



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

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

Slootman, M.W.

**Publication date**

2014

**Document Version**

Final published version

[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

Slootman, M. W. (2014). *Soulmates: Reinvention of ethnic identification among higher educated second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch*.

**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, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

## 6. 'I am... who I am...'. Identifications in social contexts

---

*Why do second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch climbers identify as they do in various situations? How do social contexts and feelings of belonging affect their ethnic and national self-identifications, both in co-ethnic as well as in interethnic contexts?*

---

The discussion in the previous chapter about the ethnic (and national) identifications of the higher educated second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch seemed to imply that identifications are autonomous and static. However, as I show in this current chapter, when participants tell their life stories – when they tell anecdotes and recall situations – how they identify and how they behave in relation to these identifications does not appear static or autonomous but seems to be related to the context. This chapter explores *why* the participants identify in certain ways in specific situations. Based on the in-depth interviews, this chapter explores the positioning of the second generation climbers in various contexts. What relations do they have with social others? How do external demands and ascriptions influence feelings of belonging? How are these feelings of belonging related to their self-identification in specific contexts?

Social contexts of ethnic minorities are often divided into 'ingroup' and 'outgroup'. As I explained in chapter 2, 'ingroup' is associated with belonging, sameness and agreement (with consonance)<sup>i</sup> and 'outgroup' with non-belonging, difference and disagreement (with dissonance). When these terms are applied to entire social categories, such as ethnic categories, this suggests that every member of the ethnic category is automatically part of the ethnic 'ingroup'. Relations with co-ethnics are taken to be strong and characterized by agreement and consonance. Interethnic relations with people of the ethnic 'outgroup' are taken to be weak and characterized by difference and dissonance. Although I do not adopt the assumptions that co-ethnic relations are necessarily consonant and interethnic relations are necessarily dissonant, the structure of the chapter reflects the divide between ethnic 'ingroup' (co-ethnic contexts) and ethnic 'outgroup' (interethnic contexts). One of the goals of the chapter is to explore if this dichotomous thinking is applicable to the participants' experiences.

The empirical data suggest another relevant divide: the divide between one's childhood and one's adulthood. I discuss these contexts and phases separately, starting with the co-ethnic spheres in the participants' youth, in which parents appear to play the largest role (6.1). The second section focuses on the interethnic spheres in their youth: their school and neighborhood (6.2). I proceed to consider the relations with co-ethnics in their adult lives (6.3). The fourth and largest section shows how the participants move in interethnic settings in their adult lives (6.4). I discuss how the participants perceive the 'Dutch' climate in general and how they position themselves in concrete social interactions at their daily work places.

In every of the four sections, I first describe the participants' social relations, followed by a reflection on their experiences and a discussion of the most common individual responses to situations of dissonance. When the stance of the individual and the social other diverge, the individual needs to deal with this dissonance; for example when the other has divergent behavioral standards or when the other applies a certain label against one's will. Based on the empirical data, I identify four responses that vary in balance between meeting one's independent wishes and meeting one's need for belonging and acceptance. These responses or strategies are: conforming, convincing, concealing and confronting.

The chapter has two concluding sections. One contains a reflection on the impact of various dimensions, such as social mobility, ethnicity, gender, generation and religion (6.5). I show how social mobility, ethnicity, gender, generation and religion influence one's positioning and identification in social contexts. The last section discusses the results and their implications (6.6). I show the relevance of acknowledging both external pressures and individual agency. I furthermore argue that thinking in ethnic 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' is misleading and that the analytical toolkit commonly used, as described in chapter 2, lacks a valuable conceptual tool.

## **6.1 Co-ethnic sphere in youth. Parents and others**

Based on the interviews, I identified three groups of co-ethnic actors, which emerged from the stories about the participants' childhoods: parents, a local co-ethnic community, and co-ethnic peers, including their siblings. I will first discuss how the participants describe their relationships with these various actors. In the second half of this section, I reflect on these descriptions and consider to what extent the relationships are characterized by consonance or dissonance. I also explain the four strategies that the participants used to deal with disagreement. These four responses to disagreement are: to conform, convince, conceal and confront.

### *Parents*

As we have seen in Esra's story in the first chapter, Esra's parents placed a high priority on education and were very strict. The development of their children was important to them, which is why they moved to another neighborhood when the children entered primary school. Homework was prioritized over household tasks. Her father stood up for her education and challenged other Turkish fathers, who were more protective of their daughters and did not allow them to pursue higher education. At the same time, her parents were not involved in school and school choice in more practical ways. Her father envisioned her to be a doctor, but also would not allow her to live by herself or attend a university of her choosing. This was so much out of the question that she knew better than to ask. Esra's alternative preference was a university that allowed her to stay at home. This university was not the one that her father had in mind, which was the nearest one, so this still formed a challenge. She took up this challenge, and after endless attempts to make him understand the benefits of her choice, she finally got her father on board. She also convinced him to allow her to marry the partner of her choice.

Looking back, Esra experienced her youth as nauseating because she was not allowed to participate in social events. This forced her to grow up in relative isolation. When she asked for permission to go out on a visit or trip, this was denied. She once took up the fight and really confronted her mother. She was finally allowed to go on this school trip – but ultimately her mother's lack of support made Esra miss the event. Sometimes, Esra's actions were clandestine, such as visiting the cinema during school times. Her marriage formed a means to escape this strict control.

Most participants accounted of a relatively strict upbringing, even though not all parents were as strict as Esra's. There is a spectrum, ranging from Esra's and Imane's nauseating childhoods, to the more permissive upbringings of Hind (who was allowed to go to school parties), Berkant (who was stimulated by his parents to take part in all kinds of social events) and Nathalie (who was brought up in an extremely permissive way in comparison with the other participants). None of the parents were indifferent, withdrawing all kinds of control (which might have been crucial for the achieved social mobility, as suggested by Portes, Fernández-Kelly and Haller 2009).<sup>ii</sup> Most parents were relatively strict and had stringent ideas about how their children should behave. Often, this was framed in terms of being a 'good' 'Moroccan', 'Turk' or 'Muslim'.

The parental demands to behave as a good 'Moroccan', 'Turk' or 'Muslim', concurred with high expectations of their children's educational and professional careers. With a few exceptions, the participants' parents stimulated their children

– including their daughters – to reach high education levels. Parents valued education and had (extremely) high expectations regarding the future professions of their children. They had migrated to the Netherlands primarily for the futures of their children. Many parents envisioned their children to become doctors or lawyers. Parents provided finances to buy books, and many relieved them of household chores or paid work that interfered with homework. However, most parents did not offer additional support. Their knowledge of the education system was inadequate to guide their children. Their meager Dutch language abilities discouraged many parents from meeting teachers for the standard regular updates about their children. Other parents, particularly fathers – whose language skills often surpassed those of the mothers – were too busy working to be involved in school issues. Many parents prevented their children from attending universities that required leaving the house and living somewhere else. This restriction applied to many (but not all) female participants but also to some of the male participants.

