to write about culture even though the students probably would not put into question the existence of racism as such in Switzerland. However, when asked to write about culture, the term does not trigger ideas of racialization or racism.

A handful of students make this observation themselves:

> I find it [culture] to be a term that in its common usage has replaced the notion of 'race' but is very often used in the same way […]. I have often heard it used in a rather derogatory way to bring a whole group of people back to their otherness with words similar to "oh they do it like that at home, this is their culture. (N63)

In other words, the critical stance of a handful students visibilizes migranticization and racialization. However, as they relegate the equation of culture with race to others – as in the quote above -, they simultaneously invisibilize their own participation in this structure as non-migranticized and white privileged people.

The struggles of students labelled migrants: acting within the bounds of the discursive repertoire

Students who express in their essays that they are being ascribed migrant status, particularly those who indicate that their parents are from non-European countries, describe concrete experiences of being othered through the deployment of culture-as-defining-attribute. They indicate that they are rarely addressed as "being Swiss," even when born and raised in Switzerland, instead they are continuously marked as non-belonging. This nativist outcome makes clear why in the Swiss context – in contrast to the Toronto one – hyphenated identities or insisting on having two (or more!) cultures, is difficult. The following quote is illustrative:

> This notion [culture] has been used 'against' me, that way as 'ah but it's in your culture' 'how are you doing at home?' by people who consider themselves

> outside of 'my culture' and who define my culture as my 'ethnic' and religious background. Even though I was born in Le Locle [town in the Canton of Neuchâtel] and have lived here all my life, I am not considered to be 'from here'. When I answer that I am from Neuchâtel, people continue and ask me 'no but, basically, you do not come from here, or ??' This is because neither my first name nor my family name are familiar to them. Whether I like it or not, my actions, due to my racialization, are often seen as a result of 'my parent's "culture"' which by default is also mine. […] I have been dealing with these questions since I was a child. (N63)

The nativist construction of Swissness leads to the othering of people who were born in Switzerland and who have a Swiss passport simply because they are visibly non-white (which is rarely discussed openly), or have non-native-Swiss names, or because their parents are from elsewhere. In other words, culture-as-defining-attribute works to hypervisibilize them as non-Swiss.

In this situation of (at least) symbolic exclusion, these students delve into the same discursive repertoire as those who are not seen as migrants when they make sense of the notion of culture: yet, they use some elements differently, in ways that shift, reinforce or expand the repertoire in a process reminiscent of scholarship on boundary formations. These students mobilize the notion of culture-as-defining-attribute from the position of marked non-belonging. From this standpoint, they attempt to invisibilize their othering either by becoming "unmarked" of the ascribed "other culture," or by being "marked" as Swiss, both of which are difficult.

First, many students write that they do not fit into these categories of culture-as-defining-attribute they are assigned to. As a consequence, the students try to find other meanings and they emphasize an individualistic part of culture. Thus, they deliberately attempt to unmark themselves from being of an "other" culture:

> My father being of Spanish and English origin, questions of culture or the idea of tracing the origin of the family are raised on a recurring basis […] However, I do not identify with a Spanish or English identity […] To resolve this internal conflict, I remember a few years ago having been inspired by a TEDtalk wanting to reaffirm the origin not by the question where are you from? but where are you a local? (N37)

This student, with European parents, presents trying to be "local", or *changing* to a discursive register which is not linked to culture-as-defining-attribute, as a way to place themselves outside of migranticization. Whether this strategy is successful is another question. Yet, it demonstrates that discursive repertoires offer elements of contestation and conflict which potentially can impact on power.

Second, few students try to "mark" themselves with Swiss culture. They use culture-as-defining-attribute to visibilize their Swissness, thus reproducing

the nativist elements of the available discursive repertoire. This can be understood as an assimilation strategy of outsiders – given that there is no possibility to belong while being marked with "another culture". The following student is one of the few among the migranticized ones who adopted this strategy:

> It should be noted that I am of foreign origin, with two foreign parents, and I arrived in Switzerland at a very young age, so a large majority of my education and socialization was done in Switzerland. The question of being part of a different culture does not appear much in these young ages because I quickly internalized the fundamental notions and values of Swiss life and thus identify myself as a Swiss rather than a foreigner. (N27)

Hereby, the work of culture-as-defining-attribute is, again, to invisibilize systemic migranticization. Cretton (2018) shows a similar strategy of non-white Swiss citizens with migration background as they adopt the dominant discourse that denies the presence of racism in Switzerland.[10]

Finally, even more rarely, we saw a response to being Black or having non-European parents that offered a third strategy: stressing the richness of having two cultures, in the way that is dominant among the UTM students.

> I come from two Franco-Senegalese cultures and this is an incredible gift. It allowed me to have a horizontal or circular view of the world and not a vertical one. (N58)

These students invisibilize structural racism (and migranticization), in ways common amongst the UTM students. By insisting on horizontal differences in terms of cultural richness, these students try to circumvent the systemic racialization they are confronted with. This strategy can be read as an attempt to stretch the dominant discursive repertoire.

