



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

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

Sloutman, M.W.

Publication date

2014

Document Version

Final published version

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Sloutman, M. W. (2014). *Soulmates: Reinvention of ethnic identification among higher educated second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, P.O. Box 19185, 1000 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

2. Models of incorporation. Ethnic and national identification considered

What does the literature say about trajectories of incorporation in relation to ethnic and national identifications? What actually is ethnicity and what is identification? Why is the common use of some key concepts problematic?

The identification of children of immigrants and other (ethnic) minorities concerns many. This interest extends beyond individuals with ethnic minority backgrounds themselves to politicians and policy makers and to scholars. Much has been written about processes of immigrant incorporation (or immigrant 'integration' or 'assimilation'), and much has been written about the concepts ethnicity and identity.

In this chapter, I discuss the main strands in the literature on immigrant incorporation, which contain different presumptions about the relationship between identification and social mobility (2.1). I also reflect on two opposing analytical perspectives: constructivism and objectivism (2.2). Why do some notice a 'constructivist, post-Barth-consensus', whereas others identify a 'science war'? Furthermore, what does this mean for the analytical use of the concepts ethnicity and identity? What *is* ethnicity? And what *is* identity? How can these terms be applied in a scientific study in a meaningful way, without automatically adopting and reinforcing dominant connotations and discourses? Near the end of the chapter, I explain my choices in terminology (2.3). I discuss the connotations and workings of some concepts as they are commonly used, which I try to avoid. In the last section, I summarize and reflect on the theoretical and conceptual discussions presented in the chapter (2.4).

2.1 Models of incorporation

The foundation of the literature on processes of immigrant incorporation, the model other theories respond to and build upon, is the idea of 'straight-line assimilation', or 'classic assimilation theory', originally stemming from Warner and Srole (1945) (Gans 1992, Alba and Nee 1997). The theory argues that there

is a common process of assimilation that unfolds over generations, by which 'each new generation represents on average a new stage of adjustment to the host society' (Alba and Nee 1997: 832). Based on cases of European settlers who immigrated into the United States in the early 20th century, straight line assimilation assumes that immigrants will increasingly adapt to their new country; they will become increasingly 'similar' and will eventually be seamlessly incorporated into mainstream society, or rather, into society's middle-class segment (ibid.: 835). Inspired by the famous scheme of Gordon (1964), different domains of assimilation can be distinguished, such as a structural and a cultural dimension. Even though assimilation in one domain can precede assimilation in another, straight-line assimilation assumes that in all domains a development towards incorporation of assimilation occurs, leading towards incorporation into and adaptation to the (middle-class) society of residence, including on the 'identificational' dimension. In other words: an increasing 'national' orientation is regarded as an unavoidable outcome of immigrant incorporation over time, which is regarded as a process in which 'ethnic' orientations (orientations towards the heritage culture of the immigrants, towards the country of origin and towards co-ethnics) gradually dissolve and are eventually lost (Alba and Nee 1997). Gans explains that every kind of social mobility leads to processes of cultural and social adaptation (2007: 158, 161). Although this classical assimilation model primarily describes long-term mechanisms on a macro level, it presents a perspective from which we would expect to see the relevance of ethnicity, and therefore ethnic identifications, wane as part of incorporation processes, and as resulting from socioeconomic advancement in particular.

I identify two lines of reactions to this classical model. The first challenges the zero-sum assumption that people's increasing sociocultural orientation towards their society of residence coincides with weakening orientation towards their sociocultural roots. The counterargument here is that processes of incorporation are not zero-sum, or one-dimensional (running from the extreme of complete 'ethnic-orientation' towards the opposite extreme of complete 'national-orientation'). Instead, it is proposed that incorporation processes are bi-dimensional, which means that ethnic orientation is seen to be independent of the orientation towards the society of residence. For example, Hutnik's model presents identification with the ethnic minority group and identification with the majority group as two independent axes (1991: 158). Berry presents a similar model and argues that the combination of an ethnic and a national orientation (the mode of incorporation that he labels 'integration') is most positive for a person's wellbeing (1997, 2005; see also Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder 2001). Nevertheless, the option for minority groups and individuals to retain their ethnic culture and identity is strongly influenced by the demands placed on them by the dominant group (Berry 1997; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder 2001). When immigrants are not allowed to retain their

ethnic cultures and identifications, they might feel forced to choose between completely adapting to the society of residence or dissociating themselves from this society. This bi-dimensional view of identification implies that an advancing orientation towards the society of residence does not necessarily coincide with a weakening of one's ethnic orientation.

The second line of reactions challenges the idea that immigrants necessarily incorporate into the middle-class segment of the society of residence. Gans questions the idea of 'automatic immigrant success' and points to the substantial risk of 'second generation decline', particularly in times of economic recession (1992). Ogbu and Simons (1998) argue that in certain immigrant groups, the youth take a rebellious 'oppositional' stance, renouncing mainstream values that emphasize the benefits of schooling and the desirability of a professional career. From such an adversarial stance, marginalized positions are not seen as failures but rather as desired situations. Institutions, such as schools, are associated with oppressive authority (Zhou 1997). Zhou explains: 'School achievement is seen as unlikely to lead to upward mobility, and high achievers are seen as sell-outs to oppressive authority' (p. 987). Such oppositional stances have drastic, negative impacts on school performance and socioeconomic status and are likely to result in downward mobility.

Based on the two lines of reactions, Portes and Zhou developed the famous model of 'segmented assimilation' (1993) (see also Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller 2009). This model elaborates on the idea that incorporation extends beyond the middle class to more segments of society, and on the view that orientation towards to the society of residence does not preclude a co-ethnic identification. The theory argues against the 'classical' presupposition that presents only one path of incorporation for immigrants, leading towards 'upward assimilation' into the majority middle-class culture. Instead, the incorporation process is perceived as segmented, resulting in different sociocultural and socioeconomic outcomes, depending on the challenges faced and the resources available. Sociocultural adaptation to the society of residence can lead to assimilation into a middle-class mainstream ('upward assimilation') but also to assimilation into lower classes ('downward assimilation'). This last route is especially likely for people of immigrant groups with relatively low human capital (such as the children of Moroccan and Turkish immigrants in my study), and for those in more hostile integration contexts. Segmented assimilation theory argues that (partial) co-ethnic orientation, called 'selective acculturation', can protect youth from this downward trajectory, as orientation towards their parents' culture and co-ethnic community provides access to valuable forms of co-ethnic capital. This is actually an example of Berry's 'integration' mode, and – just like Berry – Portes and Rumbaut show that a partial co-ethnic orientation is associated with higher self-esteem and higher academic achievements (2001). The idea is that ethnic

networks protect from discrimination, parental guidance and family and community resources offer support for one's educational and professional career, and family aspirations and community networks help one resist the pull of adversarial subcultures (Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller 2009: 1082). This theory makes a key contribution to the models of incorporation with its acknowledgement of the (socioeconomic or structural) value of a co-ethnic orientation and by debunking the assumption that complete adaptation to the society of residence is only beneficial for the careers of the second generation. Based on this theory, it can be expected that second generation climbers with low-capital backgrounds have a strong ethnic identification, as their social mobility supposedly depended on this.

Critique to segmented assimilation theory

The value of segmented assimilation theory is disputed. Alba and Nee (2003) do not agree with the segmented view. As prominent defenders of assimilation theory, just as Waldinger and Perlman (1998), they argue that over generations, immigrant groups will be seamlessly emerged into the mainstream, in socioeconomic and sociocultural terms; although Alba and Nee point to the possibility that the mainstream is altered by this influx. Gans (1972, 1992) predicts a 'bumpy line' process, with periodic revivals of ethnic boundaries and ethnic identifications, but underscores that this process eventually results in complete assimilation. We do not know if these predictions will come true for the current migrant groups. The fact however is, as Stepick and Stepick argue (2010), that the current situation in the U.S. is characterized by diversity and different assimilation outcomes; as is also the case in the Netherlands, as we will see later.

Considering the diversity, several points of critique can be made with regard to segmented assimilation theory. The first focuses on the predication of 'downward assimilation'. The risk of downward mobility resulting from adaptation to lower-class subcultures has proven to be smaller than presented, which nuances the term 'downward assimilation' and its pessimistic sound. The large majority of the children of immigrants with low human capital *do* show socioeconomic advancement in relation to their parents (Waldinger and Feliciano 2004; Thomson and Crul 2007; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters and Holdaway 2008; Stepick and Stepick 2010), even though they might not reach the (higher) middle classes. Children of immigrants who are regarded as downwardly mobile because they have jobs in the 'marginal working class', are often better off than their parents – albeit only modestly. Furthermore, when the children of immigrants are compared to segments of the ethnic majority with similar backgrounds instead of the majority average, it often appears that they are not lagging behind but actually have relatively high achievements (see e.g. Gracia, Vasquez, Van de Werfhorst 2014). Acknowledging this advancement recasts the phenomenon of 'downward assimilation' in a less pessimistic perspective. In reality (also in the

Netherlands), the children of immigrants are most often compared with average levels and are therefore portrayed as lagging behind.