Parental strictness was not only about explicit permission and prohibition. Karim experienced pressure from his parents in a more indirect, but no less influential way. He did not comply with their norms for behaving in a certain way, as a ‘good Muslim’ and ‘good Moroccan’, referring to regular praying, visiting the mosque, abstaining from having intimate relationships and participating in social events outside the family or school setting. His behavior led to parental disappointment and to rejection:

Like I just said, many Moroccans did not see me as Moroccan. They think I’m TOO alternative. They think I’m totally lost, ‘satanic’ (...). So, my father urged me: ‘You need to visit the mosque more frequently, you should cut your hair, you should wear neat clothes, etcetera, etcetera’. Well... I didn’t do that. The reaction I got was: ‘If you don’t do that, you are not a real Moroccan’, you know. And you’re not a good Muslim. So, that made me think: Why would I even try being a good Muslim and a good Moroccan? I cannot... kind of... live up to it ANYWAY... (Karim)

Not all participants experienced stringent rules as dissonant and oppressive. Aysel was taken out of school as a teenager to help her mother at home, but she never experienced this as limiting or coercive. In those days, this was simply ‘self-evident’. Even in hindsight, Aysel did not perceive it as a constraint on her development or as social pressure. Instead, she rather saw it as something that you just did, as the oldest daughter who was going to marry and have children either way. Aysel internalized her parents’ views on her future as a housewife. Similar to Aysel, Bouchra, raised in a rather orthodox religious family, did not experience the strict rules in her youth as oppressive. Reflecting on her youth, she explained that she did not have any wishes that conflicted with the group norms, so she did not experience any social pressure. For example, she never felt the

interest to go to a discotheque. However, Bouchra did not fully internalize the rules, as she mentions that this conformism was partly a 'coping strategy'. Her use of this term implies that there is a less intrinsic and more instrumental side to her conformism – the desire for warmth and acceptance from her parents and other co-ethnics.

We should not overlook the emotional bonds between parents and children. Most participants felt strongly connected to their parents, even though their life-worlds were miles apart. Many participants sensed the hardships their parents had endured through their migration trajectory. They were close, as they had always helped their parents navigate the unfamiliar Dutch society they had entered. All participants witnessed their parents' diligence and sacrifices – all for the futures of their children. This made them feel a responsibility to succeed and not to fail in return. The participants wanted to make their parents proud and not disappoint them. Agius Vallejo and Lee, who observe a similar attitude among Latino Americans, call this the 'immigrant narrative of struggle and sacrifice' (2009: 19). Bouchra concisely illustrates this point:

My parents made so many sacrifices for us that I kept thinking: I don't want it to be in vain. (Bouchra)

#### *Co-ethnic community*

The broader co-ethnic community was not assigned a prominent role in the interviews. Co-ethnic adults were mentioned occasionally, mostly in an indirect and negative way. Karim's parents transmitted the norms and pressures of acquaintances they met at the mosque. Esra recalled that her father's friends disapproved of the fact that she was allowed to study. Ahmed's parents endured fierce pressure from co-ethnics when Ahmed left town to study in another city. Some participants had experienced the local co-ethnic community as a supportive home. For Bouchra, the co-ethnic community felt like a 'stable bastion', consisting of people who shared her norms and habits, providing warmth and trust. For Adem, 'Turkish' people simply had always comprised his direct social environment. More than other participants, Bouchra and Adem, like Aysel, spoke of their ethnicity (mentioned in the same breath with religion) as the self-evident core of their being, as something that had always been stable and undoubted.

#### *Siblings and co-ethnic peers*

Childhood relations with co-ethnic peers and siblings were recounted in more positive terms than the relations with parents and the co-ethnic community. Many participants assigned their siblings an important role, both in practical and emotional terms. They mentioned their siblings as friends and role models, offering support and friendly competition. A few participants grew up in families whose primary social environment was the co-ethnic community. For them, co-

ethnic children were their closest friends (only Esra mentioned she did not feel closely connected to them). This was generally the case in Turkish-Dutch families. Moroccan-Dutch families apparently were not part of equally cohesive communities. For the Moroccan Dutch participants, co-ethnic peers were either absent in their youth (as their neighborhoods and schools were then still largely dominated by the ethnic majority) or co-ethnic peers were part of the general group of classmates and neighbors. Most Moroccan Dutch participants did not feel a special connection to them. On only a few occasions, they mentioned co-ethnic peers as special friends who understood the ethnic minority situation and formed a buffer from discrimination.

### **Reflection and responses (to parental expectations)**

Contrary to the connotation of 'ethnic ingroup', participants' relations with co-ethnics in their childhood and youth appear far from only consonant. Relations with parents and co-ethnics were not described solely in terms of agreement and belonging, but in a mix of consonant and dissonant terms. This ambiguity parallels other studies on second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch, such as Buitelaar (2009) and De Jong (2012). Even though all participants' stories radiated love and respect for parents, disagreement was a major theme. Participants sometimes felt some sort of struggle to belong, to be accepted by parents and other co-ethnics. They felt the (sometimes pressing) demand to succeed in educational and professional terms, which needed balancing with being a good 'Moroccan', 'Turkish' or 'Muslim'. Parents shaped the possibilities for their children by explicitly promoting or prohibiting certain behaviors, but also by granting or withholding esteem and appreciation. Parental influence was also more indirect when children, out of love or respect, adapted their behaviors to protect their parents from disappointment or scorn of other co-ethnics.

Probably, these tensions and ambiguities are partly intrinsic to parent-child relationships in general and also occur in non-immigrant families. Social climbers with majority backgrounds are confronted with the comparable, ambiguous demand to succeed and avoid alienation at the same time (Matthys 2010: 85). Just like minority parents, parents of ethnic Dutch climbers stimulate their children and simultaneously hope their children do not climb too high. Alienation, then, is formulated in terms of class instead of ethnicity. Lower-class ethnic Dutch parents emphasize the value of working class skills and morals and warn their children against 'unrealistic' expectations. As a parent of one of Matthys' respondents put it – 'you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear' (*'als je voor een dubbeltje geboren wordt, dan word je nooit een kwartje'*) (ibid.: 98). Despite these resemblances, the interviews with the second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch imply that parent-child contrasts are particularly sharp in immigrant families. In immigrant families, extra-large gaps exist between parental norms and the norms that are common in the outside world, and

between parental wishes and parental resources. In addition, the responsibility the participants feel to succeed for their parents seems larger because of the immigration experience and the immigrant narrative of struggle and sacrifice.

When divergent behavioral preferences exist between children and parents and other co-ethnics, this situation of dissonance requires a response. Children have various ways of dealing with their personal preferences and the diverging parental expectations. They have various approaches for dealing with the mix of parental encouragements, demands and prohibitions in combination with their own feelings of respect, responsibility and love. The stories show that how individuals act in situations of dissonance not only depends on their own preference and the preferences of the social other, but also on feelings of belonging and the appreciation of the social bond. From the interviews, four kinds of responses emerge, which I label 'conform', 'convince', 'conceal' and 'confront'. These are characterized by varying balances between one's own independent preferences and the wish to preserve social bonds. These strategies are very similar to the strategies Van der Hoek identifies among adolescent second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch women: acceptance, communication, deceit and rebellion (2006: 78).

*(1) Conform.* One way to react to dissonance is to conform to the stance of the other. Conformism is a way to avoid conflict, which can threaten the social relation. One can fully internalize the other's stance, resolving the entire disagreement,<sup>iii</sup> but conformism can also entail one's obedience in terms of behavior. An example is when Esra decided that she would not even ask if she could study at a university that would require her to live by herself, because this seemed futile. Bouchra also referred to a strategy of conformism, when she referred to sharing the norms of her co-ethnics as partly a 'coping strategy'. Apparently, in these cases, feelings of belonging are more important than the participants' independent wishes. When one wants to protect social relations and avoid threats to one's acceptance and belonging, conformism is the safest response.

