# Soulmates: Reinvention of ethnic identification among higher educated second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch

Slootman, M.W.

[Link to publication](#)

# 1. Introduction.
# Winning the Golden Calf...

*Why this study? What is in the book?*

\* \* \*

When actor Nasrdin Dchar is awarded the Golden Calf for Best Actor in 2011, the Dutch equivalent of the Oscars, in his short, improvised, emotion-laden speech he exclaims:

> I am Dutch!
> I am proud, with Moroccan blood!
> I am a Muslim!
> And I won a freaking Golden Calf!! [i]

\* \* \*

The speech of Dchar, child of Moroccan immigrants, received much attention in the Netherlands. Many people held the opinion that with the emphasis on both his Dutchness and his Moroccan roots, he finally said what needed to be said. Others might have wearily sighed that such a statement is entirely worn out. [ii] Possibly, some social scientists listened to his exclamation with wonder, as various models on integration and assimilation trajectories predict that positions of structural integration (such as being declared best Dutch actor) are accompanied by a weakened ethnic identification and a strengthened identification with the country of residence. Other academics, however, possibly saw their ideas confirmed, as in their models, ethnicity is seen as a major resource for structural integration and social advancement.

What made Dchar make this explicit statement? And why at such an important moment, which in the first place is a celebration of Dchar as an actor? Why does he emphasize his Dutchness at the moment he is awarded a prestigious Dutch award? Why does he highlight his ethnic background and his religious affiliation? What do these expressions mean to him? And, how does his strong assertion of both his Dutch and his ethnic identity fit with views on integration? Let us look at the rest of his short speech for clues. He sees the Netherlands as full of anxieties.

'We are all injected with fear'. (This sentence leads to an explosion of applause.) He mentions Dutch Deputy Prime Minister Verhagen, who finds fear for foreigners 'understandable'. [iii] Dchar goes on to explicitly address his statement (that he is both Dutch and Muslim, with Moroccan blood, and has won a Golden Calf) to Minister Verhagen and the popular anti-Islam politician Wilders and all people who support them. It seems that with his now famous words, Dchar wants to emphasize that he strongly rejects the label of the 'Other' who needs to be feared, that he belongs in the Netherlands, and that this does not lead him to disregard his religious and ethnic background. He illustrates this by briefly expressing – in the Moroccan language – his deepest love for his parents, who are seated in the audience, radiating with parental pride. It is as if winning the Golden Calf makes him the ultimate proof that in no way does his background stand in the way of being successful and constructively participating in Dutch society.

But then again, what does it mean for him on a personal level to be a child of immigrants from Morocco, who once came to the Netherlands to work in low-wage jobs? What does it mean to be socially successful in Dutch society? How does this relate to his Moroccan roots and his identification as Moroccan and Dutch? These questions underlie my study, which is laid out in this book. In this study I explore how ethnicity is experienced and how 'feeling Dutch' is experienced. In particular, I explore these experiences among people of higher education with ethnic minority backgrounds. I thereby focus on the case of second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch with high education levels, and I study how they identify in terms of feeling 'Moroccan', 'Turkish' and 'Dutch' – and, where this is related, also in terms of feeling 'Muslim'. I also explore why they do so and what it means for them, and how this develops over time.

## 1.1 Identification and incorporation

Why is it interesting to learn about the identifications of citizens with an immigrant background? And why would we focus on the higher educated? Ethnic identification among second generation climbers is an important theme, especially as children of the post-war immigrants have now become adults and increasingly find their way into the middle classes, both in Europe (Crul and Schneider 2009) and in the United States (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf and Waters 2002). Furthermore, the theme of ethnic identification has become increasingly topical in discussions about immigrant incorporation. Whereas discussions on integration previously primarily focused on socioeconomic aspects, their focus shifted to sociocultural identification. This is the case in countries all over the world; the Netherlands forms no exception, as I will explain later. In fact, the case of the Netherlands is specifically interesting because of the sharp turnaround from a country that was renowned for its so-called 'tolerance' of ethnic diversity