A second critique of segmented assimilation theory argues that a focus on the group level also fails to do justice to reality. When entire immigrant groups are classified in terms of trajectory types, variations over time and between individuals are ignored. Crul and Vermeulen (2003) warn of the risk of being too deterministic with premature classification, as over time adaptation processes can change, as is illustrated by the incorporation process of Moroccan immigrants and their offspring. 'The Moroccan community (...) once seemed headed for downward assimilation, but now seems to be rising' (ibid.: 983). Additionally, the group approach does not do justice to intragroup differences. Portes and his colleagues take ethnic groups as levels of analysis and primarily use segmented assimilation theory to explain differences *between* ethnic groups. Challenges and resources are in the first place treated as group characteristics. Large differences that exist *within* ethnic groups are therefore largely neglected, and factors that possibly play a role in processes of incorporation, such as gender, class, profession, religion, and local context, are overlooked. For example, daughters of immigrants reach higher levels of education than sons – at least in the United States (Stepick and Stepick 2010: 1153), but also sometimes encounter lower parental expectations (Thomson and Crul 2007: 1034) and more stringent demands with regard to modest behavior (Song 2003: 47). As Crul and Vermeulen emphasize, 'different segments of the same group may follow different paths' (2003: 975) (see also for example Zhou and Xiong 2005). It is even possible for an individual's acculturation mode to vary per context and per life phase (Crul and Schneider 2010). The polarization between individuals who are successful and who lag behind, within ethnic groups such as Moroccan Dutch and Turkish Dutch, illustrates that groups indeed exist of various segments (Crul and Doomernik 2003, Gijsberts and Dagevos 2009). By focusing only on Moroccan and Turkish Dutch with higher education levels, I selected a sub-segment of ethnic categories with a particular incorporation characteristic (higher education level). In other words, I build upon this intra-group variation as a given. Yet, I also look beyond the influence of education level. Throughout my study, I also remain open to other variations within the two ethnic groups, within the higher educated samples, for example in relation to gender.

Ethnic options

Besides the two main integration models, straight-line assimilation theory and segmented assimilation theory, which primarily hypothesize on processes of structural, cultural and identificational incorporation on group levels, another line of literature is more applicable to understand the workings of ethnicity on the individual level. This field of literature aims to understand the persisting relevance of ethnicity to people's self-identifications, extending to third or fourth

generation migrants, in spite of evidence of far-reaching adaptation to the society of residence, both in social, cultural and economic terms. This approach is interesting because it addresses the question why individuals identify in ethnic terms. Instead of assuming that ethnic identification necessarily reflects an encompassing cultural orientation or social cohesion, it looks for other explanations and roles for ethnic identification. It shifts the focus away from ethnic groups to individuals and the interaction between personal agency and external structures.

Gans developed the idea that persisting ethnic identification does not necessarily reflect an orientation towards co-ethnics or the 'old ethnic cultures' (1979: 6). He argues that ethnic identification among the third and successive generations – such as the third generation Jews in the United States – does not require cohesive ethnic networks and practiced cultures. This kind of ethnic identification, which Gans calls 'symbolic ethnicity', is not anchored in groups and roles. It is voluntary, without consequential behavioral expectations, and primarily expressive, relying on the use of symbols. In the words of Cornell and Hartmann (1998), we can call 'symbolic ethnicity' a 'thin' identity because it 'organizes relatively little of social life and action' (p. 73). Waters (1990) further illustrated this 'symbolic ethnicity' in her book 'Ethnic Options', describing that many descendants of white European Catholic immigrants indeed have such costless, voluntary and individualistic 'symbolic ethnicity'. Many of the 'white ethnics' in her study identify in ethnic terms (only) at the moments they want to; they choose 'to turn their ethnicity on and off at will' (1996). They are not labeled by others in ethnic terms and their ethnicity only influences their lives when they want it to.

In later work, Waters (1996) argues that this 'optional ethnicity' is not available for (visible) minorities that have a socially enforced or imposed identity and that are confined to a minority status. She concludes that many ethnic (and racial) minorities do not have these 'ethnic options'. Rumbaut likewise explains that those labeled as 'non-white' confront an entirely different situation than descendants of white European immigrants, whose ethnic identifications have gradually become individualized and voluntary (2008). When ethnic differences are socially relevant, for example in the context of the prejudice and discrimination that 'non-white' minorities encounter, this makes individuals self-conscious of their ethnic backgrounds. A likely response is for them to strengthen their ethnic identifications, leading to a 'reactive ethnicity'. Like Waters, Rumbaut argues that it is unlikely that the ethnic identity of the successive generations of 'non-white' ethnic minorities will become optional, voluntary and 'symbolic'.

Song counters the proposition that stigmatized ethnic minority individuals have few or no 'ethnic options' (2001, 2003). While they do not have unlimited freedom to assert their preferred identity labels wherever or whenever they wish,

they have the ability to influence the connotations and meanings that are associated with their identities. Additionally, they can influence the cultural practices that are attributed to a certain identity. 'Code-switching', such as adapting one's dialect to a situation, is another example of exercising one's ethnic options. Song shows that even though structural aspects can be very influential, ethnic minorities are not powerless and do not lack agency in asserting their ethnic identities.

2.2 Ethnicity and identity as social constructions?

The various theories on incorporation reflect divergent views on ethnicity and identity. They are based on different assumptions about the inevitable or 'substantial' character of ethnicity and ethnic or national identification; they stem from different ontological assumptions. These assumptions are important. How we, as researchers, view ethnicity or identity shapes the lens of our studies. Whether we see ethnic identity as an inherent part of a separate culture or as a dynamic variable shapes how we define our questions and approach our research. One view could for example lead us to analyze the 'cultural distance' between Moroccan Dutch and the ethnic Dutch, measured in strength of 'ethnic identification'; whereas the other view could lead us to explore when and why people identify in certain ways. In the end, our ontological position influences how we observe the world, as well as the potential scope of our research. In this section, I reflect on two opposing perspectives with two divergent views on the character of 'ethnicity' (and identity in a broader sense). I discuss the potentials and drawbacks of a constructivist and an objectivist stance, and I describe what is considered a general constructivist consensus. Further, I discuss the conceptual toolkit that I use. First, I give a brief, more general description of identity and ethnicity.

Why do identities, and ethnic and national identities as specific kinds of identities, matter? Everybody has multiple social identities because every individual belongs to many different social categories and can therefore be categorized in many ways. These categorical characteristics, or 'social identities', such as gender, age, sexual orientation, profession, religion, nationality and ethnic background, indicate how a person is socially defined. They position people in social space (Verkuyten 2005: 43). Thinking in categories is a basic cognitive mechanism. It is something that everybody does to organize and better understand themselves and others (Jenkins 2008b: 13). By categorizing, people are lumped together – and lump themselves together – based on a certain shared trait, even if they differ in all other respects. These processes of categorization, based on similarities (or even perceived similarities), play an important role in questions of belonging such as 'who belongs with whom?' and 'with whom do I belong?' This means that

issues of identification are closely related to issues of belonging (Antonsich 2010: 649).

These social categorizations are rarely neutral. Categorization often involves a broader evaluation based on stereotypical images about people of a specific category. For example, the categories male and female are accompanied by comprehensive sets of expectations and judgments with regard to behaviors, emotions, skills, morals and roles that are regarded typical for either men or women. These expectations are then projected onto people who are classified as male or female, whether or not these sets actually (entirely) apply to the specific individuals. These evaluations, and therefore also the social relevance of the categorizations, vary with time and place. Some categorizations, such as gender and ethnicity, are more encompassing than others, such as voluntary memberships to sports clubs. This means that they have stronger links to the structural and ideological aspects of society (Verkuyten 2005: 54), and therefore they have a stronger influence on people's social experiences. They are associated with more comprehensive stereotypes and are internalized at an early age. People of the same category are then generally considered to 'belong with' other people of the same category, and they all are regarded as similar in many respects. When people are classified (or classify themselves) in a certain way, the focus is on the presumed similarities among people of the same category, which overshadow their internal differences. Categories are often called 'groups', which tend to imply a certain level of uniformity and/or cohesion and interaction (Goffman 1990 [1963], Brubaker 2002). All in all, it is clear thinking in terms of identity is indispensable for conceptualizing the relationship between the individual and society (Verkuyten 2005: 10).