*(2) Convince.* Here people try and convince the other by explanation. This was Esra's approach when she kept explaining her preferences for a specific university and for a specific husband to her father. Convincing was Aysel's main approach in a later stage of her life, when she already had children, she started pursuing a professional career. The bond with her family was important to Aysel, and her main aim during her path of social mobility was to keep her family close and to prevent alienation. This wish made her continuously try to make them understand and to 'take them along' in her trajectory of personal development. As other studies, with a stronger focus on the adolescent period show, the fear among parents and others that social mobility leads to alienation or immoral



behavior can be eased by explicit ethnic or religious identifications (De Koning 2008, Ketner 2010, De Jong 2012). Such identifications, both in terms of label and behavior, can convince parents and other co-ethnics that the child is a good 'Moroccan', 'Turk' or 'Muslim'. This reassurance that the child is doing fine can increase trust and expand the child's freedom. The strategy of convincing is another approach to avoid confrontations and to protect social relations and belonging.

(3) *Conceal*. Another way to pursue one's independent wishes is to hide the behavior that the other does not appreciate. This happened when Esra pretended to go to school and secretly visited the cinema and when Hind did not tell her parents that she was seeing a boyfriend. According to De Jong, Moroccan Dutch students often use this strategy, which is based on the apparently broadly accepted principle among Moroccan Dutch families that 'what you don't know does not exist' (2012: 107). In this approach, one does not comply with the wishes of the other, but nonetheless tries to avoid conflict. However, the risk of being exposed forms a possible threat to one's belonging.

(4) *Confront*. One can choose for open conflict and confront the other by assertively pressing one's point or by openly choosing one's own path. This approach is most risky in terms of belonging. One runs the risk of disapproval and rejection, as we saw in Karim's quote above. Another example is Ahmed, who decided to go and live in another city against the wishes of his parents, who actually got used to this situation quite quickly. A participant in Buitelaar's study illustrates the possible consequences of this approach. After this participant finished her studies, she went to live by herself to enhance her job prospects – apparently against the will of her father: 'I had to hand in my keys. From then on, I was simply a visitor who had to ring the doorbell. He emphasized that he didn't want to see me again' (2009: 208-209, translation MS).

These four strategies to deal with dissonance vary in levels of independence and belonging. The strategies are characterized by varying balances between fulfillment of one's independent ambitions on the one hand and the protection of one's social bonds on the other hand. Pektaş-Weber (2006) and Buitelaar (2009) observe searches for a similar balance among Muslim and Moroccan Dutch women. This range of strategies shows that behavioral expectations of others, even when these others are parents, do not necessarily deprive individuals of personal agency. Even in the face of authoritative parents or a cohesive community, individuals often still have various responses at their disposal. This means that even when people conform to the stance of the other, this does not necessarily reflect a complete lack of agency. Conformism can involve the careful deliberation of various choices. Individuals can deliberately *choose to conform* and to refrain from pursuing one's independent ambitions in order to protect

social bonds, for example out of love or respect. However, the acknowledgement of individual agency should not lead to an underestimation of external pressures. When environments have strict social norms and severe sanctions for deviance, individual agency is very limited.

## 6.2 Interethnic sphere in youth. School and neighborhood

School and neighborhood were the main interethnic spheres the participants moved in during their childhoods. We will see that, just like in the co-ethnic sphere, the social relations in these environments cannot be solely characterized by either dissonance or consonance. We will also see that in situations of dissonance, of exclusion, one response seemed to dominate among the participants: try and conceal the dimension of difference.

As we read in the first chapter, Nathalie was bullied during her entire childhood. Her story compellingly illustrates how intense experiences of active exclusion can be. That Nathalie is raised in an extremely 'Dutch' way, compared to other co-ethnics, makes her story particularly interesting. Apparently, active exclusion is not necessarily based on 'objective' cultural differences. Let us listen to Nathalie's account:

Well... this bullying, at primary school, well, that was a daily reality. It was very 'white' there. Let's say: very 'Groningen'. I came from Rotterdam and therefore had a different Dutch accent. We were also – well – among the only foreigners in our village. That works...so, well, then you feel extra isolated, indeed. This lasted a VERY long time. It easily lasted... the entire primary school phase. It even continued for two or three years into my secondary school. I even – at primary school, at some moment, I started to speak with the same Dutch dialect, just to be part of THEM.

Yes, yes, I think I felt different because they saw me as different. Not because of my upbringing or the language, because I really TRIED to be the same. I am not the person that hides herself. I think I tried to compensate by being a really naughty kid. I tried to change that situation, I guess. But yes... well... then once – It's not that you ARE very aware that you are – WHY you are 'different'. But... well... discrimination certainly happened. Even in the most obvious ways... I remember I was in school, maybe in fourth or fifth grade, when we passed around secret notes. Once, such a note said 'silly African' [*Afrikaantje*]. That felt like a real – that was really – I really found that – that was really – let's say, the last straw... Let's say – I just started crying... because it said 'African'. Not 'Idiot' or whatever, but it really said 'silly African'. That explicit – the really discriminatory... That was... that was – this felt – this REALLY felt terrible, yes. Yes. And maybe, indeed, maybe that's what makes you behave as-Dutch-as-you-can, as-normal-as-you-can..., as some sort of compensation.

When you realize that THAT's a reason to be excluded, you try to fix it and minimize it as much as you can, in order to be as NORMAL as possible. You also don't want to – you avoid doing anything crazy and over the top. You try to be as NORMAL as possible. It wasn't until after quite a while... before I could... could be proud of it. Like – At first, you want to downplay it as much as possible – the fact that you are different because your parents come from foreign countries. And now I even ENJOY telling about it (...), the story of how my parents rebuilt their lives here. (Nathalie)

Even though not all participants accounted in similarly intense ways about their experiences of exclusion, the impact of feeling like an outsider among ethnic majority peers was a striking theme in nearly all interviews. When the participants grew up, their schools and neighborhoods were still dominated by the ethnic majority. Their ethnic minority backgrounds made most participants feel somewhat 'different' from their ethnic Dutch peers in a negative way. For most, feeling like an outsider led to shame and a lack of self-confidence. For some, this experience made them extra ambitious.

In many cases, participants felt different as a result of active exclusion. Some were severely bullied like Nathalie. Others were occasionally labeled as the Other, for example when neighborhood children sang 'Turky irky'. Many participants voiced their frustration about differential treatment at the end of primary school. Children of Moroccan and Turkish immigrants often received a lower secondary school placement advising than equal-performing ethnic majority peers. Even though this did not apply to the majority of the participants, it was frequently mentioned in an agitated way, suggesting that these practices had a big impact.

Feeling different was not always (only) the result of active exclusion. Some participants felt different and isolated because their parents did not allow them to join in social events such as school outings or because they were not allowed to invite friends to their houses. Some felt different because their ethnic Dutch peers did not share their life-worlds. Imane explained that every year when she had to introduce herself at the start of the new school year, she felt utterly ashamed to tell that she had no less than eight siblings. In addition, she felt an unbridgeable gap because of her aberrant clothes, bags and books, and because she did not share her classmates' experiences of going out and having dates. Feeling different also related to differences in personal development, like for Said, who as a child was very conscious of his arrear in the knowledge and cultural capital that was relevant at school. Some had internalized negative images about Moroccans and Turks, as the following (completely anonymized) quotes show:

At primary school, I somehow understood that, well... yes, that Moroccan and Turkish parents were illiterate, etcetera. So, I remember being VERY surprised to find out that my mother actually was able to read! Because I thought: 'What -?! You can't read, can

you?!' How silly that was! Just because I had heard somewhere (not at home...) that, well, people from Morocco or Turkey cannot read and write.

You just start to wonder, because you don't see any examples, you're the first generation that attends school, you have no one preceding you – I literally remember that I wondered: 'Are those Turkish actually stupid? Are the others just right? Is it really possible that they are just right about this?' ...That you even start to CONSIDER these things!!

