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Reinvention of Ethnic Identification Among Second Generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch Social Climbers

by MARIEKE SLOOTMAN (University of Amsterdam)

Abstract

In this article, a trajectory of immigrant incorporation is identified among ethnic minority social climbers that is characterized by reassertion and reinvention of ethnic identity in early adulthood. In-depth interviews with university-educated, second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch show that ethnic identification is relevant for minority social climbers, contrary to what is often assumed. However, this ethnic identification is not a static and self-evident given. This study once more illustrates that ethnic identification not only varies between individuals within an ethnic group, but also varies over time and between contexts. It shows how trajectories of social mobility affect the ethnic identifications of minority climbers and reveals the important role of co-ethnic, co-educated peers. The findings suggest that middle-class segments emerge that articulate their ethnic distinctiveness.

Keywords: ethnicity, identification, second generation, social mobility, segmented assimilation

Introduction

Why do many people with immigrant backgrounds often identify in ethnic terms, 'even' when they are born in the country of residence, and 'even' when they are higher educated? It is widely assumed that the value of one's ethnic background automatically declines and that ethnic identification weakens during processes of upward mobility (Pott 2001). This assumption is negated by empirical evidence that demonstrates that higher educated Moroccan and Turkish Dutch maintain, on average, equal affiliation with their ethnic labels as lower educated individuals of the same ethnic background in the Netherlands (Slootman 2014). Ethnic identification of what I call 'second generation climbers' is an important theme, especially as the children of the post-war immigrants have now become adults and increasingly find ways into the middle classes, not only in the United States (Kasinitz,

Mollenkopf and Waters 2002) but also in Europe (Crul and Schneider 2009). Furthermore, ethnic identification has become topical in the last decennia due to the widespread emergence in many Western European countries of culturalized integration discourses, which are increasingly critical towards cultural and religious diversity (Joppke 2004; Uitermark, Mepschen and Duyvendak 2014).

In this article, I explore how ethnic identification relates to individual trajectories of social mobility among children of immigrants. Based on semi-structured interviews with second generation, university-educated Moroccan and Turkish Dutch with low-class backgrounds, I explore the relevance of ethnicity and how their ethnic identifications depend on social context, period and life-phase. The results reveal that their ethnic identifications are related to their trajectories

of social mobility in particular ways. I show that the main models of immigrant incorporation are not fully adequate to understand ethnic identification among second generation climbers, and I emphasize the importance of attending to relational and dynamic aspects of identification. The findings warn us not to treat ethnic identification as static givens for individuals or entire ethnic categories.

I present the empirical findings by life-stage. I discuss how participants describe their social relations and their positioning in the social contexts in three phases: (1) in their childhood and youth-phase, (2) in their phase of early adulthood at university, and (3) in their adult lives at the moment of the interviews. From these stories, a trajectory emerges that is characterized by reassertion and reinvention of ethnic identification in the climbers' early adulthood, which appears to be specific for climbers who are educational pioneers in their ethnic minority groups. After presenting the results, I interpret this trajectory of reinvention in the light of existing literature on ethnic identification. Before I present the empirical findings, I touch upon the main models of immigrant incorporation and explain my conceptualization of identity. I furthermore describe the Dutch case and the methodological approach.

Immigrant Incorporation and Ethnic Identification

In thinking about the identifications of people with immigrant backgrounds in relation to socio-economic mobility, two famous models of immigrant incorporation spring to mind. The classical integration model of straight-line assimilation regards immigrant incorporation as a process in which immigrants eventually, over generations, become seamlessly incorporated in the middle-class segment of society, both in structural as well as in sociocultural respects. During this process, their ethnic orientations (orientations towards their heritage culture, towards the country of origin and towards people with the same ethnic background) gradually dissolve (Gans 1979; Alba and Nee 1997). This perspec-

tive does not account for the relevance of ethnicity among ethnic minority climbers. Segmented assimilation theory aims to remedy this shortcoming, and argues that for children of immigrants, orientation towards the heritage culture and towards the family and other co-ethnics provide important resources for social mobility (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller 2009). However, the relevance of this perspective seems limited for explaining ethnic identifications among second generation social climbers, as it provides only one, rather instrumental, reason for ethnic identification (as a source for social mobility). Furthermore, the model is primarily applied on the group level and tends to overlook intra-group variations and developments over time (Crul and Vermeulen 2003; Stepick and Stepick 2010). Also, the model is developed for the American situation which, in comparison to the Dutch situation, is characterized by relatively high levels of segregation and the presence of 'native' minority groups. My focus on the development of ethnic identifications throughout individual life courses and the influence of the social context takes a more individual and dynamic perspective.

