Scholarship on citizenship and national identity construction has long comprised an essential part of historiographical discussions on nation-states. Some of this literature is historical, while other works stem from related fields of political science or sociology. Rarely, however, do social and cultural historians read studies from the field of education on the role of schools in nation-building. Certainly, authors such as Benedict Anderson and Elie Kedourie acknowledge that schools impact how young people become adult citizens. Yet even well-received books on education and citizenship, such as Stephen Harp’s work on schooling in Alsace-Lorraine (Learning to Be Loyal: Primary Schooling As Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940, 1998), or Gregory Wegner’s study of the teaching of anti-Semitism in Nazi schools (Anti-Semitism and Schooling Under the Third Reich, 2002), have not convinced historians that there is a clear need to understand the actual functioning of schools at the classroom level. Standard courses on “School and Society” that examine in depth the possibilities and limitations of schooling at the local and national level remain sequestered in Schools of Education, with nary an historian in sight—due in part to the traditional intolerance of departments of history for their craft being practiced by “other” historians employed in other disciplines, particularly education. The consequential lack of social and cultural historians’ general knowledge of educational theory and practice beyond popular (mis)conceptions about schooling has, to be generous, weakened the scholarship on nation-building and citizenship formation.

For historians ready to move beyond a superficial understanding of how classrooms contribute to the creation of a national culture (or cultures), the multi-author, multi-country study Civil Enculturation: Nation-State, School and Ethnic Difference in the Netherlands, Britain, Germany and France is an excellent introduction to the subject. More of a sociological/anthropological than historical work, Civil Enculturation lays the groundwork for historians and policymakers alike interested in the changes and challenges that the modern state and its schools have faced since the French Revolution made public schooling a key component of state building and citizenship formation. As Gerd Baumann declares in the introduction, “Without state schools, there would be no nations as we know them in northwestern Europe, no national conscience collective, and no effective means of inculcating and rehearsing the conventions of the dominant political culture” (p. 2, emphasis in original). Yet, as even a superficial observation of any European culture demonstrates, the “dominant political culture” finds itself occasionally at odds with large segments of society. Political historians as well as those educational historians steeped in the literature on school history and theory will find this book to be an important contribution to discussions of possible approaches to educating increasingly diverse populations in four different European contexts.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution of this book is the authors’ successful attempt to arrive at a clear definition of schools’ mission vis-à-vis the state. Where works to date have struggled with vague terms of identity and citizenship formation, or worse, indoctrination and inculcation of national values, Schiffauer, Baumann, Kastoryano, and Vertovec have arrived at a more specific role carved out together by the state and the educational system: civil enculturation. With this phrase, the authors
have determined that schools ideally help pupils acquire the skills necessary to function in their particular society. Some of their findings are not unknown to social scientists, such as the argument that communication is culturally constructed and specific. It is these findings in their context of four schools in four different national and social contexts, however, that give new life to these accepted principles. As the authors demonstrate, the ability to navigate a social system is one that becomes even more important as countries face growing immigrant populations, from both western and non-western cultures.

The authors lay out each of the four nation states' guiding principles and proceed to investigate how the schools they researched adhered to or, more often, adapted these ideals. Their methodology included classroom and extracurricular observation, analysis of printed material, and interviews with faculty and students, including expelled female Muslim students in the case of France. If co-authored books are traditionally disjointed in their writing styles and even conclusions, this work offers a cohesive study that benefits from multiple viewpoints while addressing similar issues through a cross-cultural sample. Part of the unified feel of the book comes from the intermingling of research teams—although each team was originally responsible for a particular country and chapter, unexpected circumstances brought about a mingling of research sites and authorship. This initial problem became an advantage, as the editors note (p. vii). They are also careful to justify their decision to focus in-depth on one school in each country instead of conducting research at multiple sites. Nowhere do they claim that the four schools they investigate represent all schools in their respective countries; rather, the authors explain that no one school can ever be “representative” of every other school. These schools are, however, “characteristic” of other schools in those countries, even where differences such as region and class would present variations (p. 6). This distinction might not satisfy every researcher interested in national patterns of education, but the execution of the study makes it a convincing argument for the scope of this project.