Fortunately, the fact that participants felt different in the context of their schools and neighborhoods forms only one part of the picture. Not all relations with ethnic majority peers were characterized by exclusion and non-belonging. Not all participants attending 'white' schools always felt different from their environment. Said, who was conscious of his arrear in primary school, did not feel different from his ethnic Dutch peers in secondary school. Ahmed had always identified as very 'white' because of his 'white' environments. Aysel explained that the current issue of integration and 'foreigners' (*allochtonen*) was simply not relevant in her youth. She was just Aysel, a Turkish girl. That was all – nothing more. Hind stated that she never felt out of place. She had always had many friends of various ethnic backgrounds. She even had more friends with ethnic Dutch backgrounds than with ethnic minority backgrounds, partly because she had more personal freedom than most ethnic minority girls in her surroundings.

Some participants attended schools or lived in neighborhoods with (a few) children with other ethnic minority backgrounds. For a few participants, sharing a minority ethnicity created an extra bond. Imane not only felt close to the Moroccan Dutch girls, but also to Turkish Dutch girls, as they understood at least some of her situation and protected each other against discrimination. For a while, Hind was close with a girl who was a Jehovah's Witness. It was convenient that this girl's parents were slightly stricter than other parents, just like Hind's parents. For example, as they had slightly earlier curfews than most of their classmates, they left school parties together. In many other cases, peers with other ethnic minority backgrounds were mentioned as 'just other friends', such as Hind's Surinamese and Belgian friends.

### **Reflection and responses (to 'Othering' in school and neighborhood)**

The stories reveal that, contrary to the general use of 'ethnic outgroup', interethnic social relations are not solely characterized by dissonance. Not all participants always felt different in their schools and neighborhoods, which were dominated by ethnic Dutch, and many of the participants had friends in school with ethnic Dutch backgrounds or other ethnic minority backgrounds. However, feeling different was an important theme in many accounts of primary and secondary school periods. Participants had a dire wish to belong, but their

belonging often felt contested because of their Moroccan or Turkish backgrounds. Frequently, their belonging was downright denied by others, as their behavior or appearance – or simply their ethnic background – deviated from what was regarded as common. Participants were actively labeled as the Other, or they just felt out of place because they themselves felt as if they deviated from a certain norm. Most often, these two mechanisms went hand in hand. The stories show that exclusion, in either form, can be a very negative and impactful experience. It is related to feelings of loneliness and a lack of self-confidence, as will be further discussed in the next chapter. The stories parallel the stories of ethnic majority climbers, who also often felt different from their classmates because of their aberrant clothes, housing, patterns of expenditure, language use and human and cultural capital (Brands 1992).

A common reaction to dissonance in the form of feeling excluded was a response of concealing. In their youth, many participants tried to conceal the dimension of difference to downplay their ethnicity. Nathalie strikingly described how she felt a deep wish to belong, to be regarded as ‘normal’. She longed to be accepted as one of ‘us’ by her classmates and not to be treated as the Other, the permanent outsider. Her response was to de-emphasize her Moroccan background in order to be as ‘Dutch’ as possible. Many participants employed such an approach, when in their schools and neighborhoods they tried to avoid standing out, doing their utter best to adapt and fit in. This is also illustrated by Mustapha’s quote:

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

This response is also observed among other immigrant groups, such as second generation Asian Americans and Chinese British, who out of shame distanced themselves from, or even rejected, their ethnic backgrounds during their childhood and youth (Min and Kim 2000; Song 2003: 211-212).

### **6.3 Co-ethnic sphere at present. Parents and the next generation**

Moving to their present lives, we will see that how the participants reflect on their co-ethnic relationships differs from the accounts of their childhoods. Again, I successively describe how they spoke about their relations with their parents, the broader co-ethnic community, and their peers. The section on their peers is only brief, as this theme will be further developed in the next chapter. In the second half of this section I will reflect on the nuances and complexities of belonging among co-ethnics.

### *Parents*

When participants spoke about their current relationships with their parents, they spoke less about dissonance than when they spoke about their childhood memories. Berkant strongly emphasized his appreciation of his bond with his parents. He explained how he values and loves them and how he continuously works on bridging the gap, which of course still exists. In his communication with them, he adapts to their language and to their worldview. After all, he is familiar with their life world, whereas they are unfamiliar with many aspects of his life. He explained that, out of love, respect and consideration, he does not confront them with issues they will never understand and therefore avoids discussing certain themes, such as his patterns of expenditure or his perspective on religion.

In the interviews, many participants brought up the importance of the bonds with their parents. Most participants spoke lovingly about their parents. Some participants described their fathers or mothers as role models because of their endurance, their strength, their solidarity with family members or their perceptiveness. This respect and appreciation is also why most participants would not say they had 'outgrown' their parents. They did not describe their parents as less intelligent or less skilled, avoiding the suggestion that parents exemplify arrear and failure. This might also be why several participants disputed the regular meaning of 'success' as having a high education and a high status job: to contest the implicit suggestion that people with lower education levels are failures. This is probably why Aysel reacted cynically to her selection for my study because of her higher education level, and this might be why she nuanced the relevance of education:

Apparently, I am some sort of Golden Calf. Am I? ... Did you approach your target group like: these are people who won a Golden Calf...?!!

(...) but there are also many others who are VERY capable and VERY smart – My illiterate mother, she has no diplomas... but in some respects she is much smarter than I am. Much wiser. (Aysel)

Many noted that their parents had changed over time. Esra's younger siblings had 'entirely different' parents than Esra when she grew up. They had two 'Dutch' parents, who allowed them to join in school trips. Her sister was even allowed to have a love relationship with a Dutch boyfriend. Aysel's parents, who made Aysel quit school to help at home, became the biggest advocates of education for their grandchildren. Parents had become more progressive, partly as a result of the struggles with their older children and the conclusion that their children's lives had turned out well, partly because of the evaporation of the prospect of return, and partly because of the increased importance of educational degrees.

*Co-ethnic community*

Participants occasionally mentioned the broader co-ethnic community. A few participants mentioned that successful co-ethnics are treated with suspicion by 'the co-ethnic community'. People such as Rotterdam mayor Aboutaleb or rapper Ali B are commonly regarded with distrust. Ethnic minority people in prestigious positions are often not taken seriously by co-ethnics, as they are considered too good, too slick or too Dutch. Thus, for social climbers, the balance can be intricate, as they risk alienation or ostracism from co-ethnics.

While some participants walk a tightrope to protect their belonging as 'successful' Moroccan or Turkish Dutch, other participants seem less inclined to adapt their behavior in order to protect their belonging among co-ethnics. These participants keep a certain distance to 'the co-ethnic community' in anticipation of receiving contempt triggered by their 'too Dutch' life style, or out of fear that rumors will reach their parents. These participants expect that co-ethnics are less modern and have nothing in common with them. Karim feels a disconnection that makes him distance himself from certain Moroccan Dutch or Muslims. Aside from Karim, I primarily encountered this attitude in interviews with (some) female participants. A possible explanation is the stricter behavioral norms for women, who then are more likely to deviate from what is considered appropriate for a 'good' Moroccan/Turkish/ Muslim woman. See the telling quote of a (completely anonymized) female participant:

At that time, I was kind of allergic to anything Moroccan. There was this group [of Moroccan-Dutch students] – that I always avoided. I feared they would be narrow-minded and would denounce me; for example because I smoked, and because I fell for Dutch boys – and that they would pass on information about me to my parents. The Moroccan community is only a small world. I still have that, actually. I don't like this close involvement. I prefer to live more anonymously, more individually.

Not all reflections on the co-ethnic community were negative. Some participants described their feelings at a later age, when they experienced an increasing need to strengthen and develop their bonds with their ethnic background and with co-ethnics. They started to miss something that felt essential to them – the 'ethnic part' of themselves. This is an important theme in the interviews, which will be further discussed in the next chapter.