As ethnicity and identity are complex terms, it is important to explain the concepts I use. Following Brubaker and Cooper (2000) and Anthias (2002), I deem the concept of identity unfit as an analytical concept (see Sloomman 2014). On the one hand, the use of (ethnic) 'identity' has essentializing tendencies, making identity into something that someone just 'has' based on one's background or cultural traits. On the other hand, it is too broad a concept to do the analytical work, as it is used to refer to both structural characteristics and individual affiliations, and to both external labelling and self-understandings (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Rather than assuming that individuals have a given identity, following many others such as Giddens (1991), Hall (1991) and Jenkins (2008), I focus on *processes* of identification. Focusing on processes enables us to recognize the interactional and temporal aspects of identification. In particular, with 'iden-

tification', I refer to the self-identification of individuals, which can be influenced by the external ascriptions of others and by current stereotypes. Self-identification has to do with how people position themselves, and how they apply the identity-labels that are available (such as 'Moroccan', 'Turkish', and 'Dutch'). 'Identification' has to do with how they relate to these labels and how they experience and define their belonging in social situations. I do not automatically assume that expressions of identification reflect cultural practices and social relations; I prefer to analyse to what extent this is the case. In this paper I analyse to what extent expressions of identification are related to certain practices and relations. When I refer to someone's 'ethnicity', I do not refer to one's identification or sociocultural orientation, but solely to the birth country (or countries) of one's parents. The term 'co-ethnics', then, refers to people whose parents are from the same country as the parents of the individual in question. I do not imply that being co-ethnic automatically entails high levels of recognition, identification, cohesion or solidarity; this needs to be studied rather than assumed. Instead of using the common term 'natives', I use the term 'ethnic Dutch' to refer to people with two Dutch-born parents, as the term 'natives' obscures the ethnicity of the ethnic Dutch and falsely excludes members of the second generation, who are, after all, also born in the Netherlands.

The Case of Second Generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch

The focus of this article is on the Moroccan and Turkish Dutch in tandem because, as I will explain, the two groups have comparable positions in Dutch society. The Moroccan and Turkish Dutch are the largest ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands and have a Dutch-born second generation that is currently coming of age. Around five percent (4.5%) of the 16.7 million Dutch citizens are Moroccan and Turkish Dutch, of which roughly half belongs to the second generation (CBS 2012). The share of first and second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch is much

higher in the larger cities. In some Amsterdam and Rotterdam neighbourhoods, they comprise between forty to fifty percent of the population,¹ making them the largest and often most established groups, particularly among the younger cohorts (Crul and Schneider 2010). In the late 1960s and 1970s, male 'guest workers' from Morocco and Turkey arrived in the Netherlands to work in lower-skilled jobs (Vermeulen and Peninx 2000). Many of them came from rural areas and had extremely low formal education levels. Later, their families followed them to the Netherlands. Everybody, including the original migrants themselves, assumed that they would eventually return to Morocco and Turkey. Hence, for a long time, they were oriented to their homelands and Dutch policy was aimed at facilitating their return (Scholten 2011). Ultimately, many stayed in the Netherlands. The Dutch government actively stimulated the cultivation of Moroccan and Turkish identities and languages till the nineties (Bouras 2012). While most of the first generation remained in the lower socioeconomic strata, the educational position of the second generation is characterized by a large contrast between those who are advancing and those who are lagging behind (Crul and Doomernik 2003). Since the nineties, the share of second generation youth with a Turkish and Moroccan background starting in higher education increased from twenty to over forty percent (CBS 2012: 85). Despite the steady increase, the average education level among the second generation is still much lower than among ethnic Dutch. The ethnic Dutch more often enrol in higher education (nearly sixty percent), finish more quickly, and are less likely to drop out (Crul and Doomernik 2003; CBS 2012).

Moroccan and Turkish Dutch also have a similar status in the dominant integration discourse in the Netherlands. Like in many other European countries, the integration context in the Netherlands has shifted from being relatively toler-

¹ Amsterdam: <http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/feiten-en-cijfers>, 1 January 2013. Rotterdam: <http://www.rotterdamcijfers.nl>, January 2013

ant to relatively intolerant regarding ethnic and religious difference (Duyvendak and Sloomman 2011). Requirements for sociocultural assimilation have increased (Ghorashi 2006; Scholten 2011). Particularly Moroccan and Turkish Dutch, who are predominantly Muslim, are often portrayed in negative ways (Uitermark 2012). Their supposed 'backward' culture and religion are seen as the root causes for many social problems, such as the perceived educational inferiority of (part of) the second generation in comparison to the ethnic Dutch, the sense that second generation youths are nuisances in public spaces, and the relatively high criminality rates among the second generation. Islam is often presented as incompatible with the 'progressive' Dutch culture (Uitermark, Mepschen and Duyvendak 2014). Ethnic identification and identification as Muslim is often treated with suspicion, and is seen as an unwillingness to fit into Dutch society. At the same time, Moroccan and Turkish Dutch, including the second and even the third generation, are persistently labelled as foreigners (*allochtonen*) and, therefore, as non-Dutch.