In lay usage, there is often little recognition of the variable aspect of ethnic identity, and other social identities, and how meanings of ethnicity arise. It is commonly assumed that people with the same 'ethnicity' are highly similar to one another and are bound together – that they have shared behaviors, emotions, morals, skills and so forth – solely because they share a certain characteristic such as (some part of) their descent. This is also a common view in the Netherlands, as I will describe in chapter 4. Ethnic identity is often seen as an indisputable, primordial characteristic, something a person or a group 'just has' by nature that is unchangeable and undisputed. This objectivist or essentialist view is based on the assumption that all ethnic groups have static cultures that are inherently different from each other. Groups and cultures are seen as monolithic, meaning they are taken to be 'internally homogeneous and externally bounded' (Brubaker 2002: 164).

The post-Barth consensus: ethnicity as social construction

In academia, a more variable view on ethnic identity has gained ground in the last decennia. From this perspective, ethnicity, and identity in general, are seen as social constructions. The paper that Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth wrote as the introduction to the book 'Ethnic groups and boundaries' (1969) is considered the major turning point in thinking about ethnicity and identity (Nagel 1994; Verkuyten 2005: 76). In 1995, this view was presented as a 'new de-essentializing consensus' (Baumann and Sunier 1995: 3) and it is still seen as the 'basic anthropological model of ethnicity' (Jenkins 2008a: 24). 'We are all constructivists now' (Bader 2001: 251). Rather than viewing ethnic identities as products of naturally existing ethnic groups with distinctive, monolithic cultures, in this constructivist view, ethnic identities are seen as emerging from boundaries that are constructed between imagined (not imaginary) social groups. These constructed boundaries make that people see themselves as members of groups and are recognized as such by others. These ethnic groups are then signified by ethnic labels and defined in cultural terms.

Everyone can trace their lineage, and people share certain parts of their descent with some people and not with others. What is constructivist about this? Constructivist thinking is based on the idea that some parts of one's descent carry more weight than others, and that this particular emphasis varies in time and place. The same holds for the social roles and meanings that are attached to these descents. In situations where ethnicity is socially relevant, ethnicity demarcates social difference (and sameness). Ethnic boundaries construct social categories for people who are associated with similar social roles and positions.

Ethnic boundaries are formed by accentuating (or even imagining) cultural sameness and difference. Sameness and difference can be expressed in terms of language, religion, customs, rituals, moralities and ideologies, or at a more concrete level, in terms of dress, food, gestures, space, gender roles, etcetera (Nagel 1994: 153 ; Jenkins 2008a: 79, 111). Thus, 'culture' (or rather: the cultural elements that are selected to demarcate ethnic boundaries) provides the meaning and content of ethnicity (Nagel 1994: 162). At the core of ethnicities are beliefs about the existence of some kind of shared culture. This cultural content of a group 'forms the basis for contestations about what is distinctive about the group vis-à-vis other groups' (Song 2003: 44). In principle, ethnicity can be organized around any marker of differentiation such as – using Jenkins' example – which end of the boiled egg is the right one to open, but in practice, some things are more 'emotable' than others (Jenkins 2008a: 172). Issues of morality are usually central to the demarcation of ethnic boundaries. Morality often centers on marriage, family and sexuality, with women as the 'extensions of ethnic group integrity and identity', and therefore as the ultimate symbolic bearers of ethnic identities (Song 2003: 47). Religion is also likely to play an important role in the

construction of ethnic identities, as the rituals that often accompany religious practices are effective ways to make identities matter (Jenkins 2008: 126).

Not only do cultural differences lead to the construction of ethnic boundaries, in turn, these social boundaries can produce cultural differences, abstract loyalties and social relations as well. In a constructivist view, the ethnic boundary is clearly not an automatic consequence of what Barth calls 'the cultural stuff that it encloses' (1969: 15), and no simple correlation exists between cultural difference and the social relevance of ethnic identity (ibid.: 32-33). Furthermore, boundaries appear to be emphasized the most when differences are relatively small, as Blok (1998) asserts in reference to other sources such as Freud's work and Bourdieu's book *Distinction* (2010 [1984]). This argument of the 'narcissism of minor differences' suggests that the largest threat to one's identity comes from what is closest, what is least distinctive. This is not to say that this is always the case or to suggest that those who are very distinct cannot be perceived as very threatening. The important point is that we do not automatically feel connected or close to what is most similar to 'us'. Our identities might be threatened most by those who are rather similar to us, which might reinforce the need to emphasize or exaggerate (and maybe even invent) differences between 'us' and 'them'.

A social constructivist perspective is used to argue that a phenomenon or concept in its present context is not 'inevitable' or 'natural' (or 'essentialist' or 'primordial') but is partly the result of people's perceptions and perspectives; it is the result of social processes in particular historical contexts (Hacking 1999: 6). A constructivist view enables us to identify variations in the meaning of a certain concept and to unravel the mechanisms that bring about these meanings, while identifying different stakeholders and power imbalances that factor into the process of meaning-making; see for example Stuart Hall's description of the evolving meaning of the category 'black' (1991). This view can be 'liberating', as it provides a tool for unmasking power inequalities that underlie the roles that are attributed to people. Societal roles and positions are often regarded as inescapable because they are based on classifications that are seen as inevitable and are accompanied by stereotypical ideas that are presented as natural. An example is the widespread stereotypical idea (at least in the Netherlands) that Muslim men are oppressive and Muslim women are docile victims. Another example is the 'natural' responsibility of 'the woman' to take care of the children, which 'inevitably' leads to underrepresentation of women in (high profile) public functions. It can be liberating to understand how such stereotypical ideas emerge, how and why these images are fed and spread, and how individuals deal with these images. In the words of Schulz: Viewing phenomena as social constructions and unmasking authority 'contributes to our understanding of social and political processes through which individuals and groups locate themselves in relation to

others, understand themselves, and define their possibilities' (1998: 336 in Song 2003: 84). A constructivist view allows us to examine how identities in general, and ethnic identities in particular, are constructed and reconstructed over time. This does not necessarily mean however that a phenomenon or concept is indefinitely or individually malleable.

Is there really a constructivist consensus? Falling into two traps

What some social scientists present as a post-Barth constructivist consensus is in reality not beyond dispute. Critique is voiced on the constructivist stance itself and for the dismissal of the relevance of objectivist perspectives. Criticism has also addressed the application of the constructivist perspective in much of the scholarly literature.

Constructivism versus objectivism

Hacking counters the idea of a comprehensive academic constructivist consensus (1999). He observes 'science wars' of accusations against social constructivists, criticizing them for their relativism. The relativist critique posits that constructivist perspectives reduce every view to mere personal interpretation, making 'truth' subjective and relative (ibid.: 4). The implication is that 'anything goes' and there are no grounds for criticizing ideas nor for any form of knowledge or scientific progress. However, the relativist critique actually criticizes the possible moral implications rather than the validity of the constructivist ontological perspective. With regard to the validity of the ontological perspective, the question is which perspective is most appropriate to describe certain phenomenon: a constructivist or objectivist perspective.

Objectivism 'asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors' (Bryman 2001: 17). This implies the existence of a reality that is external to the people involved. Instead of perceiving culture and cultural meaning as shaped and reshaped by people, the objectivist view regards culture in a reified way: as existing 'repositories of widely shared values and customs into which people are socialized', existing independently of these people with an 'almost tangible reality of its own' (ibid.: 17). Perspectives like primordialism (the idea that a phenomenon is a primal given) and essentialism (the idea that a phenomenon has a real and static 'essence', independent of people and contexts) are related to objectivist thinking. In the social sciences, objectivist perspectives are often dismissed as 'essentialist', which has strong normative connotations. Nobody proudly claims to be an 'essentialist' (Phillips 2010). 'Most people who use it use it as a slur word, intended to put down the opposition' (Hacking 1999: 17). Essentialism is associated with racism and is 'increasingly employed as a term of criticism' (Verkuyten 2005: 125).