For some, their co-ethnic (re-)orientation shapes their societal engagement. The situation of the co-ethnic next generation is still characterized by arrear and inequality, and negative ethnic stereotypes are still widespread, so it feels like their responsibility to 'give back' and help bridge the differences. Participants do voluntary work with co-ethnic youth, support their nieces and nephews, work in

diversity management, start social initiatives and contribute to public discussions on integration.

### *Co-ethnic peers*

Co-ethnic peers play a large role in the adult lives of most participants. Most participants have many close friends who share their ethnic background. In addition, these friends also share the participants' high education level. These co-ethnic, co-educational friendships form an important theme, which is further explored in the next chapter. Siblings were only mentioned sporadically in the context of the participants' adult lives.

### **Reflection and responses (and an increased wish to belong)**

Contrary to their accounts of childhood, participants' reflections on co-ethnic relationships in their current lives focused less on dissonance and more on consonance and belonging, particularly when they spoke of their parents. This does not mean that their worldviews and normative stances are aligned with those of their parents. Rather, the participants highly value their relationships with their parents. Much effort is taken to secure and nurture these bonds and bridge disagreements. Out of love and consideration with their parents, participants evade confrontations and discussions on divergent stances ('concealed'), or participants conform to their parents' wishes, when these are about less-essential topics, for example visiting family at religious holidays. Some participants try to – in a sense – take their parents along in their lives ('convince'). For important issues, the main strategies employed were concealing and convincing instead of conformism and confrontation, which were the strategies participants often employed in their youth. This had to do with their increased independence, on the one hand, and with respect and love for their parents, on the other hand.

The shift in parent-child relationships, from more dissonant to more consonant, when children grow up, is probably common to parent-child relationships in general. However, the accounts interestingly contrast with the experiences of ethnic majority climbers. In both Dutch and international literature on the social mobility of ethnic majority climbers (see Brands 1992; Lubrano 2004; Matthys 2010), alienation from parents and family is a major theme. In their process of social mobility, climbers outgrow their parents and 'leave' them 'behind'. One of Brands' participants described melancholically:

Some people come to equal footing with their parents, despite occasional conflicts. They can really fight. They can really have a conflict. Whereas people like me outgrow our parents, and are not even capable of having a fight anymore. There is no way back. We are not even allowed to have conflicts anymore. Even a bad relationship is beyond reach. It becomes a non-relation. (Brands 1992: 295, translation MS)



In contrast, alienation from parents was not a major theme in my interviews, although in nearly all cases, there was a huge distance between the participants' life worlds and those of their parents. A possible reason is that they did not want to speak negatively about their parents. Another reason is that participants did not have much to say about alienation simply because the gap with their parents has always been self-evident. As children of immigrants, they have never known otherwise. Ever since they could remember, there was a gap between their life worlds and those of their parents. They had always been more socially adept than their parents, who often needed support from their Dutch-speaking children to navigate their ways through Dutch society. When I ask Berkant to reflect on this interpretation, he explains:

Yes that's true. Actually, we only continue the situation we have known since our youth. For example, when my parents joined me at school and asked ME what the teacher said. Then you were the interpreter for your parents. The relationship with your parents had always been kind of weird. From very early on, your parents were not able to help you with your homework, with your issues, they just wouldn't understand. (Berkant)

This means that the gap with parents among second generation immigrant climbers is not primarily a consequence of their social mobility, nor is it specific to immigrant children with higher of education levels. It is present among many immigrant children, particularly those with low-capital backgrounds, since they acted as intermediaries for their parents from early childhood (Orellana 2001; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001; Pels and De Haan 2003). Some participants explained that their high education level and social achievements even helped reduce their alienation from their parents. Their success gave them 'extra credits' and helped bridge the existing gap. Their achievements increased their parents' trust and led to an increased acceptance of their identities and their choices, contributing to a closer bond and to more leeway. Hicham's quote illustrates this:

Look, they [my parents] saw that, since I was young, I have been concerned with issues of identity. And, since I was very young, I have also been an active Muslim. In combination with success at school, and in society, etcetera, this leads to extra praise, to let's say extra credits. This shows them that you behave differently and make different choices, while being very open about it. There is no pressure on me to change things because – especially now, but also ten years ago – they see me as someone equal to them. I think this is rather unique. Nevertheless, I see this happening more and more among the higher educated; that societal success gives you the credit that enables you to shape your identity in the ways you want. (Hicham)

Many of the participants expressed feelings of deep respect for their parents. Even though feelings of esteem, loyalty and gratitude are also present among ethnic majority climbers (Matthys 2010), these seem to be deeper among the children of immigrants because of the immigrant trajectory. Most participants hold their parents in great esteem, partly because of their parents' sacrifices and the hardships they endured as immigrants who wanted to give their children better futures. As we saw above, this 'immigrant narrative of struggle and sacrifice' contributed to feelings of responsibility towards their parents. Karim explains this feeling:

(...) this made me feel guilty – well... maybe that's too strong... but it gave me feelings of – well...– um – INCREDIBLE loyalty towards your parents, because, they have been tremendously DEDICATED to you. (...) I admired their attitudes; because as people without much education, who have not visited many countries – that they have this mentality to go for it and get the best out of it... That must have been really hard! Been really difficult! (Berkant)

For many participants, not only the bond with their parents, but also the emotional bond with co-ethnics and the broader co-ethnic community is stronger than in their childhoods. Many of their best friends have a co-ethnic background (and a high education level). Several participants are actively involved in activities that intend to support the next generation and help improve the image of Moroccan and Turkish Dutch in the Netherlands. However, relations with the co-ethnic community are not only described in consonant terms. Participants feel that many co-ethnics are less modern and experience a considerable risk of being accused of acting 'too Dutch'.

Literature on ethnic minorities helps us to further understand the complexity of belonging among co-ethnics. It explains why belonging to a minority community often requires a conformism that can be nauseating at times and why community membership simultaneously presents many benefits. It is not only ethnic majorities, but also ethnic minority groups who think in essentialist stereotypes, as thinking in stereotypes promotes intra-group cohesion and solidarity, particularly when ethnic minority groups feel threatened (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears and Doosje 1999; Song 2003). These stereotypes function as behavioral scripts and as bases for judgments of 'ethnic authenticity'. Anyone who does not comply with the norms risks being accused of 'acting white' (see e.g. Waters 1994) or being a 'coconut' (being 'white' on the inside), leading to condemnation or even ostracism: a denial of belonging. These scripts are often gendered and often contain downward leveling norms (Portes 1998). When the scripts are strict and there are high levels of social control, they can be very restricting, particularly when they do not correspond with the preferences of the individual or when they hamper one's social mobility. At the same time, adherence to these scripts can

provide a sense of belonging, social acceptance, unity and membership, and they can offer access to family support and other resources through extra-familial networks. It can be pleasant if you have a claim to distinctive ways of talking, dressing, interacting, eating (Song 2003: 41, 54-55). Belonging to a co-ethnic community can contribute to a sense of self-determination and security about who you are.