Methods

The empirical data presented in this article were collected through thirteen in-depth interviews with university-educated second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch. I selected participants who were born in the Netherlands and who had at least one parent who migrated from Morocco or Turkey, as well as participants who arrived in the Netherlands at a very young age, before they entered the educational system. As the participants needed to reflect on their trajectories of mobility, I selected people who were not at the very beginning of their professional careers, and who were over thirty years old. All of them were born around the moment their family migrated to the Netherlands, making them what I call the 'early' second generation. This means that they grew up in neighbourhoods and attended primary schools that were not (yet) ethnically segregated and were strongly dominated by (lower-class) ethnic Dutch.

Nine of the interviews were conducted with Moroccan Dutch (four female and five male) and four with Turkish Dutch (two female and two male). Only one of the participants had a mixed ethnic background, as one of her parents was born in Morocco and the other migrated from Poland.² All participants were in their thirties or early forties at the time of the interview. Some of the participants were in a relationship (mostly married); others were single, and some had children. At the time of the interview, they lived in cities and in villages all over the Netherlands. They grew up in cities and villages all over the Netherlands, as well. All of them went to university and had jobs matching their education levels. Several worked as consultants, some ran companies they (co-) owned, one worked in the medical field, and others worked as researchers, technical engineers, or teachers. Four of the interviews were conducted in 2006, and the rest in 2011. Nearly all participants called themselves Muslim, but how they described their religiosity and what it meant for them greatly varied.

To avoid selecting participants *based on* their ethnic identification, thus selecting on the dependent variable, I did not use organizations with ethnic signatures as a starting point for recruiting. I recruited most participants via my own (primarily ethnic Dutch) private network, covering various professional branches in various parts of the Netherlands. A few participants were recruited via my professional academic network. As participation was voluntary, a certain bias could not be completely avoided. In explaining their willingness to participate, most participants expressed their wish to contribute to the Dutch debate, to be heard, and to challenge negative stereotypes. This implies that the participants are probably characterized by a relatively high social involvement. This bias is not necessarily problematic, as the aim of this study is not about representativity of all second

² Pseudonyms are used and personal details are slightly changed for reasons of anonymity.

generation climbers, but about exploring social mechanisms as they occur (among some). This does not mean that these mechanisms occur among all ethnic minority climbers, nor among all participants. Individual variations exist. Nevertheless, the interviews expose trends that point to particular mechanisms and a particular trajectory, which are important to identify and further explore.

The interviews were semi-structured and lasted between one to four hours. They were all in Dutch. To avoid an emphasis on ethnic background and ethnic identity from the start of the interview (and because I was originally primarily focused on their process of social mobility), I introduced the interviews as focusing on trajectories of social mobility among children of immigrant parents. In the first part of the interview, the participants described their educational and work trajectories in a chronological way, focusing on their social environments and crucial decisions. This provided quite a broad impression of the composition of the various social contexts they moved in, and of how they experienced their social relations and their position in the various contexts, without the participants interpreting these situations through the lens of ethnic identification. In the later part of the interview, when we discussed the feelings of being 'Moroccan', 'Turkish' and 'Dutch', we used these details to critically reflect on the participant's articulations of ethnic identification. This approach enabled me to back up more abstract expressions about orientations and identifications with more 'practical' or 'factual' details. In this way, I tried to come to more solid findings about peoples' identifications, as interviews only give access to retrospectively constructed memories and to accounts that are produced in the specific interview setting. To understand the participants' identifications, in the data analysis I closely attended to the use of the ethnic labels, as well as to expressions of belonging that were formulated in terms of 'feeling different', 'feeling similar' and 'feeling normal'.

Phase 1: Downplaying Ethnicity in Childhood and Youth

The accounts of the participants' childhoods were loaded with memories of 'feeling different' and the longing to be 'normal'. As children, the participants yearned to be accepted as normal in the eyes of others. There were various reasons as to why they felt different in their primarily 'white' schools and neighbourhoods. Some participants were bullied throughout their childhoods. Some mentioned examples of differential treatment; for example, when Moroccan and Turkish Dutch children at age twelve were referred to lower consecutive education levels than their equal-performing ethnic Dutch peers.³ Others did not mention active exclusion, but just felt that their lives deviated from the lives of their ethnic Dutch classmates. Their clothing and appearance differed from their ethnic Dutch peers, or they experienced gaps in knowledge and language skills. One participant recalled that she felt different because she had eight siblings. At home, they spoke Turkish or a Moroccan dialect with their parents, and they had to assist their parents in navigating Dutch society. Many participants felt they stood out and missed out on friendships during childhood because they were not allowed by their parents to join in social events. Some reported that they had internalized negative stereotypes and that they missed co-ethnic role models. They had wondered if 'the Turkish' were indeed less intelligent than 'the Dutch', because there were no co-ethnics in the higher social strata of Dutch society. Or they had assumed that their Moroccan (Tamazight) dialect lacked a written version because the Amazigh people were not smart enough to write – and did not realize this was a consequence of the suppression of Amazigh cultures in Morocco.