to a country where an Islamophobic political party (the Freedom Party (PVV) headed by Geert Wilders) has been very successful and where essentialist language has come to dominate the political realm. Children of immigrants and even their grandchildren are often assessed based on their identification, which is regarded as an expression of loyalty' to the Netherlands. The higher educated are by no means exempted from any of these demands and any of the criticisms that are addressed to entire ethnic minority categories. How do higher educated immigrants maneuver within this landscape? How do these criticisms and demands, in which entire ethnic categories are lumped together, apply to them and affect them? With my study, I hope to contribute to an increased understanding of the experiences of the (adult) children of immigrants and thus to an increased nuance in debates on integration and diversity.

The relevance attached to processes of 'integration' is also reflected in the large body of academic literature on immigrant incorporation. (In the literature, the terms integration and assimilation are commonly used, but these have various normative connotations, as I will explain later, so I prefer to use the term 'incorporation'). As I will argue in detail in the next chapter, the two main models of immigrant incorporation have distinct views on the relationship between ethnic identity and trajectories of incorporation. One line of thinking, inspired by the model of straight-line assimilation, is based on the assumption that the relevance of ethnicity diminishes when people become more incorporated, particularly when this means that they are upwardly mobile in socioeconomic terms. Upward mobility is assumed to go hand in hand with a decreasing ethnic identification and an increasing identification with the country of residence, which I call 'national' identification. The other line of thinking, which builds on segmented assimilation theory, underscores the relevance of ethnicity and points to the importance of ethnic identification for achieving socioeconomic advancement. These two models appear to have limited value for understanding the relevance of ethnicity for social climbers. Based on the first line of thinking, we would expect that ethnic identification among these social climbers with immigrant backgrounds is relatively weak and that their national identification is relatively strong in comparison with lower educated co-ethnics. We would expect a weakening of ethnic identification during the trajectory of incorporation and a strengthening of national identification.

Is this what really happens? It does not seem that Dchar's personal statement, with the explicit emphasis on his ethnic background, validates the assumption that ethnic identification has decreased as an effect of incorporation. The second line of thinking seems more appropriate to explain Dchar's twofold emphasis on both his Dutch and his Moroccan sides. But, how appropriate is the underlying argument that the value of ethnic orientation lies in its value for social advancement? Is this really the reason why Dchar highlights his ethnic

background? Do we not overlook possible alternative mechanisms of identification and incorporation that are at play here?

Thus, my study focuses on how ethnic identifications develop in relation to processes of incorporation, and to social mobility in particular; and on how ethnic identifications relate to national identifications. I focus on the equals of Dchar, on second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch who 'won a Golden Calf'. Not literally, of course, but on those who achieved positions that are generally regarded as 'incorporated'. I place this qualification between quotation marks because incorporation is a broad term, referring to a large variety of domains and attributes. I focus on those with high education levels and according jobs, those that can be considered incorporated in structural terms, but who are nevertheless unabatedly targeted by the demanding integration discourse; and those who at the same time are met with incomprehension when they 'despite' their mobility 'still' stress their ethnic background. Please note that with this choice I do *not* suggest that those who fall outside this selection are therefore automatically not incorporated. Nor do I suggest that in my view children of immigrants *should* show certain levels of socioeconomic advancement and sociocultural adaptation.

My findings are partly based on interviews that I conducted with university educated Moroccan and Turkish Dutch. To be precise: with Dutch men and women, born in the Netherlands (or who arrived here at very young age), with parents who were born in Morocco and Turkey and came to the Netherlands as immigrants. I refer to them as 'second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch', even though I consider this label to overly accentuate or even misrepresent their immigrant situation, since as *children of* immigrants, they often are not immigrants themselves. The stories told in these interviews shed light on why and how they identify in ethnic and national terms, on how their identification is shaped by the social relations in the various contexts, and on how this identification develops over time and in relation to their trajectories of social mobility. To give a feel for what will unfold in the book, in the next section, I introduce five personal stories, which are inspired by the interviews (1.2). I finish the chapter with a description of the set-up of the book (1.3).