However, simply dismissing essentialism makes it easy to overlook the possible value and relevance of essentialist and objectivist thinking, and the possible downsides of a constructivist perspective. Firstly, according to some, constructivism does not lead to adequate descriptions of social phenomena. As constructivism tends to emphasize processual, unstable, instrumental and political aspects and tries to explain fluctuations in ethnicity and ethnic identification, the danger is that it falls short in accounting for the social relevance and the tangible consequences of certain phenomena, such as the 'more persistent values inherent in ethnicity' (Liebkind 1992: 154). Brubaker and Cooper suggest that a constructivist conception of 'identity' makes it hard to account for crystallized self-understandings, the sometimes coercive force of external identifications, the singular understandings, unitary groups, and the power of identity politics (2000: 1). For example, when we emphasize the fluid character of ethnicity, we risk to underestimate the inevitability of ethnic classification and its consequences for certain individuals or certain groups, as well as possible practical, social and mental benefits of ethnic identification. Bader even accuses constructivists to see phenomena as 'not "real" (...), only "abstract and purely analytical notions", "useful fictions", that have no "causal" or "normative" powers' (2001: 254). Secondly, the negative appraisal of essentialist views needs nuancing. Verkuyten criticizes the widespread idea that constructivism is characteristically emancipatory and liberating, and that essentialist views on culture are generally oppressive and (Verkuyten 2005, chapter 5). He argues that the constructivist perception of culture as varied and dynamic is not only used to challenge stereotypical representations, but can also function in oppressive ways, when it legitimizes assimilationist demands. In turn, essentialist reasoning (which presumes the inevitable incompatibility of two cultures) is not only used by ethnic majorities to oppress minorities, but is also used by ethnic minorities in emancipatory ways, when used in protests against assimilationist demands and in claims for recognition of cultural differences and identities. At times, an essentialist position is taken strategically, in pursuit of political goals, which is called 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1988). Thirdly, some argue that essentialist views are evident in many political, social and psychological processes. Brubaker explains that essentialism forms the base of politics: 'Reifying groups is precisely what ethnopolitical entrepreneurs are in the business of doing', as in politics, the 'political fiction of the unified groups' is important, and these unified groups are partly evoked by talking as if they exist (2002: 167). In a similar vein, Phillips (2010) argues that essentialism is a common way of thinking in many social and political contexts. Furthermore, both Phillips and Verkuyten explain that essentialist thinking is a key psychological mechanism because it helps people process complex information, as it provides a firm understanding of the world (Medin 1989 in Verkuyten 2005: 126; Phillips 2010). An essentialist perspective can also contribute to a secure sense of identity,

as people who strongly identify with a group are generally more inclined to see their group as essentially homogenous and distinctive (Verkuyten 2005: 142).

Even though Verkuyten and Phillips convincingly show the political, social and psychological importance of essentialist reasoning, their argument is not necessarily convincing from an ontological perspective. The argument that essentialist thinking is very common in practice does not prove that a social phenomenon is essentialist in its character. When a phenomenon – such as a specific ethnic group – is dynamic over time in shape and meaning, and varies per context, it is still possible for people to view it in a reified way, perceiving it to be static, with a natural essence. Brubaker emphasizes the important distinction between the realm of practice and the realm of analysis by arguing that a social phenomenon, such as a reified idea about ethnicity or an ethnic group, is ‘a key part of what we want to explain, not what we want to explain things with; it belongs to our empirical data, not to our analytical toolkit’ (2002: 165). We should carefully distinguish between a ‘category of practice’, which refers to categories as they are used in everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ‘ordinary social actors’, and a ‘category of analysis’, used by the analyst (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 4). We can say that it is up to us to study *why* ethnicity is presented as a reified given, rather than adopting this view as our own.

Constructivism implemented: traps of essentialism and ambiguity

This brings us to a discussion about how constructivism is applied or ‘implemented’ in the realm of analysis. How is a constructivist perspective applied in academic studies in our ‘categories of analysis’? Here we confront two other points of critique that stem from the inaccurate use of constructivist perspectives in academic work. It appears that constructivism is easier said than done. On the one hand, there is a risk of unintentional essentialization, while on the other hand there is a risk of ambiguity, or what I refer to as the ‘essentialist trap’ and the ‘ambiguity trap’.

In 1999, Hacking already complained that social construction was worn out. In his view, the numerous studies being tagged as the ‘social construction of...’ were more cases of ‘bandwagon-jumping’ than anything actually related to social construction (1999: 35). Correspondingly, Brubaker and Cooper argue that the academic consensus has turned into ‘clichéd constructivism’ (2000: 11), as they ‘often find an uneasy amalgam of constructivist language and essentialist argumentation’ (ibid.: 6). This is not equally the case for all categorizations. For example, in the case of class, there has been a remarked change. Nowadays, the term ‘working class’ can hardly be used without quotation marks, and ‘the working class’ is seldom regarded as a homogenous entity and an autonomous actor (Brubaker 2002). Contrastingly, the general tendency to see ethnicity in so-

called 'groupist' terms, shows that the case of ethnicity remains an explicit example of this uneasy amalgam:

'Despite the constructivist stance that has come to prevail in sophisticated studies of ethnicity, everyday talk, policy analysis, media reporting, and even much ostensibly constructivist academic writing about ethnicity remain informed by 'groupism': by the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous, and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts and fundamental units of social analysis. Ethnic groups, races, and nations continue to be treated as things-in-the-world, as real, substantial entities with their own cultures, their own identities and their own interests. (...) the social and cultural world is represented in groupist terms as a multichrome mosaic of monochrome racial, ethnic, or cultural blocks.' (Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004: 45)

The widespread use of the terms 'ingroup' and 'outgroup', and 'bonding' and 'bridging' in reference to entire ethnic categories reflects the prevalence of groupist thinking. In academic literature as well as in common integration discourses, the social context of ethnic minorities is commonly discussed in dichotomous terms. The social context of ethnic minorities is divided into a so-called ethnic 'ingroup' and a so-called ethnic 'outgroup'. These terms are derived from social identity theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). This theory postulates that the mere act of self-categorization leads to 'ingroup' favoritism (with an emphasis on sameness, belonging and consonance) and 'outgroup' derogation (with an emphasis on distinction, dis-belonging and dissonance), even if this categorization is totally arbitrary and for example is based on the toss of a coin. Connection of the terms 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' to ethnic categories ignores the condition of self-categorization and imposes the idea that ethnic minorities inevitably have a co-ethnic bias and try to distinguish themselves from people with a different ethnicity. Applying the basic idea of social identity theory, that self-categorization results in (at least some level of) groupness, to entire ethnic categories, blindly presupposes a self-categorization in solely ethnic minority terms. A similar faltering line of thought underlies the common use of the concepts 'bonding' and 'bridging' (like for example by Putnam 2000). The use of these terms to denote co-ethnic respectively interethnic relations implies that ethnic groups are necessarily cohesive, that people with the same ethnicity are naturally more similar than people with different ethnic backgrounds, and that co-ethnics are naturally drawn towards each other.

'Groupist' scholars do not deliberately take a 'groupist' (or objectivist or essentialist) stance, but it is apparently difficult to avoid such ways of thinking. The line between concepts as they are used as 'categories of practice' and as 'categories of analysis', is often blurred (Brubaker 2013: 5). This confusion of

categories of analysis and categories of practice in empirical studies leads scholars to speak as if such internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups exist (ibid.: 5). Thus, instead of studying how meanings originate and shift in practice, they often contribute to reifications of categories such as 'Moroccans', 'Turks' or Muslims. Apparently, there is what I call an 'essentialist trap'. This is primarily a problem in empirical studies, which is why there is a gap between 'the grand theoretical work that asks us to rethink everything on the basis of no serious empirical data and the empirical work that keep churning out the same banalities as it did twenty years ago' (Baumann 1999: 143). We need to be conscious of the risks of employing an 'ethnic lens', which prevails in the now common approach to take the 'ethnic group' as a unit of analysis (Glick Schiller, Çaglar and Guldebrandsen 2006; Glick Schiller 2008). Baumann explains the risk:

'(...) yet, when it comes to empirical studies of ethnicity, most students are still given topics such as "The Turks in Berlin", "The Berbers in Paris", or "The Sikhs in New York". The focus is on a national, ethnic, or religious minority as if anyone could know in advance how this minority is bounded and which processes proceed inside and which outside that assumed community. We have, in effect, created a little island; we study this island, and we usually conclude that the island is, in so many ways, an island.' (Baumann 1999: 145-146)

Focusing on 'ethnic groups' as units of analysis is likely to contribute to (further) reification of the ethnic categories because this ethnic focus becomes the lens of the observation. Apparently, this often occurs in the social sciences. Carter and Fenton (2009) even speak about a broad 'ethnicization of sociology', in which ethnic and national identities dominate our thinking. Fox and Jones argue that this preoccupation with ethnicity, particularly in the scholarly field of migration, has given ethnicity 'a fixity in both popular and scholarly imagination that is at odds with its contingent and socially constructed nature' (2013: 385). This preoccupation not only leads to an over-stating of the concreteness of ethnic groups, but also to the mobilization of an ethnic explanatory framework at the expense of alternative and possibly more relevant explanations for social phenomena, such as for example poverty (Brubaker 2013). Such an ethnic lens can obscure underlying mechanisms, such as educational values and social support (Carter and Fenton 2009). Furthermore, one risks overlooking external mechanisms, which can lead to blaming the victim. For example, social processes governing the socio-economic status of immigrant origin people often have more to do with their immigrant status, their social origins and the dynamics of labor markets, schools and families than with their culture and ethnicity (Brubaker 2013: 5). Thomson and Crul (2007) present an illustrative example in their discussion of public integration debates. They explain that the political focus on immigrants 'as Muslims' leads to religion, and Islam in particular, being generally regarded as the major barrier for integration; while in reality, the processes of

integration for Muslims are largely similar to those for non-Muslims. In a similar vein, by referring to people by their ethnicity (for example as 'Moroccans') and using ethnicity as a central analytical term, their ethnic background is emphasized, together with their supposed cultural Otherness. I have to admit that my study is yet another study that focuses on ethnic identity. However, I try to avoid the trap of essentializing ethnic identification and to examine the 'fixity' of ethnicity, ethnic identification and ethnic groups instead.