Whether because of active exclusion or not, when the participants felt different, this generally was a negative experience. Feeling like an

³ In the Netherlands the education system is stratified from the start of secondary education at age twelve.

outsider was a reason to try to hide the dimension of difference: their ethnic background. Many participants in their childhood and youth tried to downplay their ethnicity in order to be as 'normal' as possible. They wanted to avoid standing out so that they would be accepted as one of 'us', as the following quotations of Nathalie and Mustapha illustrate. Nathalie remembers a situation when she openly was called names in the classroom:

That was... that was – this felt – this REALLY felt terrible, yes. Yes. And maybe, indeed, maybe that's what makes you behave as-Dutch-as-you-can, as-normal-as-you-can..., as some sort of compensation. (...) When you realize that THAT's a reason to be excluded, you try to fix it and minimize it as much as you can, in order to be as NORMAL as possible. (Nathalie, father from Morocco and mother from Poland)

At primary school, you are just busy trying to fit in. Trying to avoid standing out in a negative way – or in a positive way. That really hurt. – Yes, actually, you have always learned about your cultural background – to actually hide it somehow. (Mustapha, parents from Morocco)

Most parents placed high value on education, and they envisioned bright futures for their children (not only for their sons), that they might become doctors and lawyers. However, in nearly all cases, the practical support they could offer their children was very limited. Often, parental restrictions even hampered the development of their children, not only socially, because the children were not allowed to take part in social events, but also educationally; for example, grown-up children were not allowed to attend the university and the study of their choice, because this required them to move to another city and live on their own. For many parents, in spite of their high educational expectations, it was most important that their child was a 'good' 'Moroccan' or 'Turk'.

Phase 2: Joint (Re-) Exploration of Ethnic Identity at University

Although their secondary school experiences varied, the participants described the moment they

entered university in surprisingly uniform ways. In their secondary school period, some participants felt accepted and developed a positive self-image. Said formed close friendships with ethnic Dutch peers, and his educational achievements made him realize he was doing well and could be proud of himself. Others felt excluded and insecure. Berkant felt terribly unhappy at secondary school, where his unfamiliarity with the life worlds of his ethnic Dutch classmates made him feel isolated and out of place.

At university, the participants suddenly encountered students who shared their ethnic background. This moment was spontaneously recounted in emotion-laden terms by many participants, such as by Said, Berkant and Mustapha:

The funny thing is – at university you find out – Yes, there I DID relate more to, well, Moroccan Dutch students. This was kind of a change. In fact, your whole life you did not do that. There you meet soulmates [*lotgenoten*], higher educated Moroccan Dutch students. That was a real revelation. For all of us. We still are in contact. But I remember the moment of revelation at that time: 'Apparently I am not alone' – I always felt THE exception. They were at your own wavelength, let's describe it this way. There were incredible levels of mutual understanding. Of course, that is fabulous. We surely all were... this outsider, you know. That was a fantastic period, indeed. I primarily related to Moroccan Dutch people. Students. They were my best friends. Look, I also participated in a normal student fraternity, so there I did interact with other – But when you ask me: who did you mostly relate to, then it is primarily [with Moroccan Dutch].

Then, you suddenly ARE at university, you ARE together with people – Well... since the second year, when I became involved in the Turkish student association – that was a PEAK experience. Suddenly, a whole new world unfolds, um – with an urgent need to share your experiences with somebody who went through the same as you did. So that was really a peak, my time at the Turkish student association. Really a peak. (Berkant, parents from Turkey)

So, when at university I did meet Moroccan students, for me that was a relief. Indeed, there was no need anymore to explain myself. About why this and why that. So, at that moment I started to explore my roots, also via my studies, as I did a research project in Morocco. And I became active in

the student environment. Yes, Muslim, Moroccan, whatever, youth association as well – I have since then been very involved with the Moroccan community. I very much enjoyed it. It gave me heaps of energy, and it really made me grow as a person in that period. (Mustapha, parents from Morocco).