## 1.2 Five voices

The experiences of the second generation that I study vary broadly. At the same time they are characterized by resemblance. To give a feel for both the broader trends as well as the personal variations, I introduce five personal stories. The stories are based on interviews with five adult children of Moroccan and Turkish immigrants. Changes have been made for reasons of anonymity. These stories are

brief sketches of personal lives, which particularly focus on the roles of ethnicity and ethnic identifications. They also focus on the social relations, particularly those relations that are partly shaped by ethnicity or in turn influence people's ethnic experiences and identifications. The stories are meant to set the scene and give a feel for the relevance of this study. They hint at the directions that will unfold in the chapters to come. They also illustrate the richness in experiences and accounts.

These five stories are not 'ideal types'. Thinking in ideal types would simplify reality too much, smoothing out the complexities and ambiguities that form part of the personal accounts in the interviews. We can think of these five people as people with university degrees, who are over 30 years old. They were either born in the Netherlands – shortly after their parents arrived here to work as 'guest workers' in low-wage jobs – or they arrived here with their parents at a very young age. They work as professionals, consultants, engineers, and as entrepreneurs. They speak Dutch fluently and most have what I would call a 'professional' appearance. Not only are they smartly dressed, but they also radiate confidence and reflexivity and formulate their thoughts with a certain ease and determination.

## a) Said. 'Whenever I can, I now tell them I am Moroccan.'

Said grows up in a village in the province of Noord-Holland as the only child of Moroccan immigrants. As his family is one of the only immigrant families there, his friends at primary school are all ethnic Dutch. Said does not grow up isolated, but he is aware of his arrear in relation to his friends, even though they all come from low-class backgrounds. He feels his friends learn a lot more at home than he does. He regularly does not understand complicated words. Sometimes, he is not allowed to play at friends' houses. In hindsight, he reflects on his childhood as the period during which he discovered he was actually different, in a negative way. But he also acknowledges positive consequences of his youth, as it resulted in his extra drive to prove his worth.

His time at secondary school (*VWO,* preparatory tertiary education), another 'white' environment, is a great period. Said is eager to learn and to close the gap with his peers. A low mark at school for a Dutch language test greatly upsets him and leads him to receive high marks for Dutch from that point on. His friends, with their ambitions, provide his role models. Hanging out with them at their houses increases his cultural baggage. His ethnic background feels entirely irrelevant during this period, which is characterized by sensing and seizing opportunities, and by a growing awareness of his intellectual capabilities and that he is on the right track. When his ethnic background prompts the hairdresser to assume that he attends lower vocational education, he takes pride in disproving her stereotypical assumptions. He remembers this period as one characterized by increasing self-confidence and a decreased emphasis on ethnicity. He then learned 'not to have a negative relation with his own identity'.

When he starts at university, he is amazed to see many other Moroccan Dutch with a high education level. He always assumed he was the only one, but he suddenly meets companions who share his experiences. It feels like a revelation to meet with people who appear to be on the same wavelength, to experience such a level of mutual understanding. They all have felt like they were exceptions. They start a Moroccan Dutch student association. Suddenly, most of his interactions are with other Moroccan Dutch. Or, maybe about sixty per cent of his interactions, as he also attends a regular Dutch fraternity. Looking back on it, this was a really fantastic period.