A second criticism of the work of constructivist scholars is that their concepts are often vague and ambiguous. This point of critique is roughly the opposite of the previous accusation of essentialism (even though the critics are the same). Hacking argues that social constructivist claims are often confusing because the phenomena studied are multifaceted and therefore complex (1999). This makes it hard to use concepts in clear and unambiguous ways, and leads to what I call the 'trap of ambiguity' of constructivist thinking. As an example, Hacking raises the issue of the construction of gender: Does the social construction of gender refer to the idea that gendered people exist, to the gendered people themselves, the language, the institutions, human bodies or perhaps to 'the experience' of being female?

Similarly, the analytical use of 'identity' is often characterized by ambiguity, as Brubaker and Cooper show (2000). 'Identity', just like 'ethnicity', is used in divergent ways. The terms refer to both structural characteristics and individual affiliations, and to both external labelling and self-understandings. They have contradictory connotations, as they sometimes imply stability and fundamental sameness, and sometimes seem to reject notions of basic sameness (ibid.: 10); sometimes they refer to tight 'groupness' and sometimes to loose affiliations. A term cannot be used to distinguish between different phenomena and variations if these are all captured by the same term. In other words, the language of identity and ethnicity 'blurs what needs to be kept distinct', making these concepts ill-suited to do the analytical work (ibid.: 27). Apparently, the complexity of phenomena that we label 'identity' and 'ethnicity' often leads to the overuse and dilution of these analytical concepts, which then become unfit for analytical purposes despite their important roles in everyday politics as practical concepts.

In summary, across the social sciences there is a broad preference for constructivist thinking. In response, a few scholars highlight the practical importance of objectivist and essentialist thinking, pointing to its prominence in political, social and psychological practices. However, the practical relevance of objectivism does not mean that we need to adopt this as our analytical perspective. For analytical purposes, a constructivist approach might still be preferred. Yet, adopting a constructivist approach appears to be easier said than done, particularly in empirical studies. There is the essentialist trap on the one

hand. Adopting a category of practice as the unit of analysis can provide a 'groupist' view and an 'ethnic lens', which often cause scholars to unintentionally end up reinforcing essentialist notions of ethnicity and ethnic groups. On the other hand, there is the trap of ambiguity, with the multifaceted character of social phenomena making it difficult to analyze these phenomena in unambiguous ways.

My description of my research theme exposes my ontological position. The use of phrases like 'what ethnicity means for the higher educated second generation' or 'processes of identification' show that my point of departure is constructivist. However, in reaction to the argument of some that with a constructivist perspective one risks overlooking the social relevance of a phenomenon, I argue that starting from a constructivist perspective does *not* preclude finding that a phenomenon is rather static, rigid and uniform. This perspective does not predetermine that the phenomenon as it emerges from the empirical study is entirely dynamic, malleable or social in character. At the same time, I believe that starting from an objectivist position presents the considerable risk of overlooking existing variations and dynamics, which could (then falsely) lead to the conclusion that a phenomenon is objectivist in character. As I see it, there is less of a risk of wrongly drawing conclusions about the character of a phenomenon when starting from a constructivist perspective than from an objectivist perspective.ⁱ

We have seen that the choice for a constructivist perspective entails the risk of slipping into essentialist thinking and to confusion due to ambiguous use of certain concepts. In the following section, I explain how I try to avoid these two traps and discuss how I employ (ethnic and national) identity as an analytical concept.

Studying ethnic and national identification: the analytical toolkit

One of the major challenges in studying second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch, which I selected because of their ethnic background (*not* for their presumed evident ethnic identification), is avoiding an essentialist and groupist perspective and an ethnic lens. Based on a variety of suggestions made by migration and identity scholars, Fox and Jones propose a three-part remedy for avoiding this trap (2013). Two of these solutions are methodological. The first solution is to avoid sampling on an ethnic dependent variable. For example, if the study limits itself to individuals with strong ethnic identifications, we could not observe (nor understand) that a potentially broad range of ethnic identifications exists. The second suggestion is to start from 'the everyday' as a means for observing practices beyond ethnic practices. By expanding our focus beyond solely ethnic practices, we can observe the possible relevance of non-ethnic dimensions and specify rather than infer the relevance of ethnicity. In the next

chapter, I explain how my research design complies with both of these suggestions. I explain how I try to avoid selecting participants based on their ethnic identification, and to avoid centering the interviews on the theme of ethnicity through an initial focus on the participant's trajectory of social mobility and on his relationship with various social others. Their third solution is similar to Brubaker's warning about not conflating the category of analysis with the category of practice. We should not use 'ethnicity' as it is used in practice to analytically explain 'ethnicity' as it used in practice. Instead, we should try to explain how ethnicity becomes socially meaningful. This is the challenge I take up here. In order to avoid this conflation of 'ethnicity' as a category of analysis and 'ethnicity' as a category of practice, but also to avoid the trap of ambiguity, I assembled an analytical toolkit, consisting of the four conceptual tools that I present here. In addition, I reflect on the analytical relation between ethnic and national identification.

The first analytical tool I use is to think in processes. This is an oft-used way to avoid the essentialist trap (see for example Giddens 1991; Hall 1991; Baumann 1999; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Jenkins 2008b). In the line of Barth, instead of thinking in terms of fixed notions of 'identity' and 'ethnicity', the analytical focus is on *processes of identification*. Identification then, also in terms of ethnicity, is viewed as something that is not necessarily static over time and over situations, but is shaped in the various situations in which people act and interact with each other. Thinking in processes enables us to recognize that individual identifications do not simply 'exist', but come into being and are asserted in various ways. Instead of assuming that ethnic minorities identify in ethnic terms simply because they have certain ancestors and 'have' a specific 'culture', we can study what makes individuals emphasize a certain aspect of their identity, whether it be in ethnic terms or national terms or in any other way. This way of thinking enables us to study whether and how various dimensions of identification vary in salience and meaning by context and over time. It enables us to analyze how and to what extent identifications are contextual and dynamic.

Focusing on processes of identification also enables us to recognize the interactional aspect of identifications. Central to Barth's model is that ethnicity both depends on how people see themselves as groups and how others see them. Before Barth, Cooley already introduced his metaphor of the 'looking glass self' to describe the social nature of one's self-perception as an interaction between how one sees oneself and how (he thinks) others see him (1964 in Jenkins 2008b: 62). Thus, the second important tool in the toolkit is the distinction between *self-identification and external identification*, which respectively refers to the self-ascription of identity and identity-ascription by others (see for example Penninx 1988; Song 2003; Verkuyten 2005; Jenkins 2008a, 2008b). I use 'categorization' or 'labeling' as synonyms for external identification.

By focusing on the influence of external ascription on one's self-identification, we can unmask and explore power relations and the effects that external identification can have on individuals. The range of ethnic and national categories that is available to individuals – categories that are socially and politically defined and connected to varying degrees of stigma or advantage – can be quite restricted and constraining (Nagel 1994). The state is a powerful external actor. States create categorizations in formal and informal ways, formulate criteria, shape connotations and ascribe labels to citizens (and non-citizens) (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Wimmer 2008). Immigration policies, census-taking, redistribution of resources, affirmative action and rules for political access are examples of political and social practices that can contribute to a strengthening of ethnic boundaries and even to downright discrimination (Nagel 1994). External identification does not even require a specifiable actor:

But the state is not the only 'identifier' that matters. As Charles Tilly [1998] has shown, categorization does crucial "organizational work" in all kinds of social settings, including families, firms, schools, social movements, and bureaucracies of all kinds. Even the most powerful state does not monopolize the production and diffusion of identifications and categories; and those that it does produce may be contested. (...) Yet identification does not require a specifiable 'identifier'; it can be pervasive and influential without being accomplished by discrete, specified persons or institutions. Identification can be carried more or less anonymously by discourses and public narratives (...) [and] their force may depend not on any particular instantiation but on their anonymous, unnoticed permeation or our ways of thinking and talking and making sense of the social world. (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, p16)

The influence of external factors and the underlying power imbalances are easily overlooked when the sole focus is on processes of self-identification, as is often the case in the anthropological literature (Jenkins 2008a: 57-58). In studies on integration and assimilation, it is often the other way around, as – because of a focus on the group level – these often primarily focus on structural factors and thereby overlook individual self-determination or individual agency (Song 2003: 8). By distinguishing self-identification from external identification and by focusing on the interaction between both mechanisms, we can analyze to what extent (and how) self-identification is influenced by the external identification by others. We can analyze the influence of structural factors on individual agency.