These delighted accounts were precipitated by unprecedented mutual recognition in the university setting. There was the sudden insight: 'Apparently, there are more of us'. The participants felt a 'match' with these co-ethnic students, who were on the same 'wavelength'. There was a sudden, urgent need to share stories with people who had lived similar experiences. These co-ethnic students knew what it was like to be, in Said's words, 'the exception' in their school environments, and they encountered identical problems in their relations with co-ethnics. For Karim, meeting co-ethnic student Kamal was 'life changing', as he finally felt appreciated as a person, instead of feeling criticized. Like Karim, Kamal was also burdened by high expectations from his family and 'the entire Moroccan community'. Both men were put 'under a microscope' and felt the pressure to pray and marry, and to behave as 'one of them' (their co-ethnics). They felt the heavy imperative to succeed in educational and professional terms. Sharing these experiences was a relief. Even participants such as Esra and Imane (female participants with a Turkish and a Moroccan background), who initially kept their distance from co-ethnic students, in the end felt like fish in water among them. Contrary to their expectations, these fellow students appeared not to be as conservative as other co-ethnics, but to be modern, liberal and emancipated. Many participants were members and/or founders of Moroccan or Turkish student associations. This does not mean that the participants' university networks only consisted of co-ethnics; their friends (who were all higher educated) had various ethnic backgrounds, including ethnic Dutch, and various participants (also) participated in 'general' student associations without ethnic signatures. However, despite the ethnic variety, it was these *co-ethnic co-educated* peers whom

many participants felt the closest bonds with, who were their real 'soulmates'.

In their early adult life, many felt the increasing need to explore and reassert their ethnicity because it increasingly felt like a (missing) part of themselves. Hicham explained that he and many of his co-ethnic peers struggled with a dawning sense that during their process of social mobility, they had neglected a 'part of themselves', which suddenly started feeling like a loss. Ahmed felt an increasing desire to develop his 'Moroccan side', which made him move back to the city where his parents lived. He wanted to find out what being Moroccan meant for him and how it had shaped him. In addition, he longed to strengthen the bond with his family. He now has a new bicultural 'balance', which makes him feel happy and 'peaceful'. Not only Ahmed identified in dual terms; nearly all participants expressed that, in addition to feeling 'Moroccan' or 'Turkish', they also felt 'Dutch' (and sometimes they indicated that they felt Dutch even 'more'). They had come to see their dual identification as a valuable asset. Feeling 'Dutch' no longer stood in the way of feeling 'Moroccan' or 'Turkish', nor the other way around.

Phase 3: Continued Ethnic Identification in Adult Life

The reasserted ethnic identification extends into their current lives and, for most participants, this is reflected in their friendships and social commitments. Many participants showed a social engagement that was (partly) related to their ethnic background; they aimed to improve the situation of stigmatized minorities in society, and they were involved in a variety of social initiatives. They aimed to bridge cultural differences or support the next generation of co-ethnics. Berkant explained that he wanted to provide co-ethnic youth with the co-ethnic role-model that he himself didn't have. Regarding friendships at the time of the interview, nearly all of the participants' close friends were higher educated, having various ethnic backgrounds, including ethnic Dutch. Still, just like at university, many – or even

most – of these friendships were with co-ethnics. Furthermore, quite a few participants helped found and/or were active members of professional organizations with co-ethnic signatures. (This, by the way, did not stop them from being members of ‘general’ professional organizations without ethnic signatures).

All participants, except Nathalie (who has a mixed ethnic background), refer to themselves as (at least partially) Moroccan or Turkish. Besides the reasons for this ethnic assertion mentioned above (that ethnicity starts to matter because it increasingly feels like an essential part of oneself and because it appears to have shaped one as a person in significant ways), there are additional reasons to assert one’s ethnic identity, which depend on the direct interactional context. One reason to assert one’s ethnic identity in certain contexts is to challenge negative stereotypes. Particularly because of their educational and professional success, social climbers are able to negate the negative stereotypes that are connected with ‘Moroccans’ and ‘Turkish’ (and ‘Muslims’). De Jong frequently encountered this behaviour among the Moroccan Dutch college students she studied (2012: 79). Said explained that by highlighting his ethnic background as a successful professional, he proved widespread negative stereotypes wrong:

I actually highlight it all the – I am just PROUD of it. I find it important to – I WANT to show that you can be both Moroccan and successful. I want to, very deliberately, show that these two CAN be combined. Whenever I can, I also say I am a Muslim. Whenever I can I say I celebrate the Ramadan. And whenever I can I say I regularly pray. And whenever I can I say that I... whatever – that I visit Morocco every year (...) To SHOW the right picture and to show that in your mind you are too black-and-white. (Said, parents from Morocco)