Why is civil enculturation such an important topic that it merits cross-national comparison? The answer is at once simple and complex, and one of interest to historians of modern European culture: The composition of societies has changed since the inception of public education, and states have had to struggle with a definition of what teaching nationally shared values entails. As becomes clear from this study, some nation-states have adhered to traditional definitions of their value systems, insisting on the state’s right to expect all inhabitants to accept and even internalize these ideals. Other nation-states have been less sure of the practicality and, in some cases, fairness, of prioritizing social mores and expectations that potentially exclude the traditions and even social participation of the increasing numbers of new cultures. In other words, what is the appropriate social contract for the new millennium?

The ways in which the four nation-states here resolve this question theoretically should not entirely surprise historians familiar with the development of these countries’ cultures, in particular since the end of World War II. The important contribution here is the results of the authors’ fieldwork, which demonstrates how regulations function in practice. In France, the public school is responsible for providing liberté, fraternité, and égalité to all students by insisting that they conform to the ideals of the secular Republic. The school studied here, the Lycée Fernand Braudel, conforms to this norm. There is no room at this institution, with its “instantly forbidding gate and a more than man-high fence which cords off the entire site from the world outside,” for expressions of other cultures, including religions, deemed threatening to French Republican principles (p. 22). French students may not wear “conspicuous” religious symbols. The most famous example of the primacy of the secular Republic in this regard is the prohibition on Muslim girls wearing the traditional veil or headscarf to school. Small crosses or Stars of David are acceptable; veils are not. The authors continue the discussion on this subject by interviewing faculty, administration, and students at the school, as well as Muslim girls expelled for their non-compliance with school rules. In this sense, the arguments and research follow in the footsteps of other studies, such as Françoise Gaspard and Farhard Khosrokhar’s interviews with French girls in Le foulard et la République (1995) or Alma Levy, Lila Levy, Yves Simomer and Véronique Giraud’s Des filles comme les autres (2004). Refreshing, though, is the analysis here that is situated alongside the way in which the three other nations’ schools dealt with the question of the veil. Chapter 5, “Muslim Headscarves in Four Nation-States and Schools,” is particularly valuable, but the topic receives treatment throughout the book. The authors are careful not to judge each nation and its schools’ policies, but in this multi-study work, France looks too rigid in its commitment to a normative Republic that might not, in fact, treat its citizens equally. The expelled Muslim girls, for example, have the opportunity to continue their studies by correspondence, but in reality this is a near-impossible task—
without the support of a classroom environment, it is too difficult for most Muslim girls to pass their exams. Disappointing is the near-absent yet obvious gender aspect of the subject. Various religions present in France expect males to display religious symbols, such as a beard or a turban, but these religious expressions receive almost no mention in the book and have proven to be of less interest to school officials. Although a few Sikh males have been expelled from French schools for wearing keskis (under-turbans), the law, as demonstrated at the Lycée François Braudel, has thus far kept far more female pupils from a state-sponsored education, and, ironically, from internalizing the rules of the Republic.

Historians of social history will certainly wonder what the authors thought of the subject of the school’s name, François Braudel. Curiously, here, as in the other schools, the school’s name receives no discussion. This omission is unfortunate, for it certainly would have provided an interesting topic of further consideration. Braudel, one of France’s most famous historians and key figure of the Annales school of history, was most famous for his geo-history of Mediterranean peoples of unprecedented scope. Braudel was an advocate of studying la longue durée—that is, looking at long stretches of time to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of historical change. In Braudel’s brilliant descriptions of time and space, social change takes place at different rates, occurring sometimes as sudden transformations but, just as often, as almost imperceptible waves of painstakingly slow revolutions. From this point of view, the question of how the French Republic will confront new religions and identities through its schools is a debate that has just begun.

The Federal Republic of Germany, here studied through the Lise Meitner Schule, also presents its pupils with a normative model of citizenship. In contrast to other countries, however, the model is based on a negative identity—one that might be summed up by “never again,” the popular German shorthand call to prevent nationalism, imperialism, expansionism, and xenophobia from ruling the country—in other words, never again Auschwitz, never again a Holocaust. The authors describe German democracy as “something which has to be defended and thus appears as very fragile” (p. 48). The lesson here is moderation: any political extremism is unacceptable. The goal of German civil enculturation is to teach pupils to think and feel democratically—to create a citizenry that acts according to internalized principles, not to external rules and regulations. Still, German citizenship laws and public opinion do not allow for just anyone to truly be a German–Turks, for instance, and other immigrant populations (often referred to as “guest workers” for their role in the economy) face significant obstacles to obtaining German citizenship regardless of their participation in society, including schools (p. 77). Indeed, the authors conclude that even France’s strict presentation of the Republic as the only way to assimilation is more open to the acceptance of “immigrant” populations than Germany’s restrictive ethnic definition of citizenship.