#### **6.4 Interethnic sphere at present. General climate and work setting**

The interethnic sphere is an important sphere. This is where the impact of the Dutch integration debate is felt most. When participants showed agitation and frustration, this was when they reflected on their positions in broader society. These reflections also often contained ambiguities, which I found confusing. Therefore, this section about the interethnic sphere in the participants' current lives is by far the longest section of this chapter. I first describe how the participants perceive 'the general debate', which they learn through the media. I then focus on how they reflect on their direct interactions with interethnic others, such as colleagues. How do the participants feel and position themselves? Just like in the discussions of the other spheres, we see also here that relationships are not only consonant or dissonant, but that how participants reflect on their positions and relationships is more nuanced. This complexity leads to puzzling paradoxes, which I try to disentangle, and which appear crucial for understanding the positioning and identification of the participants in interethnic settings. This discussion uncovers the important mechanism of classification resistance. In the second half of this section, I show that in situations of dissonance and exclusion the same four strategies can be employed that I described before: confront, conceal, convince and conform.

##### *The general debate*

All participants experienced the Dutch integration debate as exclusionary. In chapter 4 we saw that in spite of the multiplicity of voices in politics and the media, a widespread culturalist image of 'Moroccans', 'Turks' and 'Muslims' has emerged. This image clearly trickled down to the participants. All participants perceive the dominant discourse as offensive to people with Moroccan, Turkish and Islamic backgrounds, pushing them into second-class status. They feel that Moroccans and Turkish Dutch are portrayed as subordinate and as incapable and unwilling to fit into Dutch society. The participants feel subjected to intrusive and unlawful demands. Their perception is that over time, accelerated by the events at 9/11 and the murder of Dutch columnist Van Gogh, the tone has grown increasingly harsh, and there is less and less tolerance for multiple identifications. There is an imposed 'mono-identity', as one of the participants called it. The

exclusionary discourse is worrying, and it pushes people away, as the quotes of Nathalie and Karim illustrate:

Nathalie: Recently, Wilders stated that when you misbehave three times – that you should leave the country. Even when you are – um – a second generation immigrant... This implies... that when I misbehave THREE times that I then –  
Marieke: – had to 'return' to your country.  
Nathalie: WHERE WOULD THAT BE?? Where would that be? So... EVEN when you're born in the Netherlands...! How INSANE! What are we TALKING about?! What should I – ??

But it happens – when you hear people speak, on television or anything, about: 'The perpetrator is a Moroccan', then... I DO feel addressed, yes. Because I know... they also talk about... about ME, you know. WITHOUT even knowing me, knowing who I am, or where I grew up... When THEY say: 'Moroccans should be treated differently', I am – for THEM I am Moroccan, you know. They will look at me like: 'You have Moroccan parents. Well, yes, you also went to university, and did so and so'. But this does not matter! It doesn't matter a fuck! ... When you have Moroccan parents, you should... – you know – ...you should integrate. You should speak the language. You should do this, you should do that, you know. And oh dear, when you... – You should be thankful in the first place, you know – thankful that you live in the Netherlands, because after all: 'We are such a civilized country. We only try to educate you, backward Moroccans, so that you will hopefully, once, also reach some level of civilization'. (Karim)

These quotes illustrate that participants not only experience the debate as a rejection of their ethnic category but also as a denial of their personal belonging in the Netherlands. They expressed their frustration with the labeling of entire social categories as problem groups. They are convinced that they do not fit the problematized definitions of Moroccan and Turkish Dutch, but they nevertheless feel addressed by these polarizing expressions. This feels extremely unjust and implies that they are not accepted as full-fledged citizens – and that they never will be, whatever they do and whatever they achieve. Based on these experiences, it is easy to understand that, as I indicated in chapter 4, the political side of belonging influences the personal side of belonging. Politics of exclusion affect the extent to which people feel at home.

Despite the exclusionary tone of the debate as experienced by the participants, overt discrimination by strangers-passing-by did not surface as a major theme in the interviews. Only a few instances were mentioned. When this occurred, it fed anger and frustration and confirmed the idea that there is a negative social climate for immigrants and their children. Nathalie recounted one 'utterly shocking' instance of such overt discrimination, when a driver of a passing car made a Nazi-salute. Hicham describes a moment when he was staying abroad for a year, which was similarly shocking:

(...) when you call home and your mother tells you she's been scolded and spit at, then something breaks inside. Like: Shit, please tell me this is NOT true... (Hicham)

### *Social interactions with familiar social others*

Interactions with others who are not strangers, such as colleagues, were described far more positively. Most participants described feelings of belonging in the context of their direct work (and other) environments. They explained that they feel accepted and do not feel different in general:

(...) at my work, I just feel like a consultant (Aysel).

I never felt – for example with job applications – that people thought: 'You're a foreigner' [*buitenlander*]. Never. NEVER. (Nathalie)

For ME... I felt that everybody around me was the same... or similar. I didn't think that others had a totally... totally different life, or so. (...) I think, I easily feel at home anywhere. (...) I ALWAYS belong. (Hind)

My friends are very white. That's just a consequence of my education - As the saying goes: 'what you touch shall defile you' - It's that simple. (Ahmed)

Most stressed the fact that they never experienced discrimination in their professional careers. Most participants have many friends with ethnic Dutch backgrounds and various ethnic minority backgrounds; which is a theme that will be further explored in the next chapter.

However, although in the reflections on these interethnic interactions, the participants often emphasized the consonant aspects, these reflections also contained numerous ambiguities. In the interviews, either spontaneously or in response to my probes, 'feeling different' popped up frequently, albeit in more implicit, anecdotal ways. Let us read part of Said's interview, where he talks about the relevance of his ethnic background for his professional work setting. What can we learn from his quotes? Does Said feel different because of his Moroccan background or not? Does his ethnic background make him stand out or not? Does his ethnicity matter at all or is it insignificant? Does he want it to matter, or is it annoying when his ethnicity is deemed relevant?

Said: The fact that you are Moroccan does play a role, actually. I recently attended a training in London, where, two or three times, I discussed the fact that I am Moroccan. I actually highlight it all the [time] – I am just PROUD of it (laughs apologetically but affirmatively). I find it important to – I WANT to show that you can be both Moroccan and successful. I want to, very deliberately, show that these two CAN be combined. Whenever I can, I also say I am a Muslim. Whenever I can I

say I celebrate the Ramadan. And whenever I can I say I regularly pray. And whenever I can I say that I... whatever – that I visit Morocco every year, for example. So, you know, I just try to make people realize: Wait, there's something wrong in that picture... To SHOW the right picture and to show that in your mind you are too black-and-white.

Said: This is very funny. It's weird. Recently, the course leader said to me at a leadership training: 'But YOU are the story! – you know. That you survive between all these partners, these solid, assertive, Dutch guys...!' This made me wonder: 'Is this really the case?' – Well, on the one hand it is true. He said: 'Was it difficult for you, to reach –' 'No', I said, 'not at ALL!' Well, but then... when you ask the same question to a woman... Yes, then it's also difficult. When you are just DIFFERENT from the average accountant. White. Bold. Grey. That you survive between them... That means something. Apparently. At the same time, many women leave the company when they have surpassed the managers' level. You see? So... is that culture then...? I'm not really like: culture... – Is this all about culture? I wanted to say: there are also many – well, ethnic Dutch who don't make it here.

Marieke: Do YOU feel different?

Said: No, I feel – That is the THING! That's why it kind of surprised me that this guy said: 'YOU are the story'. – WHAT: you are the story?? I've never had any problems or anything, here. Do I feel different? Well, no. I don't feel different at all, no. But sometimes.... Verrrry occasionally, you can feel it. But that was in 2001, with those attacks. When people asked you: what do YOU think about these bombings? Which made me think: well, what do I think about these bombings? Yes, then you're suddenly labeled differently, because then, suddenly, you ARE this Muslim. THEN you find out – on such occasions, THEN you find yourself thinking: Wait... I MIGHT think that I'm just a regular... well... just a regular consultant. But others obviously just see you as THAT woman. Or THAT girl. Or... THAT Moroccan for that matter. Or, whatever. That happens sometimes. That's just part of reality.