Another reason for ethnic identification is external labelling. Being labelled in ethnic terms can cause individuals to self-identify in ethnic terms. Rumbaut calls this ‘reactive ethnicity’ (2008). All participants feel addressed by the polarizing dominant integration discourse, and they frequently encountered moments that others

labelled them as ‘Moroccan’, ‘Turkish’ or ‘Muslim’ (in other words: as ‘not-Dutch’). For some, the attention to their ethnic background and the apparent social relevance of minority ethnicity raised their interest and led to exploration and increased affiliation with their ethnic identity. For others, this just led them to present themselves in ethnic terms, because they felt identification with other labels is futile when it is not accepted by other people. Ahmed’s quote illustrates this:

Actually, now I think about it... Nine out of ten times I am not addressed as Dutch, but as Moroccan [by ethnic Dutch], whereas inside I feel like a Dutch Moroccan, both. (...) Look, I actually do not call myself Dutch, because you are not seen as Dutch. (Ahmed, parents from Morocco)

Clearly, when one is not accepted as Dutch, it can be hard to claim that one is Dutch (see also the Dutch studies of Omlo 2011 and Van der Welle 2011). External labelling as ‘Moroccan’ or ‘Turkish’ enhances the social relevance of one’s ethnic background and makes it hard to escape it. Although some climbers might have expected that their social mobility would halt the exclusionary labelling as ‘Moroccan’ or ‘Turkish’ – just like the Moroccan Dutch college students hoped for in De Jong’s study (2012) – for most respondents, this turned out not to be the case.

A Trajectory of Reinvention Among Pioneering Minority Climbers

The empirical findings reveal a specific development of ethnic identification as it takes place among second generation climbers, which is parallel with their trajectories of social mobility. During childhood and youth, many Moroccan and Turkish Dutch participants tried to downplay their ethnicity, because in their primarily ‘white’ environments, they feared that they would be excluded because of their ethnic background. In early adulthood, many social climbers started reshaping and reasserting their ethnic identities. This consecutive rejection and reassertion of ethnic identity is also observed among other groups, such as Chinese youth in Britain (Song 2003: 111), or Asian Americans in the United States (Min and

Kim 2000). In the case of the Moroccan and Turkish Dutch, their co-ethnic, co-educated peers at university appeared crucial in this process of reassertion. Many of the participants experienced unprecedented levels of understanding among these students, who shared both their ethnic background and their education level. In their later lives, for most participants, their ethnic identifications had become important and valued parts of themselves (in combination with a self-identification as Dutch), which the participants asserted in certain contexts at certain moments.

Characteristic for this trajectory is the reinvention of ethnic identification in early adulthood. Participants not only *reasserted* their ethnic identity (which they had downplayed previously), but they also *reshaped* their ethnic identity to make it comply with their higher education levels. This is implied by the compelling narrations about meeting co-ethnic students at university. Meeting co-ethnic students was described as a 'revelation', which indicates that the participants had not experienced their ethnic identity in a way that felt applicable to their personal experiences until they met other higher educated co-ethnics. It is through the specific social interaction with their co-ethnic, co-educated peers that the social meaning of their ethnicity fell into place and became more fitting. Together, they created a relation to the ethnic labels that applied specifically to them, as higher educated Moroccan and Turkish Dutch.

I reflect on this trajectory in the remainder of this section. First, I argue that the role of the co-educated and co-ethnic peers at university is important for understanding the reassertion of ethnic identification among minority climbers. Next, I explain how the ethnic identification among the social climbers that were studied depended on their social mobility, and why this particular trajectory is specific for minority individuals who are educational pioneers. I then discuss the parallels with the idea of a 'minority culture of mobility', which indicate that this reinvention of ethnic identity among

minority climbers is a relevant and broad social phenomenon.

The Role of Co-Educated Co-Ethnic Soulmates

Although the resurgence of ethnic identity at university is not unique to the Moroccan and Turkish Dutch climbers studied, their case complements the explanations offered by other authors for such resurgence. Waters (1996) points to heightened ethnic identifications of both 'black' and 'white' students in college. She explains that interaction with people who are different makes 'individuals realize the ways in which their backgrounds may influence their individual personality'. My findings show that for Moroccan and Turkish Dutch climbers (who attended largely 'white' secondary schools), it is rather the encounter with similarity and mutual understanding than with difference that made them realize how their specific backgrounds had influenced their lives.