Discussion & conclusion: implications for further studies on culture and migration

We started with the observation that scholars from different disciplines demonstrate that culture-as-defining-attribute continues to matter in migration contexts and functions as a major vector of exclusion, hierarchies and othering. Going beyond this rich, existing work, we show in this article *how* culture-as-definining-attribute works *outside of politics and media*, among people situated in everyday life. An analysis of essays written by undergraduate students in two distinct migration contexts, Toronto and Neuchâtel, demonstrated that specific uses of this idea of culture coincide with an in/visibilization of power relations. We argue that this missing link – in/visibilization – moves us beyond simply showing that culture matters in terms of its exclusionary power.

Furthermore, our two cases suggest that these uses of culture-as-defining-attribute can diverge sharply: Juxtaposing the two case studies reveals different practices of in/visibilization resulting from the divergent discursive repertoire the students delve into and contribute to when they use culture-as-defining-attribute. The UTM students invisibilize racism and settler colonialism, while the Neuchâtel's students invisibilize their own participation in reproducing the ways in which culture produces migranticization and racialization. We do not argue, however, that students do not see racism, racialization, migranticization, or settler colonialism. Rather, we suggest that if we had asked students to write memos about these processes, they would have articulated a different set of concepts and ideas, and other things would have been invisibilized. Finally, one striking communality between the case studies is that in neither site, culture calls forth social class or socio-economic inequalities, despite otherwise starkly different mechanisms of in/visibilization.

What does this mean for ongoing debates on culture and migration? We argue that these findings have concrete implications for further academic work. The most important is that the use of categories always means engaging in in/visibilization. Therefore, we need to ask what we can see given the specific processes of in/visibilization at play, what is "hypervisible," and what is invisibilized through the dominant discursive repertoire. Critical migration scholars demonstrate that in many domains culture-as-defining-attribute became an important element of structural strategies to exclude people and to demarcate (non)belonging. Some of these scholars also point to processes of invisibilization (i.e. Lentin 2014; Goldberg 2006; Bonilla-Silva 2018). Yet, rarely do they further investigate these processes leading to in/visibilization. Our case studies suggest that scholarly work could profit from disentangling the assumed direct link between culture, race and exclusion and target the processes of in/visibilization that lie in-between and beyond.

Using this approach, assimilation and integration theorists could start to investigate what is at stake in terms of in/visibilization of power relations when it comes to the norm of assimilation and integration as this seems to be an overlooked dimension of this literature (see also Favell 2022). The migranticized Neuchâtel students, assigned non-belonging through culture-as-defining-attribute, reflect what Korteweg (2017) describes as the inherent gendered and racialized production of non-belonging through the integration imperative. Critical race and post-colonial scholars aim to unravel power relations and are attuned to processes of in/visibilization writ large, but they often focus solely on racialization and not on the articulation of power relations through the use of culture-as-defining-attribute in the everyday context. We suggest that a focus on in/visibilization of power relations through an analysis of

culture-as-defining-attribute could strengthen this already rich body of work.

Another implication of our analysis deals with the transnational dimension of dynamics of in/visibilization of power structures. Culture-as-defining-attribute has been identified by scholars as a means of exclusion in migration contexts transnationally. Yet, we plead for conducting situated case studies. The work of culture can only be fully understood when scholars are deeply familiar with specific contexts, considering how *discursive repertoires of meanings* differ between contexts. The juxtaposition of our two case studies reveals two different processes of in/visibilization. Yet, we hypothesize that there are many others. To bring them to light could be important for tackling exclusionary power relations and addressing migranticization, racism, nativism, and settler-colonialism.

Notes

1. This typification will not do justice to many works in this field. This section provides a general overview of major trends.
2. We received ethics approval for using these essays: University of Toronto Research Ethics Board, protocol number 38699 and NCCR on the move/Swiss National Science Foundation for the University of Neuchâtel data.
3. The quotes have been translated from French to English by the authors.
4. See for Canada https://www.mipex.eu/Canada, for Switzerland https://www.mipex.eu/Switzerland (accessed on February 1, 2022).
5. All data from Statistics Canada: https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMACA&Code1=535&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=Caledon%20East&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All (accessed on August 2, 2022).
6. For the data see: https://www.ne.ch/autorites/DFS/STAT/domaines/Pages/01.aspx (accessed on August 2, 2022).
7. Quotes by UTM students receive a T, Neuchâtel students an N.
8. For this reason, we make a plea to analytically distinguish between migranticization and racialization: While both terms refer to processes of marking differences between people on the basis of assumptions about physical or cultural "traits" and while both produce exclusion and inequalities, they do so in different ways. Racialization is understood here as being linked to the intellectual and political histories of colonialism and racism and its legacies in terms of representations. Migranticization in turn is seen as linked to "foreignization" and anchored in the nation-state logic. Of course, for some people both processes come together.
9. Marcacci, Marco. 2012. "Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft". In: *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS)*, Version vom 6. September 2012, übersetzt aus dem Französischen. Online: https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/009826/2012-09-06/ (accessed on December 15, 2021).
10. For anti-black racism in Switzerland see the last UN report: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=28062&LangID=E (accessed on January 31, 2022).

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Ethics statement

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