Marieke: But apparently, you do not experience this very often, because you refer to 2001. However, you also mentioned that recent training.... That you were addressed in such a way.

Said: Yes, exactly... Yes, but that is not in a negative way, because, obviously, this guy only had positive intentions.

Said: Recently, with a distant colleague – That's the thing... there is really no – This guy, he made some sort of 'joke', about Moroccans. Well, it was kind of funny – Well no, I actually didn't even like the joke (laughs). But I mean, those things happen regularly. So, I responded with a joke. Later, when I met him again, again he made a similar joke. So I jokingly said: 'Jeezz... you KEEP making the wrong jokes!' (laughs). Later, I spoke to him over the phone, about a Moroccan-Dutch colleague, who had been an entrepreneur. This guy says: 'Ha ha ha! He sure ran a shawarma place...!' (...) But for the rest, it was just a nice guy. He just doesn't understand that – well –

that he makes the wrong jokes. You know, it's not always discrimination, but people just don't get it...

As I discuss below, this account is confusing because of its apparent incongruities regarding the role of ethnic background and regarding feelings of belonging and differential treatment. Many of the participants' accounts were puzzling because, like Said, participants frequently seemed to contradict themselves. This surprised me, as all participants were highly reflexive, particularly about topics of ethnicity and exclusion, which made it likely that they would notice (and solve) real contradictions themselves. What happened at these moments? Were they referring to different aspects of belonging and identification? Or, did their interpretations of experiences vary during an interview? Were inconsistencies related to performative aspects: is one account told to merely describe events, whereas another is told to communicate a certain message? Are different parts of the stories meant to convey different messages? The analysis of the ambiguities in Said's interview and in the other interviews revealed four interesting paradoxes, which appeared crucial for understanding the role of minority ethnicity in interethnic situations.

- Paradox 1: Ethnic difference, but not 'different';
- Paradox 2: Exclusion, but no 'discrimination';
- Paradox 3: Ethnic self-identification, but aversion to ethnic ascription;
- Paradox 4: Awareness, but nevertheless employment of essentialist language.

*Paradox 1. Ethnic difference, but not 'different'.* Said emphasized that he does not feel different from his ethnic Dutch colleagues, which seems to imply that his ethnic background does not play a role in his professional context. At the same time, his ethnicity appears highly relevant, as he frequently seizes the opportunity in his 'white' working environment to highlight his ethnic and religious background. This is not as incongruous as it seems. Bringing forward his Moroccan and Muslim background does not mean he is dissimilar from his ethnic Dutch colleagues. It is the similarity, in particular, that makes him stress his ethnicity and religion. Because his status as professional makes him similar to his colleagues and accepted, he can show that being (partly) Moroccan and being Muslim does not matter in relevant ways. His success enables him to show that being 'Moroccan' as well as a practicing Muslim does not preclude a person from being a successful professional, fitting into the professional environment and being oriented towards Dutch society. It makes him the right person to challenge the widespread negative stereotypes about 'Moroccans' and Muslims. The fact that he has 'proven' himself and achieved a relatively secure financial and social status allows him to feel more confident about his minority ethnicity.

*Paradox 2: Exclusion, but no 'discrimination'.* Said's reflections on differential treatment are equally puzzling. Does he regularly experience exclusionary practices or not? At first glance, it seems Said does not experience discrimination. He did not label his colleague's bad jokes and the remark 'YOU are the success-story' as discrimination. He emphasized the point that the bad joke was 'not discrimination' and that the course leader had only positive intentions. To illustrate that he was sometimes treated differently, he gave no recent examples and fell back on a memory from 2001. Closer inspection reveals another interpretation of these instances. Said followed the statement that the bad joke was not discrimination with a 'but', implying a reassessment. Furthermore, how he challenged the statement that his trajectory exemplified a Moroccan success-story indicates that this 'compliment' invoked his resistance. The way that Said spoke about these occasions reveals that he would rather not be singled out. Being singled out is exclusionary, even if intentions are positive. Various other interviews illustrated how complex it can be to interpret the relevance of one's ethnicity for the situation at hand and to label situations as discriminatory. For example, being asked if she remembered an instance of discrimination, Hind mentioned that she once was singled out for a check for explosives at the airport. However, she immediately nuanced her interpretation of the anecdote as discrimination, as she let this description follow by a counterexample, illustrating that something similar happened to an ethnic Dutch colleague. Maybe she was selected randomly, and this situation had not been discrimination after all. What is felt as exclusion can differ between persons, as the following contrast between Karim and Hind shows. Karim explained that he always feels terribly excluded when he is invited for drinks. He hates receptions. He feels out of place and does not know how to behave, which he attributes to his Moroccan upbringing and the fact that he – 'unlike the Dutch' – does not drink alcohol. He sees having-drinks as an utterly 'Dutch' practice and perceives such an invitation as a 'test' to prove his Dutchness. Just like Karim, Hind does not drink alcohol, but for her, this has never been an issue. It did not stop her from attending parties and receptions and participating in a student sorority, and she never felt like an outsider because of this.

These examples show that (1) being singled out can be a negative experience in itself, even if the intention of the other is positive, and (2) it is difficult to interpret such instances of subtle Othering and to label them as discrimination. The relevance of an ethnic minority background can be complex for minority individuals to interpret. Do you feel singled out? Is there real evidence of exclusion because of your ethnicity (or religion)? Is it on purpose? Do you want to interpret the situation as exclusion? Dealing with subtle practices of Othering can be difficult because situations are often not clear-cut examples of overt exclusion. It can be hard to assess if a situation really is an instance of discrimination or if it is something that could happen to anyone. Such a situation



is even more ambiguous when the other person does not have negative intentions. The fact that the anti-racist discourse is marginalized in the Netherlands might also complicate the interpretation of exclusionary practices. We read in chapter 4 that raising issues of discrimination is often met with severe critique and little understanding. In addition to the fuzziness of a situation and the political marginalization of the anti-racist discourse, there are also psychological and social reasons for not labeling a situation as discrimination, such as a need to protect and enhance self-esteem and a desire to believe that the system is just and that one is treated fairly (Major and O'Brien 2005: 401). One might furthermore refrain from labeling a situation as discrimination to avoid being seen as 'overly sensitive', a 'complainer' or a 'victim'. It can feel inappropriate to complain when others offer a compliment or 'just' make a joke, even though such treatments can be annoying – or ambiguous at the least.

This being said, not all occasions are equally ambiguous, and not all participants are equally hesitant to label situations as exclusionary. Esra, for example, showed no reservation in labeling more implicit practices of Othering as exclusionary:

You stand out. The first thing people ask you – Like after September 11<sup>th</sup>, the first thing my colleague asked the next morning: 'Do you have any family in the United States?' All she wants is to talk about THAT... That really makes you realize that – I am not a Muslim... I'm not even raised as one. I KNOW I have my roots in a Muslim community, but I am not even religious myself. – And those attacks were carried out by Saudis... And then they ask ME... – That really is just an attempt to start a conversation. That makes me think: 'Halloooo... there's 12 or 14 million other people around here who possibly have family in the US...' Well, that just shows that you always... ARE... different.  
(Esra)

*Paradox 3: Ethnic self-identification, but aversion to ethnic ascription.* We saw that highlighting one's minority ethnicity does not necessarily mean that one feels different (paradox 1), and exclusionary practices are often not unambiguously interpreted as such (paradox 2). These points relate to another puzzling aspect in Said's story: the contrast between ethnicity in Said's own communication towards others and ethnicity in others' communication towards him. He explained that he frequently highlights his ethnicity and religion at his work place to disprove negative stereotypes. At the same time, when others refer to his ethnic background (for example in the 'success-story' compliment'), he explicitly questions and nuances the relevance of his background. Apparently, it feels different when one self-identifies in certain terms than when one is externally identified in these terms by someone else.