Said describes himself as 'engaged'. He is ambitious and tries to link and connect. He is involved in many societal initiatives, which partly aim at bringing groups together. This is largely in response to widespread negativity towards the Moroccan community. But he also reaches out in his personal realm. He supports nieces and nephews in their school choices and stimulates them to aim high. He stresses that nowadays, in his professional environment, which is primarily 'white' and male, he does not feel different from his colleagues. Whenever he can, he mentions his ethnic background or that he is Muslim. He is proud that he is both successful and Moroccan and Muslim. In consciously emphasizing all of these aspects, he wants to show people that these can go together very well, contrary to general expectations. He wants to exemplify how the stereotypical images are way too simplistic and that you can be religious, visit Morocco and be oriented towards Dutch society at the same time. Sometimes, he feels singled out. It is annoying when you are singled out to give your opinion on the 9/11 attacks or when someone makes silly Moroccan-jokes. It is even somewhat awkward when someone declares you to be a success story (because of your ethnic background). After all, what is the relevance of culture here?!

## b) Berkant. 'Now, I feel happy having two sides.'

Growing up in a middle-large town in the province of Utrecht is not always easy. Berkant, just like his other siblings, experiences exclusion from his early youth because of his Turkish background. He feels alienated as he enters primary school unable to speak Dutch and is bullied by white kids in the neighborhood. Thankfully he is in school with other 'Turkish' pupils, and the bullying makes him draw closer to his Turkish friends. When at *VWO* (tertiary preparatory education), he is the only 'Turkish' in his secondary school, he feels tremendously isolated. He was never limited in his personal freedom by his parents, who stimulated him to take part in all social activities. Nevertheless, he feels insecure because everything feels unfamiliar. The celebration of birthday parties, outings with school… he is in a continuous state of astonishment and feels a dire need to prove himself. His parents keep supporting his educational ambitions, and provide financial support as well, even though they do not have much money to spend.

When he enters university, it is a real peak experience. He meets other students who have a Turkish background, and this opens up an entirely new world to him. He feels an urgent need to share experiences with people who know what he is talking about.

They found a Turkish student association and later, he also becomes member of a professional Turkish organization. What makes him feel at home with people is the understanding that you have stuff to share; that you have things to talk about and have similar experiences. That is why he feels more at home in the middle-class (primarily) 'white' neighborhood where he lives with his wife and children, than in the 'black' lower-class neighborhood where they lived before. However, his friends are still mostly Turkish. They are higher educated, mostly coming from more liberal, less orthodox backgrounds. Next to his job, he is very active in organizations that are aimed at supporting and stimulating ethnic minority children. He is conscious about the importance of co-ethnic role models and about the lack thereof, and feels the need to 'give back' to the co-ethnic community and prevent others from going through the same as he has.

After his university graduation, he decides to move to Turkey for a while. Like many other Turkish children, he has been raised with the prospect of finally returning to Turkey. Returning to Turkey was the dream of his parents, and for him, Turkey had become Utopia, its mythical appeal confirmed during the frequent holidays he enjoyed there. As he grew older, he slowly began realizing that they would not return and that his future was in the Netherlands. Slowly, he became more positive and more oriented towards the Netherlands, and his aversion towards everything Dutch (instigated by his childhood bullying) gradually faded. Nevertheless, he then really looks forward to going to Turkey. The stay has a sobering effect. Turkey appears to be a normal country, with normal troubles. Despite his love for Turkish music and the Turkish football team, he realizes how strongly he has been shaped by growing up in the Netherlands. This makes him slowly accept and value his Dutchness, alongside his Turkishness, creating some sort of balance. Knowing that you have two sides – knowing that you do not have to choose and disregard one but that you can rely on *both* – gives him a feeling of peacefulness. Knowing that you have two countries where you feel at home makes him feel blessed. Upon his return to the Netherlands, he feels less bothered by the negative integration discourse and how people talk about immigrants on television, because of his increased confidence in the fact that he (also) belongs here.

Berkant highly values his relationship with his parents. He does not let the fact that he has outgrown their Turkish traditional mentality or their social class keep him from trying to uphold his ties to his family. He considers this *his* responsibility, as he is able to understand them and their world, whereas they are much less able to understand him and his world (for example with regard to the frequency of his holidays, the price of his clothes, decisions with regard to childcare, and in particular regarding religious views). He tries to avoid hurting them and does not confront them with things they will never understand. To Berkant, it's nothing special that his parents to fail to understand his life-world. He grew up in an immigrant situation and has always supported his parents in finding their way in Dutch society since his early childhood.