Min and Kim's study among Asian-American professionals (2000) confirms the importance of similarity for the resurgence of ethnic identification among climbers at college. However, the way in which they relate this similarity primarily to sharing one's ethnic background appears to be too simplistic. Similar to the Moroccan and Turkish Dutch participants, the Asian-Americans in Min and Kim's study had wanted to conceal their ethnicity in their childhoods because of the fear of exclusion. At college, however, this concealment was replaced with a sudden exploration and establishment of ethnic identity, in their interactions with other co-ethnic students. Min and Kim explain this reassertion by the large presence of other Asian Americans in colleges and by how colleges nurture the Asian ethnicity, such as by offering courses on Asian countries and languages. However, contrary to this American case, in the Dutch case, university curricula did not support a fostering of Moroccan or Turkish identity, nor was there a large presence of co-ethnic peers. The interviews show that the mutual understanding among these peers, which led to the ethnic reassertion and reinvention, was

based on a combination of shared ethnic backgrounds and shared pathways of social mobility. In other words, it was not only that their peers shared their ethnic backgrounds that helped these students form a fitting ethnic identification at university, but rather that their peers shared *both* their ethnic background *and* their educational trajectory. Issues that were of importance to them (such as having a progressive mentality, receiving disappointingly low secondary-school advice, experiencing pressure from parents to be successful and to remain a 'good' Moroccan or Turk at the same time) only led to mutual understanding among these co-educated, co-ethnic peers, who experienced comparable processes of social mobility.

Social Mobility and Educational Pioneers

The findings underscore the relevance of the intersection of ethnicity and education level. The role that ethnic background played for the participants was mediated by their education level. Consequently, ethnic identification is shaped in particular ways by social mobility, as are trajectories of ethnic identification. For the participants, it was not the case, as it is often assumed, that their upward mobility rendered their ethnic background irrelevant, nor did it lead to a weakened ethnic identification. This observation parallels the findings of many other studies among the same ethnic groups as well as among ethnic groups in other countries (see for example Buitelaar 2009; Min and Kim 2000; Pott 2001).

The trajectory of social mobility influenced the ethnic identification of the second generation climbers in two ways. First, the trajectory of upward mobility determined the social contexts in which they manoeuvred. Contrary to the situation at lower education levels, in their higher educated environments, they were among the very few with a minority background. At the same time, their education level and profession made them distinctive among their family and other co-ethnics, who are predominantly lower-class. This particular intersection of two characteristics shaped their belonging in various envi-

ronments. It also caused the need to reshape the ethnic labels, and led to the unprecedented mutual understanding among co-educated co-ethnics. Secondly, upward mobility created the opportunity to negate negative stereotypes, although this requires a clear articulation of one's ethnic identification. A high education level and a middle-class status equip the minority climber to refute negative stereotypes, provided that his (or her) ethnicity is noticed.

The trajectory of the reinvention of ethnic identity for ethnic minority climbers who are educational pioneers in their ethnic groups, as it emerged from the empirical data that I discussed, is unique in two ways: Firstly, the participants did not assert their ethnic identity until they met co-ethnic students at university; with hardly any co-ethnics in their secondary schools, they did not meet any co-educated co-ethnics until they entered university.

Secondly, due to an absence of a 'middle-class ethnic identity', they had to reshape their ethnic identities in order to make them applicable to their achieved education levels. When the participants grew up, there was a complete lack of co-ethnic role models embodying success in the Netherlands. What was considered typically 'Moroccan' and 'Turkish' in the Netherlands was, therefore, primarily constructed in relation to the lower class. This affected the participants' view of what it meant to be Moroccan or Turkish, as is illustrated by memories displaying that they had internalized demeaning stereotypes. The interviews suggest that they also needed to break with ethnic stereotypes that were dominant among co-ethnics. In their pursuit of social mobility, participants frequently collided with the strict norms of being a 'good' 'Moroccan' or 'Turk' as held by their parents and other co-ethnics, the anecdote about not being allowed to leave the parental home to attend a distant university, as a good example. Some participants reported that co-ethnics were critical about the high social positions of other co-ethnics, whom they condemned for being 'too Dutch'. This indicates that, for participants, it could be hard

to combine (aspects of) social mobility and the accompanying acculturation with what was generally considered a 'good' 'Moroccan' or 'Turk'. The absence of higher educated co-ethnic predecessors and of alternative Moroccan or Turkish identifications that fitted the participants' higher education levels explains why meeting co-ethnic students felt like a revelation and why the role of ethnicity suddenly fell into place. It also explains that they jointly worked to reshape their ethnic identities in order to make the labels 'Moroccan' and 'Turkish' feel applicable to their higher education levels.