Although many German schools provide religious instruction, it is almost unfailingly Catholic or Protestant in nature, with the occasional example of a more nondenominational (but generally “western”) “ethics” class. But religion and culture are present throughout the lessons at Liese Meitner. The authors present numerous examples of teachers attempting to show the inherent difficulties of acting like a correct German if an individual stems from another culture. In one case, teachers used the example of one Turkish girl who left school to marry and then found herself in an unhappy situation, without a husband and without an education (pp. 245-247). In the end, Turks and other immigrant populations at Liese Meitner find themselves in an almost untenable situation from the viewpoint of citizenship: their school, as the voice of the state, expects them to adopt German norms and mores in order to find success in German society. But the state makes it impossible for these same populations to acquire German citizenship, even if more recently the laws in this area have loosened somewhat. Observations of the teachers as portrayed in this study present the instructors as too sure of their mission to “Germanize” their immigrant pupils without truly understanding the difficulties and contradictions of this program. In certain cases, the teachers appear intolerant of other cultures (usually Turkish), while at the same time insisting on Germany’s commitment not to persecute and even accept other peoples (coded as Jews). To scholars of German culture, this schizophrenic attitude is recognizable in other situations, from citizenship to welfare policy. It is not that these particular teachers lack multicultural sensitivity; it is a larger, ongoing problem that Germany faces of being an immigrant nation without wanting to admit or rethink its traditional ethnic view of citizenship. Again, the irony of the naming of the school must be mentioned: Lise Meitner was an overlooked yet important physicist from a Jewish Viennese family (whose members had actually converted to Protestantism and Catholicism in the early twentieth century). She immigrated to Sweden after the Anschluß of Austria. Only after her death did Meitner receive recognition for

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her important scientific contributions—a consequence of her gender, certainly; but also the result of her émigré status, which gave her no true homeland to promote her achievements. The naming of the Lise Meitner Schule is typical of a country’s theoretical commitment to admitting the sins of the past (in this case the persecution of Jews) by officially honoring victims. The situation at the school, however, is further proof that such symbolic acts are not always accompanied by a larger program of a resolution of an historical problem. I am by no means comparing the situation of Jews during the Holocaust to Turks in today’s German schools; rather, I am suggesting that the broad question of multi-cultural acceptance is uneven in German educators’ and pupils’ comprehension.

The Dutch school in Rotterdam visited by the authors, the Nikolaas Tinbergen School, offers a surprising approach to civil entculuration, given that country’s near-defiant self-construction as a nation committed to tolerance and consensus, along with the ever-present concept of compromise (p. 30). The lofty ideas of an egalitarian civil society—to which even the state is subservient—unravel in the reality of the school’s location. The school itself is spread across a wide area of land located between a “rough” working-class district and a more affluent middle-class district. Different buildings house one of each of the “tracks” (technical, clerical, and academic, pp. 28-29). The lowest, vocational, track building borders the working-class area, and to keep potential problems at bay, school officials erected an iron gate around that building. Buildings for the higher academic tracks provide unrestricted access, located as they are in neighborhoods not perceived to be a threat to the pupils’ welfare. Regardless of the very practical and likely necessary solution of a fence to protect students in an unsafe area, the enclosure highlights the social inequality present in the multi-tracked schools, where here as elsewhere throughout the educational world, lower classes and non-native speakers are overrepresented in the vocational tracks. The geography of the school also contradicts the curricular emphasis of the history of the Dutch nation as one of steady progress towards a unity that has resulted from democracy, defined as active civic participation of the individual. Citizenship and thus membership in the nation is a collection of practices, not a status (pp. 44-45). Equality in this definition is thus achievable by one’s actions. In an extension of this principle, immigrant cultures are officially welcomed by the state (and the Nikolaas Tinbergen School) as enrichments, as long as these cultures participate in the great Dutch compromise of creating a united society. But educators in the school and textbooks indicate a less complete acceptance of cultural differences. For instance, one textbook explains the concept of an allochtoon—"somebody who differs on grounds of race or other clearly visible marks [sic!] from the original inhabitants of our country” (emphasis by authors, p. 72). The text goes on to explain that western Europeans residing in the Netherlands are not allochtonen but vreemdeling or buitenlander (less racialized definitions for a foreigner or non-citizen). In a logical extension of the citizenship-as-practice ideal, pupils learn that future progeny of allochtonen will likely become autochtoon—"an inhabitant of our country who has roots here”: “They [future generations of allochtonen] will have the same habits [as Dutch, autochtoon children] and perhaps no longer remember that their grandfather came from Turkey. They will then be considered as autochtonen” (p. 72). The authors question this fairytale of citizenship, since “clearly visible marks” such as black skin would continue to place a person in the allochtoon camp permanently. The supposed multicultural Netherlands, as seen through this part of its educational system, appears less committed to making room for different cultures and more interested in the eventual assimilation of these differences.