### c) Esra. 'I would say I am 60% Dutch and 40% Turkish, Kurdish'

Esra grows up in a town in Twente. Her father works hard, and he hardly spends time at home. He stresses the importance of education and envisions Esra becoming a doctor. As she needs to go to university, her father urges her follow the *MAVO* (lower secondary general education; which is way below the preparatory level for university). Thankfully, her teacher has better knowledge of the system and, recognizing her potential, he sends her to *VWO* (preparatory tertiary education). The support her parents provide is limited to this emphasis on education and to freeing her from household tasks when she needs to do homework. Neither their abilities nor their interest stretch beyond this, which is partly because her father works hard and is hardly ever at home. Esra's parents are Kurdish, but her parents downplay the Kurdish ethnicity in favor for the Turkish identity for reasons of protection.

Esra grows up with very limited personal freedom. She is not allowed to participate in social activities outside school and does not have many friends because it is difficult to maintain a friendship when you have nothing to invest in the relationship. There are the children of the Turkish (and later Kurdish) families she regularly visits with her parents, but these are not real friends. Sometimes, she is called names by children in the neighborhood, but she does not register this as active exclusion. Esra does not feel really 'different'; it is more that she feels strongly isolated and has the urgent feeling that she is missing out on important things. She longs to get to know the world outside of her narrow and oppressive family-world. In secondary school again, she is not allowed to join in social activities and school outings. When she once explicitly defies her parents and gets them to allow her to join in a one-day school outing to the museum, on that morning, her mother does not wake her up in time to go, making her miss out on yet another event. Even during university, she is only allowed to travel back and forth to university each day and is not allowed to go on trips with friends. In comparison to other Turkish fathers, however, her father is relatively permissive. He once has an argument with other fathers, who do not allow their daughters to follow higher educational tracks because they would never let them go to university – as there are boys… Esra's father challenges them and argues that they will eventually need to let their daughters go into the real world. Esra does not often choose for open conflict. She knows that there are many things she does not have to ask for (because they will never be granted), so she doesn't. Some of these things, like visiting the cinema, she secretly does during school times. There is continuous negotiation. She continuously balances her demands: what do I ask for, and what don't I? Every time she wants to do something, this involves extensive explanation, intense efforts to persuade. But Esra knows what she wants, is well prepared and determined, and she manages to get permission for the study of her choice and for the husband of her choice. Reflecting on these experiences in the interview, she describes the enormous transformations of her parents over time. Her youngest siblings grew up with totally different parents: with 'Dutch' parents. They were allowed to participate in school trips – in anything! Her youngest sister even has a Dutch boyfriend, which was entirely unthinkable fifteen years ago.

Despite the discouragement of her parents (for reasons of protection), Esra becomes very interested in Turkish-Kurdish politics, which makes her drawn towards other people with a Turkish background. However, depending on the political situation of the moment, she sometimes also feels a gap separating them from her. On the other hand, the widest gap she feels is due to the conservative views that most of the Turkish and Kurdish people hold. She prefers to mix with people who are Allevi, who are more modern. She also participates in the Turkish student association at her university, where she enjoys meeting a range of Turkish people who are all higher educated, including like-minded students who are relatively modern as well. This is also a place where she can share and develop her interest in Turkey. As an adult, living in a white village, she now has many local Dutch friends, who are all higher educated (or entrepreneurs). Even though her direct environment is primarily Dutch, she also enjoys her participation in a Turkish professional association.