The third tool in the analytical toolkit is the distinction between *category and group*. This is a way to avoid 'groupist' thinking, which is based on reifying assumptions about categories (Goffman 1990 [1963]; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Verkuyten 2005: 56; Jenkins 2008a, 2008b). As we saw, groupist views assume that (ethnic) categories are highly homogeneous and highly cohesive. The term

'group' in itself elicits groupist thinking because even in its most minimal definition, 'group' implies a sense of affiliation with 'co-categorical' others and 'a capacity for collective action' and 'a stable and embracing pattern of mutual interaction' (Goffman 1990 [1963]: 36, see also Carter and Fenton 2009). However, people who belong to the same ethnic category not always need to show high levels of similarity, affiliation, cohesion and interaction. Belonging to a certain category does not necessarily lead to high levels of solidarity and interaction. Moreover, the existence of a category in general does not automatically lead to certain levels of groupness. Groupness is not something that we should presuppose but rather something we intend to study (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, Brubaker 2002). The analytical distinction between category and group is required for analyzing the ways in which ethnicity can exist and 'work' without the existence of ethnic groups as substantial groups or entities. The concept of category 'can help us envision ethnicity without groups' (Brubaker 2002: 170) and enable us to analyze the relations between categories and groups (and categories and identifications, and identifications and groups). The distinction enables us to study when and how categories play a socially relevant role, either because they concur with self-aware or even cohesive and mobilized groups, and/or because they are highly important to an individual's life and self-understanding. Category, as I use it, refers to someone's objective traits that determine his or her position in a system of classification (such as having immigrant parents, born in Morocco or Turkey). Having at least one parent who is born in Morocco means that one's 'ethnicity' as a category is 'Moroccan'. Based on one's mere ethnicity, I do not automatically assume anything about one's self-identification, external identification, one's social network or behavior.

The fourth analytical tool is the distinction between label and content. The last analytical distinction that is important in my study is the distinction between *label* and *content*. A few authors elaborate on this distinction. For example, Verkuyten talks about label and the 'cultural component' (2005: 46). Jenkins uses the terms 'nominal identity' and 'virtual identity' (2008a: 76).ⁱⁱ I distinguish self-identification with a nominal label from what this label means for an individual and what it reflects in terms of 'cultural stuff' (as Barth calls it) or the 'cultural component' (Verkuyten 2005). 'Cultural stuff' includes language, ritual, kinship, economic way of life, lifestyle more generally, the division of labor, but also a sense of what is proper and honorable (Ruane and Todd 2004 in Jenkins 2008a: 11). The distinction of label and content enables us to study what identification with a certain label means for an individual. It enables us to bring the 'cultural stuff' into the analysis, just as Jenkins pleads for, but as a topic of analysis and not as an aspect that is taken for granted (ibid.: 172); as a self-evident aspect of one's self-identification. The term 'identification' in my book solely refers to one's self-identification with a label, without any broader connotations or automatic assumptions. To refer to identificational content, I use 'content' or more specific

terms such as 'behavior' or 'practices'. Chapter 5 is built on this distinction and analyses the association between identification with the ethnic label and sociocultural content.

Another tool to help avoid treating ethnicity in an essentialist way is to employ the idea of *intersectionality*, which is the fourth analytical tool in the toolkit. Intersectional thinking is based on the idea that the various dimensions of a person's identity do not work separately but shape one another. So, how a female Muslim experiences her gender is not similar to the experiences of all women, and how she experiences being a Muslim is not similar to the experiences of all Muslims. Rather, her experiences as a woman are shaped by the fact that she is a Muslim, and her experiences as a Muslim are influenced by the fact that she is a woman. This idea that social divisions are interconnected has existed for a long time, but it was not labeled until Crenshaw (1989) coined the term 'intersectionality' to direct attention to the specific experiences of black women. Their experiences were misrecognized because gender inequality and racial inequality were only recognized as separate forms of oppression. The idea of intersectionality has become a central philosophy in (black) women's studies, in critique of the presentation of the experiences of white middle-class feminists as *the female experience* (McCall 2005). Apparently, it has hardly extended beyond women's studies, or beyond 'black' women (Nash 2008: 4). It has not been employed to correct essentializing tendencies in studies on ethnic groups. For example, in the comprehensive overview works on (ethnic) identity of Jenkins (2008a, 2008b) and Verkuyten (2005), and in the critical articles of Brubaker discussed above, this view is not discussed, let alone promoted for its de-essentializing merits. These authors only discuss the multifaceted (or 'hyphenated') character of identity in the context of a combination of ethnic and national dimensions. I consider this a missed opportunity. The acknowledgement of identity as a complex phenomenon and the decomposition of binary ways of thinking, make intersectional thinking highly effective to avoid groupist thinking (see also Anthias 2013). Nash places the call to broaden the application of intersectional thinking: 'If (...) intersectionality purports to provide a general tool that enables scholars to uncover the workings of identity, intersectionality scholarship must begin to broaden its reach to theorize an array of subject experience(s).' (2008: 10). However, we must be careful not to slip into new forms of essentialism by replacing larger homogenizing categories with slightly smaller homogenizing categories and by looking at an 'intersection' as two unproblematic social sections coming together, creating a new 'groupist' group (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009 in Fox and Jones 2013: 390; Anthias 2013). Rather, we should acknowledge the socially and historically constructed character of the relevant social categories. Subsequently, we should go beyond noting a co-dependency and focus on the process of intersecting. My study responds to these calls by focusing on the higher educated men and women with

an ethnic minority background, trying to disclose how their experiences in relation to their ethnic minority background is shaped by their class position.

Ethnic and national identification as one domain of analysis

It is now 'anthropological common sense to consider ethnicity and nationalism in the same analytical breath' (Jenkins 2008a: 12). I conclude this overview of analytical tools with a discussion of the analytical relation between the concepts *ethnic and national identification*. Why are they often mentioned in one breath, as is also the case in my study? As I explain here, ethnic and national identifications fall in the same analytical domain because these categorizations are employed to define and express who belongs in a particular territory or arena. Therefore, the use of 'ethnic' and national categories and the near conflation of the concepts appear to be an effect of the political workings of the nation-state.

The two terms are often conflated, or at least used on one breath. Wimmer's definition of ethnicity elucidates the conflation between the two notions, as he defines ethnicity 'as a subjectively felt sense of belonging based on the belief in shared culture and common ancestry' (2008: 973), a description he derives from a tradition established by Weber (1985 [1922]: 237). This means that when national identity not only refers to belonging based on formal citizenship but is formulated in terms of a shared culture and a common ancestry as well; it is also a form of ethnicity. Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov elaborate further why ethnicity and nationality should be regarded as one analytical domain (2004: 47-48). The distinctions between the concepts have been blurred, as in both cases boundaries are formulated in terms of 'distinctive language, religion, customs and other kinds of culture' and in terms of phenotypic and other visible markers. In both cases, the implications of these boundaries are also related to 'territorialization', to the issue of 'who belongs here'. In other words, these boundaries are related to inequalities in power and autonomy. The blurring of these analytical boundaries between ethnic and national (and other) identities is illustrated by the shifting denotations of immigrants in Northern Europe. Various labels are used over time to refer to nation-of-origin and region-of-origin, to migratory, legal and racial characteristics and increasingly in reference to religion (Allievi 2005 and Yildiz 2009 in Brubaker 2013: 2). For example, the same people have been categorized as Algerians, North Africans, guest workers, immigrants, foreigners or (especially in the UK) blacks and Muslims. The Netherlands, as I will describe in chapter 4, has seen a similar shift from foreigners ('buitenlanders'), 'guest workers', 'minorities' and 'migrants', to 'allochthonous' and 'Moroccans'/'Turks', and increasingly to 'Muslims'. So, in the Dutch discussion on who does and who does not belong, ethnic, national and also religious labels are used in comparable ways and in relation to each other. Even though someone might be born in the Netherlands and have Dutch nationality, the fact that he is ethnically 'Moroccan' or 'Turkish' still makes him 'allochthonous'

instead of 'autochthonous', and thus he is still regarded as 'not-Dutch'. Because he is 'Moroccan' or 'Turkish', he is assumed to be 'Muslim'. Because he is 'Moroccan' or 'Turkish' or 'Muslim', he is supposed to never really be 'Dutch', as 'the Moroccan culture', 'the Turkish culture' and 'the Islamic culture' are seen as incompatible with 'the Dutch culture'. This points to the conflation of not only ethnic and national identities, but also of religion and immigrant-background.