A 'Minority Culture of Mobility', or Rather 'Minority Middle-Class Capital'

The prevalence of ethnic identity among minority social climbers in adapted forms to fit the achieved middle-class status echoes the idea of a 'minority culture of mobility', introduced by Neckerman, Carter and Lee (1999). These authors argue that segmented assimilation theory overlooks a specific trajectory of assimilation: the assimilation into an existing minority middle class. They argue that minority middle-class cultures exist in response to the particular challenges faced by ethnic minority climbers, just like we have seen in the discussion of the Dutch case in this article. In the professional realm, dominated by ethnic majority members, ethnic minority climbers stand out because of their minority ethnicity and their lower-class background. In the spheres of their families and co-ethnic community, they stand out because of their achieved middle-class status. These challenges lead to the development of specific cultural elements and specific social spaces (with co-educated, co-ethnic soulmates), which protect from discrimination, and where the minority climbers can switch to familiar communication styles and enhance their skills to manoeuvre in both kinds of settings (see also Carter 2003; Clerge 2014; Lacy 2004; Mehan, Hubbard and Villanueva 1994; Vallejo 2009; 2012). Actually, because of the static and bounded connotations of the term 'culture', and because these cultural elements seem to help

people deal with social mobility rather than aim to enhance mobility, I prefer the term 'minority middle-class capital' to a 'minority culture of mobility'.

This idea of a 'minority culture of mobility' or 'minority middle-class capital' parallels my argument in its emphasis on the possibility of being middle-class without completely assimilating into the ethnic majority mainstream, and in presenting an alternative incorporation trajectory of becoming middle-class with a *middle-class minority identity*. In addition, the literature supports the idea that the ethnic identification of minority climbers is not a mere adoption of common ethnic images, but rather entails an adaptation of ethnic identity to the achieved middle-class status. The Dutch case differs from the model of Neckerman and colleagues, because in the case of the United States, a minority middle class (of African-Americans) is already available to other minority groups as a possible destination for assimilation. In the case of the Moroccan and Turkish Dutch pioneering climbers, however, there was no such minority middle-class available to tap into, and instead they had to create it themselves.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this article, I have shown that for the case of upwardly mobile second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch individuals, ethnic identification is by no means irrelevant. Many of these social climbers identify in ethnic terms and feel affiliated with ethnic labels. As we have seen, there are various intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for (re-) assertion of their ethnic identity, which partly relate to their social mobility. Many of the participants increasingly realized how strongly their ethnic background has shaped them as persons and affected their experiences in all kinds of social environments. They realized this all the more once they met co-ethnics who shared their high education levels. Some even felt they had 'ignored' a part of themselves throughout their climb. Sometimes participants accentuate their ethnic identity to challenge negative stereotypes,

or they do so in reaction to persistent labelling by others. These reasons indicate that the climbers' ethnic identification is not solely 'symbolic' (Gans 1979), as their ethnic backgrounds had very tangible consequences. These reasons also show that the reasserted identification is not purely 'reactive' (Rumbaut 2008), as it is much more than merely a reaction to external labelling.

What the findings teach us about the character of ethnic identification resonates with other empirical studies. In the trajectory I exposed, the ethnic identifications of the social climbers were reinvented: the meanings of the labels were adapted to their achieved positions. This underscores the variable and dynamic character of ethnic identification that also emerges from other studies. For example, Baumann analyses how the meaning of ethnicity is renegotiated in the London Southall neighbourhood among people with various ethnic backgrounds (1996). Pott shows how Turkish German university students employ ethnic identification in various ways (2001), and Bhatia and Ram explain how political events suddenly changed the ethnic self-identification of Indian Americans (2009). This dynamic character is furthermore illustrated by the development of ethnic identification throughout the individuals' lives. The relation of individuals with the ethnic labels is influenced by an interplay of feelings of belonging, experiences of difference and sameness, demographic composition of the social environment, external ascriptions, and social discourses, and therefore varies per phase and per social context. Wessendorf's study shows that a similar complex of factors influences the personal identifications of second generation Italian migrants throughout their life courses (2013). The Dutch case studied here reveals that these factors make the particular trajectory of reassertion and reinvention of ethnic identification unique for minorities that are educational pioneers in their ethnic groups.

The findings demonstrate the limited applicability of the main integration models to understand the identificational aspects of incorpora-

tion processes of immigrants, as these models tend to underestimate or overlook the multifaceted relevance of ethnic background and ethnic identification for immigrants (and their offspring) who are upwardly mobile. In addition, the macro, or group level, perspective of these models does not do justice to variations between individuals, between life stages and even between contexts. To do justice to the experiences of minority individuals, we should acknowledge intra-group variations, dynamics over time and the role of the context (such as the national discursive climate and the demographic composition of schools and neighbourhoods). If Moroccan and Turkish Dutch were solely analysed as if they were homogeneous groups, and if individuals are thought to have autonomous and static ways of identification, the dynamics exposed in this article would be entirely overlooked.

Although the findings cannot be generalized as 'the' trajectory of ethnic minority climbers, this article identifies a trajectory of incorporation that is hitherto underexposed. This trajectory of reinvention is important to notice and to further study because it contributes to our understanding of the prevalence of ethnic identification among social climbers with immigrant or ethnic minority backgrounds. It indicates that middle-class individuals, or even middle-class segments, emerge that do not lose their ethnic distinctiveness.

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