As Esra sees it, the fact that she cherishes and cultivates her Kurdish side also has to do with her place in the Netherlands. The experiences in her youth prove that even though you do your utter best, you still hear 'Turky irky' in the street. It also hurts when a nice man backs away when he hears you are not Italian but Turkish, and when your (non-religious) son is made out for a Muslim terrorist, just because of his Turkish roots. But also more subtle approaches make clear that you will always be different, for example when people specifically address *you* about the 9/11 attacks. Why you?? That does not mean however that she does not belong here in the Netherlands and that she belongs in Turkey. Esra feels very Dutch when she is in Turkey, but she cannot say she feels very Turkish when she is here. So, basically, she feels more Dutch than Turkish. Let's say, with regard to attitudes and opinions, she feels 60 percent Dutch and 40 percent Turkish – or Kurdish, for that matter. Yes, her roots are Kurdish, from Turkey, but Kurdish is a label she uses only in the second instance, because it has no place in Dutch discourse, as, unlike Turkey, it is not a country. With her immigrant background, she has the best of multiple words, as she combines the best of her Turkish, Kurdish side, and the best of her Dutch side.

### d) Nathalie. 'I *never* feel like a foreigner anymore!'

Early in primary school, Nathalie moves from the region of Utrecht to this 'white', small, close-knit village in a far corner of the province of Groningen where she feels terribly excluded. She is not accepted, partly because she moved from another place and does not speak the right Dutch dialect and partly because her family is the only foreign family in the village. She has a mixed ethnic background, as her father is from Morocco and her mother is from Poland (which makes her an exception among my participants). Also, in another respect she is an exception because in comparison with the other participants, Nathalie is raised extremely 'Dutch'. The lingua franca at home has always been Dutch, which her father mastered quickly. Nathalie and her siblings were not given standard Moroccan names – on purpose, to increase their chances for inclusion. They keep a certain distance to the local (regional) Moroccan community, and her father is not religious. Her parents strongly encourage education and are very involved. Her father participates in the parental board (*ouderraad*) of the school. With regard to

permissions and personal freedom, Nathalie's upbringing is on the progressive side. Studying and living in another city was not a problem, and she even took home Dutch boyfriends – which is simply unthinkable for most of the other participants, both men and women. In fact, her father even preferred her to come home with a Dutch boyfriend, as he feared that a Moroccan man will obstruct her development and independence.

This relatively 'Dutch' upbringing does not prevent Nathalie from being excluded by her classmates. She is severely bullied from the moment they arrive in the village. She is a bold, daring girl, seeking acceptance. She tries to behave as Dutch as possible – to be as 'normal' as possible and tries to downplay her ethnicity. When she is halfway into secondary school, a couple of her tormentors leave her class, and her position changes. She even becomes one of the more popular girls, but it takes a long time for her to shake off the consequences of her prior exclusion. Her self-confidence is below zero, and for a long time she tries not to stand out. Her self-confidence develops very cautiously as she builds friendships. These friendships make her feel 'normal' – or rather: accepted as normal by her surroundings. After a long while – after years – she finally dares to speak about her Moroccan background and her parental migration history with some pride. Nowadays she never feels like a foreigner anymore. Never. But then, most people do not recognize her Moroccan background by her appearance. She is Dutch. And only Dutch. The harsh discourse frustrates her greatly, but she does not feel addressed herself. She does not feel 'one of them'. Her friends are solely Dutch, and while she was at university she did not engage with people with Moroccan backgrounds. She felt more at home among the Dutch, but she also made an effort not to stand out or place herself in a particular corner.

### e) Karim. 'Again, they want me to come from Morocco. I am NOT from there!'

Growing up in this working-class village in the province of North-Brabant, Karim does not really have friendships with other children, besides his siblings. Like most of his siblings, he feels like one of the loners. He does not attribute this to his Moroccan background, but to his introverted nature and contained upbringing. After all, other kids with Moroccan backgrounds who are more assertive are more popular. Karim is not one of the cool guys and feels like an outsider. This proceeds into secondary school, where his graduation from *HAVO* (higher secondary general education) with honors marks a great moment. He feels exuberant, happy that he has proven his worth and intelligence to his parents and to the entire world. This is extra important to him because of his frustrations about his low school advice because his teacher did not let him go to *VWO* (preparatory tertiary education) straight away, due to his ethnic background. The subsequent years at *VWO* mean a slight improvement in social terms, as there is slightly more acceptance for a study-mentality and for his shyness. He loves reading, and Dutch and English literature form a haven.