Thus, ethnic and national categorizations are both based on ideas about shared (and unshared) culture and origin. The centrality of culture in the political project of the nation-state explains the 'culturalization of citizenship' (Duyvendak 2011; Duyvendak and Slootman 2011), in which political belonging is increasingly framed in cultural and ethnic terms.

The entwinement of ethnic and national identity (and in some cases religion and immigrant-background) is a consequence of the politics of the nation-state. The idealized model of the nation-state presupposes the congruence of the nation and the state, which often translates into a congruence of polity and culture (Brubaker 2010: 63). This is because state-makers legitimize their authority by arguing that all state-subjects have something in common that makes them into a nation. State-makers create 'myths of homogeneity' (Verdery 2000: 45). Such project of homogenization is formulated in ethnic and cultural terms (including religious terms), resting on notions such as 'culture', 'authenticity', 'tradition', 'common', etcetera (Verdery 2000: 45; Wimmer 2008: 991). Duyvendak (2011) speaks of a 'culturalization of citizenship' to denote an even increasing tendency to frame political belonging in cultural and ethnic terms. Thus, ethnic and national categorizations are both based on ideas about shared (and unshared) culture and origin. Distinction and exclusion are crucial for creating commonality because 'us' can only be defined in opposition to 'them'. In the end, 'state-making both normalizes and renders deviant, and "culture" is one of several privileged fields within which this occurs' (Verdery 2000: 45-46). This way of state-making creates 'ethnicity' and the ethnic Other in opposition to 'us', the nation. The formulation of difference aims to create sameness among the polity of the nation. This is not only beneficial for the political authorities, but also for the population – at least for those 'who position themselves (and are recognized) as belonging without question', as this established position provides them with a more secure sense of their identity and position, and a stronger sense of agency, as Skey shows (2010). Also the population defines her belonging in relation to racialized 'others', who are considered less 'national', as they supposedly threaten previously taken-for-granted practices and spaces. These mechanisms have made ethnicity a central socio-political dimension (Wimmer 2008: 991; see also Jenkins 2008a: 197). This is also why the nation is generally presented in non-ethnic terms, as if the national 'we' does not have an ethnicity. Song illustrates this in her quote about the White Americans in the Waters' study of 1990, who have the freedom

to assert their ethnicity only when they want to, explaining: ‘most White Americans need not be “ethnic” at all – they can simply be “American”’ (2003: 145).

For the sake of the political project of defining who belongs and who does not, sameness and difference are preferably presented as immutable. One way to do this is to formulate sameness and difference in physical or phenotypical terms (Verdery 2000: 49). Another way is to present ‘autochthony’ as a basis for belonging. This explains the recent upsurge of term ‘autochthony’ all over the world to claim rights and to exclude immigrants and their offspring (Geschiere 2011). These claims are legitimized by the idea of primordiality: ‘How can one belong more than if one is born from the soil itself?’ (ibid.: 323). This claim is disputable as a political principle. In practice, autochthony is often contested and uncertain (ibid.). Nevertheless, this idea of the supremacy of autochthony is powerful and makes the population at large (in imitation of the elites) feel justified in the pursuit of ethnic boundary making and discrimination against minorities. After all, as ‘natives’, or ‘autochthonous’, they represent ‘the people’ and ‘the culture’ of the nation-state and are therefore entitled to their privileged positions (Wimmer 2008: 991), which Duyvendak calls ‘nativism’ (2011). ‘Politics of belonging’ are therefore not congruent with politics of formal citizenship, as having formal state membership does not necessarily mean that one is accepted as a full member of a putatively ‘national’ society ‘by ordinary people in the course of everyday life, using tacit understandings of who belongs and who does not, of us and them’ (Brubaker 2010: 64-65).

2.3 What’s in the name?

The concept of integration is not unproblematic, as I mentioned before. Nor are the terms ‘ethnic groups’ and ‘natives’. The term integration (and assimilation) is frequently used to denote general processes of incorporation, both in academic and practical settings, but it is hardly ever accompanied by an explicit definition. When terms such as integration or ‘ethnic group’ are used as concepts of analysis without explicit definitions, the distinction with concepts of practice is unclear. This is highly problematic because when these terms are used in daily practice, they are loaded with normative connotations and contribute to power-inequalities. When we fail to define the terms integration and assimilation as concepts of analysis and/or blindly take over their usage in the practical realm, we do not unmask these underlying mechanisms and might even contribute to power inequalities. I argue here that the terms ‘integration’, ‘assimilation’, ‘ethnic group’, and ‘natives’ are unfit as concepts of analysis, and describe how I avoid the use of these terms.

In the language of politics and daily life in the Netherlands, 'integration' is seen as something inherently 'good'. When something is framed in terms of integration, it is positive and beyond dispute (Veldboer and Duyvendak 2001: 17). Apparently, the fact that 'integration' can be oppressive for some and might reduce individual freedom or the freedom of minority groups is often ignored. Furthermore, mainstream political discussions do not consider the wide variations in the meanings of integration, which sometimes contradict each other. Nor is discussed if 'integration' need always be pursued. The uncritical use of the term 'assimilation' to neutrally denote processes of incorporation is even more problematic because of the strong normative and ideological usage that appears not only in political discourses (at least in the Netherlands), but also in (older) scholarly literature (Alba and Nee 1997: 827) that presents 'assimilation', understood as complete adaptation to the society of residence and a loss of ethnic traits, as a desired outcome.

This point leads to another argument, namely that the analytical use of 'integration' without an explicit definition contributes to existing power imbalances between ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority. In scholarship, integration and assimilation are often regarded as the blurring of the boundary between an ethnic minority group and the majority group, for example, as Alba and Nee define: 'the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences' (2003: 11). This sounds balanced, as in principle, both the minority and majority can contribute to the decline of ethnic dimensions. However, when describing such boundary decline, it is easy to overlook the fact that in the current neoliberal political climate, it is often only the minority individuals who are held accountable to their integration processes, thus for this decline. Hardly any demands are placed on natives for closing the gap (Veldboer and Duyvendak 2001; Veldboer, Duyvendak and Bouw 2007). For example, the social concentration of ethnic minorities is evaluated differently than the social concentration of 'natives'. It is frowned upon when ethnic minorities establish their own organizations, whereas the existence of completely 'white' organizations in ethnically diverse societies like the Netherlands are rarely problematized.

This focus on the minority individual is partly a consequence of the 'neutrality' of members of the ethnic majority group, of the so-called 'mainstream'. The ethnic majority is seen as 'neutral', without ethnicity. This is reflected in the use of 'ethnic groups' to refer to ethnic minority groups, which suggests that the ethnic majority group is not an ethnic group. This 'neutral' status means that the majority's ideas, beliefs and attitudes are taken as self-evident and therefore function as the undebated yardstick against which minorities are held. This also means that the majority identity is strongly normalizing and the minority is usually on the 'losing side' (Liebkind 1992: 156). The mere differentiation

between a 'minority' and a 'majority' reflects a 'normative hierarchy which combines the idea of status and legitimacy, of numbers and of deviation from the norm' (ibid.: 156). The fact that the majority group is unlabeled and unmarked implies that the majority does not form an explicit group or category, masking its position of power and contributing to the power imbalance. After all, it is hard to make the standards and power inequalities explicit when these cannot be questioned and are taken for granted (Wekker 1996: 73; Verkuyten 2005: 59). Furthermore, when a group is unmarked, individuals are judged on their individual merit. When one belongs to a marked category, suddenly (s)he is assumed to be similar to co-categorical individuals and not similar to inter-categorical individuals (Captain and Ghorashi 2001). There is much less awareness of a 'minority' individual's various sides and qualities. For example, whereas an ethnic Dutch person can strive to be a talented volleyball player, a nice neighbor or a capable mayor, a Moroccan Dutch person is often primarily judged as a 'Moroccan' volleyball player, a 'Moroccan' neighbor, a 'Moroccan' mayor and is primarily measured against stereotypical images of 'Moroccans'.