Finally, a word on the name of this school as well: Nikolaas Tinbergen was a Nobel Prize co-recipient for his work on the social behavior patterns of animals. Although born in The Hague, he traveled regularly outside the Netherlands before the Second World War, during which he spent two years interned in a Nazi concentration ("hostage") camp. After the war he eventually relocated to Great Britain, teaching and researching at Oxford. He acquired British citizenship in 1955, so that he was elected as a “foreign member” of the Netherlands Academy of Sciences in 1964. Tinbergen remained committed to international cooperation in the sciences throughout his life. One has to wonder how Tinbergen’s namesake, the Nikolaas Tinbergen School, would describe Tinbergen’s citizenship status—how does one define an autochtoon who no longer inhabits the country? On a different note, was Tinbergen’s victim status as a Nazi prisoner important for the naming of the school? Nazism, after all, is presented in Dutch textbooks as a foreign invasion, in which Dutch participation was so minimal as to be exceptional (p. 45). The curriculum celebrates Dutch resistance and victimhood; perhaps Rotterdam reclaimed Tinbergen as an autochtoon to underline that version of Dutch history while ignoring the scientist’s decision to become a citizen of a different na-
Great Britain, too, explicitly considers itself a multicultural society. The school observed there, Huxley Comprehensive School, mirrors this description. As the authors noted, “You enter [the school], and you are in the middle of multi-ethnic London” (p. 24). The British answer to this multitude of cultural practices and ideals is to put them to use in the creation of a larger school identity. In the example studied here, educators and administrators invite and even encourage pupils to retain their various cultural identities, as long as these practices and beliefs remain part of the construction of a larger (British) community (pp. 24-25). Pupils participate in a conscious program of citizenship formation that begins with an adoption of acceptable school behavior—a sort of social contract at the most basic level. The approach at Huxley is to acknowledge and even accept differences as a normal aspect of belonging to the school, and, by extension, British society. This idealistic goal encounters practical and bureaucratic obstacles, to be sure: Alevi pupils were not able to have their religious beliefs included in the lesson plans because the official religion curriculum did not treat Alevism (pp. 108-109). Still, the reader finishes this book with the sense that Huxley School and, by extension, British society, has constructed the beginnings of a model of civil enculturation worthy of further observation.

The school likely takes its names from the biologist and staunch evolutionist Thomas Henry Huxley (nicknamed “Darwin’s Bulldog”), who, ironically, completed only a limited amount of official schooling. He was largely self-taught, becoming an accepted and celebrated member of the British scientific community on the basis of his research completed while an assistant surgeon. He was a prolific writer and father to a well-known scientist, Leonard, in turn father of accomplished scientists. Thomas Huxley’s legacy was one of articulating and criticizing evolutionary theories. Huxley’s persona certainly offers the school an impressive national figure in terms of his advancements of knowledge. In terms of his representativeness for a school coming to terms with the politics of a multicultural student body, however, Huxley and his ideas are almost oddly out of place.

After comparing the differences in approaches to schooling in four nation-states, the authors complete their study with an important argument that the similarities in global culture, particularly among young people, were so striking among all the pupils in these four schools as to be key in understanding where the future of civil enculturation should be. They leave open what this common global culture might look like, and whether it rests on predominantly western values or not. But after all the research team’s investigations, they offer a message that educators and administrators cannot ignore: youth culture across the west and beyond cannot be controlled by even the best intentions of policymakers in the creation of national values. That is, the challenge of coordinating multiple cultures within a single nation-state will become more complex as the boundaries of the nation-state continue to blur in an increasingly global community. For educational policymakers, teachers, and students of nationalism—from undergraduates to established academics—this book thus ends at a point where scholars can take this thoughtful research and use it as an important starting point for a very necessary dialogue about the future of multicultural education, civil enculturation, and even the very existence of the nation-state.

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