When he enters university, he feels totally disconnected from other students. He feels miserable and isolated. He is not familiar with habits like partying and clubbing and

feels entirely estranged. He also experiences a huge gap between himself and other Moroccans. He does not feel 'Moroccan', he is not into Morocco or any language other than Dutch, so there is no connection. There is also little connection with the colleagues in the factory where he works during his holidays. Again, this does not seem related to his ethnicity, rather to a lack of shared interests and commonalities. Karim does not share their love for cars and football, even if he tries, and they would not understand his passion for literature. From the side of his parents, he not only feels pressure to succeed in educational terms, but also – encouraged by the local Moroccan community in the mosque – they pressure him to be a 'proper' Moroccan. They express their disappointment, as his clothes and hair do not match their expectations, he does not speak their language fluently, nor does he pray or visit the mosque, and he is far from marrying someone.

His life changes when he meets an active, sociable student of Moroccan descent, Kamal, with whom he really connects. Karim finally feels understood and not judged. He feels valued and stimulated. They have endless conversations, and Karim opens up. As a higher educated Moroccan, Kamal knows what Karim goes through. He knows the weight of the expectations of the Moroccan community: the demands to succeed and, at the same time, to be like them. Karim starts participating in the newly founded Moroccan student association, where he makes friends with people from immigrant backgrounds for the first time. He starts using the label 'foreigner' ('*allochtoon*'), and as an '*allochtoon*' he becomes a spokesperson. He reaches out to the university board and even to the mayor. He enjoys the status and the positive attention, until he and Kamal realize that they have only become new stereotypes. They are still not real people, but have grown into 'model-Moroccans'. This makes them again distance themselves from the label 'foreigner'. Another sphere in which he feels at home in that period is the literature club in which he participates, along with other (ethnic Dutch) students who share his passion for literature. He is cautious not to mix both spheres – out of fear that he will place himself apart by stressing his ethnic side in the one context and his love for literature in the other.

He now describes himself as a critical Dutchman. Yes, he is also Moroccan, but much less so. Morocco is not his country; the Netherlands is. He does not feel at home in Morocco; he does not belong there. He has grown up here, in the Netherlands, and all the reading has made him feel familiar with the Dutch heritage. His way of thinking, his mentality, is Dutch. He is relatively open-minded and not very dogmatic. The words in his head are Dutch. It is not that he celebrates Carnival, Christmas or Queensday, but he is also not very attached to celebrating Ramadan. But then… it is as if society forces you to be Moroccan. Time and again people ask you where you come from, referring to some place abroad. They like to stress your being different. They ask you what you think about Moroccan criminals – as if you would sympathize with them because you share their ethnic background. It is the same on television, where they repeatedly speak about 'un-adapted Moroccans' who supposedly do not fit in. People place demands to adapt and to 'civilize' on people with Moroccan backgrounds – in silent reference to you, without even knowing you. This pushes people away. It makes

Karim feel 'in between'. It is as if he does not belong anywhere. It feels as if side does not understand him, whereas the other side does not *want* to understand him. One moment he longs to belong, and the other moment he is more rebellious and tells himself he does not care. But he hates it when others label him as Moroccan. That makes him feel he is reduced to his ethnicity! He does not even know what 'being Moroccan' means. This is also what annoys him when he visits the mosque (when he occasionally accompanies his wife): also 'Moroccan' people place him somewhere in Morocco. But he is NOT from there!

## 1.3 In the book…

The five, varied personal stories imply that there is not some static, uniform and predictable ethnic identification. They illustrate the variation that exists between the individual stories, while at the same time they hint at broader trends and mechanisms. Positions and identifications appear to be influenced by social contexts in certain ways. These positions and identifications furthermore depend on self-confidence and develop over time. These themes will be explored throughout the book.