Another consequence of the 'neutrality' of the 'mainstream' is that the yardstick for integration is also undefined and unclear, and is not questioned. Lindo argues, based on Alba and Nee (2003), 'the measuring stick, the point of reference, is often indicated with vague vocabulary like "the society in general", "the mainstream" or "the middle class"' (2005: 12). In the Netherlands, with regard to sociocultural aspects in the last years, the character of 'the' Dutch identity has been strongly debated. This has not lead to unambiguous results, but nevertheless the proposition that such homogeneous Dutch identity does not exist has been loudly opposed.ⁱⁱⁱ In socioeconomic terms, there is an implicit demand to integrate into the 'middle class', whereby the integration of (children of) immigrants is evaluated against the yardstick of the Dutch average. This is also the most common usage of socioeconomic integration in the literature on ethnicity and immigrant incorporation, which is 'equated with attainment of average or above average socioeconomic standing', rather than compared with the current statuses of population segments with similar socioeconomic backgrounds (Alba and Nee 1997: 835). How appropriate is it to use the socioeconomic population average as a frame of reference to assess the 'integration' of (children of) Moroccan and Turkish immigrants who once came to the Netherlands to work in low paid jobs (as, for example, is done in the Integration Report 2009 by Gijsberts and Dagevos)? Natives of the lower classes do not have to meet such expectations, as Thomson and Crul remark (2007: 1026): 'We rarely, if ever, hear that sections of the indigenous population are not integrated despite their own experience of poverty and deprivation'. Natives of the lower classes do not have to meet such expectations, as Thomson and Crul remark (2007: 1026): 'We rarely, if ever, hear that sections of the indigenous population are not integrated despite their own experience of poverty and

deprivation'. Why then, contrastingly, are immigrants with lower socioeconomic statuses considered to be not integrated? This is a relevant matter, whereas issues of 'integration' in the Netherlands often exclusively are discussed for groups who had below-average socioeconomic statuses at their moments of arrival. These are primarily people from Morocco, Turkey, Surinam and Curacao, who are aggregated under the label 'non-western immigrants'.^{iv} As argued above, comparing the situations of children of the former 'guest workers' with the native Dutch lower classes would most likely also result in a fairer assessment of processes of incorporation and a less negative evaluation of these immigrant groups.

These problems regarding to the term 'integration' make the concept unfit for this research. Instead, I prefer to use more explicit terms like 'socioeconomic mobility', 'socioeconomic advancement' or 'sociocultural adaptation'. I use these in a descriptive rather than a normative sense. I try to describe processes and mechanisms that are at play (including discursive and normative mechanisms), but I refrain from taking such a normative stance myself; I am not suggesting that children of immigrants *should* show advancement and adaptation.

The reflection on the middle class as the implicit norm is also important because it exposes a circularity in the Dutch construction of 'ethnic minority groups' and their evaluation as not being fully integrated, at least in socioeconomic terms. This is a consequence of the selective application of 'ethnic minority group' to categories that in general have a lower socioeconomic status (Rath 1991). In the Netherlands, the term 'ethnic minority' primarily refers to people with a non-western background who have lower socioeconomic positions. Strangely enough, immigrants from the U.S., Germany or Japan are not generally labeled as 'ethnic minorities', and these groups are not central to integration debates and integration policies. And, whereas people from the (former) colonies in the Caribbean fall under this category of ethnic minorities, immigrants from the former Dutch-Indies/Indonesia are categorized as 'western-immigrants'. This shows that – at least in Dutch society – the perceived distance to the standard of the mainstream rather than a certain ethnic background leads to categorization as 'ethnic'. The fact that 'ethnic minorities' do not reach the standard, then, is not because of their ethnic and immigrant background, but is simply because of their categorization as (ethnic) minority. In my study, I do not refrain from using the term 'ethnic minority'. However, I hope to contribute to a more nuanced use of this terminology by emphasizing the intra-categorical variation and by focusing on those in higher socioeconomic positions.

Furthermore, I use labels that do not obscure the ethnicity of the ethnic majority. I use 'ethnic minority group/category' and 'ethnic minority identity' where terms like 'ethnic group' and 'ethnic identity' are commonly used. I also use 'ethnic

majority' or 'ethnic Dutch' to refer to people whose parents are born in the Netherlands. As I said, I refrain from using the term 'native' to refer to ethnic Dutch, as this term is part of the nativist discourse and incorrectly excludes the children of immigrants who are born in the Netherlands and who therefore are also 'native' to the Netherlands. It is important to note that thinking in 'majority' or 'established' in some cases is obsolete. In many major cities, young children of the second generation are often more established in the cities than ethnic Dutch (Crul and Schneider 2010). Their parents have lived there for a long time, and they themselves are born and raised there, whereas the ethnic Dutch children often have parents who moved there from other parts of the country more recently. Sometimes, the ethnic majority is not even a majority anymore, at least in numbers, as has recently become reality in Amsterdam.

2.4 Summary and reflection

In my attempt to understand the ethnic and national identifications of second generation social climbers, I first turned to the literature on processes of immigrant incorporation. I explained that the famous models of straight-line assimilation theory and segmented assimilation theory are not fully adequate to understand ethnic identification at the individual level. Literature on ethnic options provide a better angle to explore individual dynamics. In the coming chapters, I zoom in on the experiences of higher educated second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch. I examine how these second generation climbers identify in ethnic terms and what this means to them (chapter 5), why they identify in certain terms in specific social contexts (chapter 6), and how these identifications develop over time (chapter 7).

In the end of my book, I will be able to reflect on the substance of ethnicity in daily life based on my empirical results. As we have seen in this theoretical chapter, phenomena such as ethnicity and identity can be viewed from different ontological perspectives. In the social sciences, there is a common consensus on the idea that ethnic and national identity are social constructs. The working of the nation-state partly relies on the creation of such categories and the (self-) labeling of people. The formulation of a contrast between 'the nation' and others, such as an 'ethnic group' or a religious group, is used by political elites and the national community to instill feelings of sameness among the 'nation' and to define who belongs and who does not belong. This close association between ethnic and national identities means that they are used in the same breath, sometimes also together with religious identities, and belong to the same domain of analysis.

So far, so good. Why would we need a contribution in thinking about the nature of ethnicity if we agree on this constructivist perspective? One of the problems

with the constructivist perspective is that we risk a misconception of the importance and substance of ethnicity in daily life. When the focus is placed on the dynamic, variable and contextual character of a phenomenon, it is easy to assume that a phenomenon is 'just' discursive and mental and that it is therefore individually malleable and escapable. This would not only lead to underestimation of the vast and tangible influence that such a phenomenon can have on an individual, but also to a failure to recognize that a phenomenon might be perceived in objectivist and essentialist terms in daily life. Nevertheless, the substantial effects of a phenomenon, such as ethnicity in daily life, in practice, do not mean we have to take objectivism as our analytical point of departure. A constructivist perspective does not necessarily preclude finding that a phenomenon is static, constant and tangible. In my view, this makes a constructivist perspective the most suitable for academic study.

However, applying a constructivist perspective appears to be easier said than done. On the one hand, there is the trap of essentialism. Often, constructivist scholars unintentionally reproduce and contribute to essentialist views because they fail to distinguish their 'categories of analysis' from 'categories of practice' and unreflectively employ reified ideas of ethnicity and ethnic groups as these are used in political and general discourses. Furthermore, they often apply an 'ethnic lens' to a study, which can contribute to groupist thinking and to the (possibly inappropriate) prevalence of ethnic explanations. On the other hand we have the trap of ambiguity. The complex character of social phenomena makes it a real challenge to employ concepts in unambiguous ways, and the use of abstract concepts (such as identity and ethnicity) often confuses or conflates aspects that need to be kept distinct.

In order to avoid falling into these two traps, I assembled an analytical toolkit containing five tools. The first is thinking in *processes of identification*, instead of thinking in terms of 'identity'. The second is the distinction between *self-identification and external identification* (being labeled or categorized by others), which enables me to expose power inequalities and to study the interaction between external structures and individual agency. It is also important to avoid the assumption that people whose parents are born in the same foreign country (e.g. in Morocco or Turkey) and therefore share the same social ethnic categories are necessarily highly similar and frequently interact. A social category does not necessarily make a group, and classification into a social category does not necessarily imply profound sameness, interaction and solidarity with co-categorical others. Levels of groupness should at least be studied rather than assumed. Therefore, the third tool is the separation of *category and group*. The fourth tool is the distinction between *label and content*. The last analytical tool is the idea of *intersectionality*. The idea that the various social dimensions of a person shape each other helps prevent groupist thinking and makes us attentive

to intracategorical variations. My focus on higher educated members of the second generation enables me to explore the intersectionality of class (education) and ethnicity. Before I turn to the empirical chapters, I explain more about the research design (chapter 3) and the context of the second generation in the Netherlands (chapter 4).