In this study, I look at how ethnicity is experienced by higher educated individuals with a lower-class ethnic minority background, who I call 'social climbers'. The main questions I seek to answer are:
- How do social climbers with minority backgrounds identify in ethnic terms?
- What does it mean for them and how does this relate to identification as Dutch?
- When do they do they identify in ethnic terms and why?
- How does this develop over time?

I focus on the case of higher educated second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch and study – in quantitative and qualitative ways – how they identify in terms of 'Moroccan', 'Turkish', and 'Dutch'. I also study how these identifications relate to their trajectories of social mobility. Although religion and gender are not main foci in this study, they are mentioned when they appear relevant to the main theme. The focus on people with Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds adds a comparative dimension to the study. The findings lead to reflections on the question to what extent the experiences of the people I studied correspond to current views on identity, 'integration' and social mobility.

The following three chapters set the scene of the study. In chapter 2, I present the theoretical and analytical framework. I briefly discuss the main models of incorporation and explain how I aim to contribute with my study. Furthermore, I

discuss two general, opposed scientific views on ethnicity and identification, an objectivist (essentialist) perspective and a constructivist perspective, and I show the potentials and drawbacks of both positions for understanding people's lived experiences. This leads to a description of the 'analytical toolkit' I use to study ethnic and national identifications. I also comment on my choices in terminology. Chapter 3 deals with the research design of my study. It describes the two methodological approaches that I employed, a structured survey and in-depth interviews, and explains the advantages of such a 'mixed methods' design. Chapter 4 sketches the societal and historical landscape of the study. It describes recent developments in the Dutch debate on integration, as well as the immigrant background of the Moroccan and Turkish Dutch second generation and their current socioeconomic and sociocultural positions in Dutch society. I also describe to what extent the higher educated form a specific case among the Moroccan and Turkish second generation.

Chapters 5 through 7 form the empirical heart of the book. In Chapter 5, I explore the identifications among the higher educated second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch. I use both quantitative and qualitative data to analyze how these second generation climbers identify and what this means for them. Do they strongly identify with their ethnic labels? Does this imply that they identify less strongly as 'Dutch'? And, what does ethnic identification mean? Does it reflect a broader ethnic orientation? Is such identification accompanied by a coherent set of specific sociocultural practices?

Chapter 6 focuses on the role of social context. Based on the in-depth interviews, it explores how the higher educated second generation participants feel and identify in specific social situations. What kind of relations do they have with social others, such as their family members or classmates? What demands are placed on them, in terms of behavior (for example by their lower educated, co-ethnic parents) or in terms of identification (for example by their higher educated ethnic Dutch colleagues)? How do they balance their own preferences with the expectations of others, particularly when they cherish and value their social bonds? Do they feel free to identify in the ways they wish? How do they balance needs for independence with needs for belonging? Is belonging among co-ethnics self-evident and among others always contested, as is often presupposed?

The theme of chapter 7 is the development of identifications over time. How do the ethnic identifications of the second generation climbers develop over time? What roles do experiences of 'difference' and 'sameness' play? Can we identify general 'stages' in the stories of the participants? And, what happens at the particular moment when they start university – a moment that spontaneously pops up in many of the interviews and is recalled in blissful terms? What is the importance of co-ethnic, co-educational peers, and why do I refer to them as

'soulmates'? What do 'soulmate-spaces' and 'minority middle-class capital' have to offer to the second generation climbers?

In the final chapter, chapter 8, I discuss my conclusions. I reflect on the trajectory of 'reinvention' of ethnic identification among minority climbers that emerged in chapter 7. I explain the prevalence of ethnicity among the social climbers I studied, despite their 'winning Golden Calves' and being incorporated into the middle-class segment in their society of residence. Or, is this prevalence of ethnicity maybe not 'despite', but rather 'due to' their incorporation? I also reflect on the phenomenon of ethnic identification from a more analytical perspective, as it emerges from the empirical findings of this study, and discuss the implications on both an analytical and a practical level.