Participants are clearly reluctant to accept being addressed by others in terms of their minority identities, whether expressed in ethnic or religious terms.

Instances of what I call 'categorization resistance' pop up frequently in all interviews, independent of one's self-identification. Participants are critical of instances of being singled out based on their ethnicity or religion. They question the role of ethnicity when they feel 'culture' is automatically taken as the primary explanation of a social phenomenon. They stress the irrelevance of ethnicity and religion in particular occasions. More than once in the interviews, their choices for co-ethnic or co-religious friends or partners are labeled as 'coincidental'. There are various ways that participants seem to try to counterbalance the widespread focus on ethnicity.

What causes this classification resistance? How can we understand the participants' reluctance to accept being addressed by others in terms of their minority backgrounds, even when they themselves stress the importance of their ethnic backgrounds? Social psychologists Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears and Doosje (1999: 36) explain that being categorized against one's will, what they call 'categorization threat', can lead to depression and can actually harm the performances of people, particularly when corresponding group images are negative and connected to assumptions of poor ability (see also Ellemers, Spears and Doosje 2002; Meyer 2003; Major and O'Brien 2005). Ellemers and colleagues offer three explanations for the frustration caused by external categorization, which are useful for explaining the classification resistance among the participants in my study. Their explanations are (1) one is pre-judged in terms of one's category membership instead of seen as a unique individual and judged on personal characteristics and merits; (2) the particular categorization is irrelevant to the actual situation, or one feels that additional categorizations should also be taken into account; and (3) a lack of personal control when others impose a certain categorization. I show that these explanations also underlie the classification resistance encountered in my interviews. In addition, I suggest a related fourth explanation.

A main reason for classification resistance in the interviews is *prejudgment*. Participants prefer to be seen as holistic, multifaceted persons, with various individual strengths and weaknesses and not to be reduced to the singular image that accompanies the label 'Moroccan', 'Turk', 'Muslim' or 'foreigner'. See for example Karim's quote:

There's no one who appreciates me for who I AM... And now [as successful minorities] we simply have changed into new stereotypes – just like before, you know. We are still not people. (...) this ethnic identity suddenly becomes your real identity, you know. (Karim)

It is particularly disturbing to be reduced to a singular image when a label is connected to negative stereotypes (Goffman 1990 [1963]), as is the case in the

Netherlands, where the labels ‘Moroccan’, ‘Turk’ and ‘Muslim’ have negative connotations and are all used in opposition to being Dutch. These labels are used to label minorities as outsiders and to emphasize their supposed affiliation with co-categorical others. Such prejudgments happen, for example, when participants are asked what they ‘as Moroccans’ think of a ‘Moroccan’ thief or how they ‘as Muslims’ see the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Rejecting the label is a way to reject accompanying insinuations and expectations and to resist being equated with an entire category.

The second reason for classification resistance in the interviews is *inaccuracy* (resembling the second explanation of Ellemers and colleagues). In Dutch politics and media, ‘culture’ and ‘religion’ are often taken as explanations for a wide range of social problems, such as criminality, obnoxious street youth, gender inequality and homophobia. Participants seem to be aware of this mechanical culturalist view, this ‘ethnic lens’. As it tends to obscure more relevant social mechanisms, participants counter this ethnic lens. They carefully consider whether particular events really can be explained by ethnicity and religion (and really need to be labeled ‘Moroccan’ or ‘Islamic’) or if other social mechanisms offer more accurate explanations. Remember Emirs critical reflection on the relevance of (ethnic minority) culture in explaining failings and successes in his professional field:

(...) is that culture then...? I’m not really like: culture... – Is this all about culture? (Said)

The third reason for classification resistance is *denial of agency*. The previous explanations for classification resistance do not explain why participants resist external identification when they assert their identifications in the same terms. Ellemers and colleagues provide an insightful explanation: the reduction of individual agency. The external ascription of a specific label deprives individuals of the freedom to present themselves as they want to, which can feel highly uncomfortable. Classification resistance can be an effort to resist external coercion and maintain control over one’s own image and position.

The fourth reason for classification resistance, which I add to the three explanations of Ellemers and colleagues, is *denial of belonging*. This is related to the first and the third point, but I think it needs to be mentioned separately. A strong downside of external identification is that you are appointed the position of the Other, so you are not classified as one of ‘us’. This denial of belonging not only occurs when one is labeled as ‘Moroccan’ by ethnic Dutch but also when one is labeled as (too) ‘Dutch’ by Moroccan Dutch. Classification resistance can be a reaction to exclusion, an effort to claim one’s belonging.<sup>iv</sup>

*Paradox 4. Awareness, but nevertheless employment of essentialist language.* After the discussion of the third paradox of classification resistance, we came to the last

paradox in the interviews: the use of ethnic labels. All participants (except for two, who occasionally used 'Moroccan-Dutch'/'Turkish-Dutch') employed the labels 'Moroccan', 'Turkish' and 'Dutch' in reference to other people without considering it problematic. This is surprising, considering the participants' awareness of the overly simplistic and polarizing use of ethnic categories in the dominant discourse and their resistance to being pushed into ethnic categories. My own, sometimes slightly awkward, attempts in the interviews to refer to 'Moroccan-Dutch', 'Turkish-Dutch', 'Dutch with a Moroccan or Turkish background' and 'children of immigrants' did not affect this use. (Later I decided to take over the terminology of each participant.) The participants even applied these straight ethnic labels to themselves, although they sometimes disputed the applicability of the same labeling at other moments in the interview. The following quotes of Aysel and Ahmed illustrate the ambiguous language use:

Marieke: Because... – What is for you... – Because you say: I am Turkish... – Are you... more Turkish than Dutch...? Or can't I say such a thing...?

Aysel: No, I think – Well, that somehow depends on – In Turkey I feel more Dutch, and in the Netherlands I feel more Turkish; let's phrase it THIS way.

(...)

Marieke: And about being Dutch... Do you think – when you just speak for yourself – that your jobs and education have made you more or less Dutch?

Aysel: These questions are really not the questions that occupy my mind. It's not important. (...) I simply don't consider such issues! These are not the questions – It is NOT interesting: Am I more Turkish or Dutch?

Ahmed: You really shouldn't ask me: do you feel more Dutch or Moroccan. That's really nonsense.

(...)

Ahmed: (...) if I had to place my identification on a scale with two extremes, I think I would be at the very Dutch end.

Why do the participants apply these labels in essentialist ways, if they are conscious of the constructed character and of the possibly harmful implications of doing so? The mixing of more essentialized and de-essentialized terms appears to be a broader phenomenon. Among the various immigrant communities in the London Southall neighborhood that he studied, Baumann notices a similar mixing of reifying and de-essentializing language, which he calls 'double discursive competence' (1996). The Southall people alternately employed a 'dominant' discourse, in which ethnic categories were equated with social groups, and each group was identified with a reified culture, and a 'demotic' discourse, which had developed among the people themselves and was used to renegotiate 'culture' and 'community' (ibid.: 188). The Southallians reified and at the same time undid their reifications (Baumann 1999: 140). Baumann offers various explanations for this double discursive competence that can help us understand the double

discursive competence among the Moroccan and Turkish Dutch participants. The explanations that are most applicable in my case are the psychological tendency and the political and social currency. As we have read in chapter 2, people have a general tendency to categorize in order to make sense of the world (1996: 193). This means that participants use reified language because this (partly) reflects how they perceive the world. In addition, the participants do not have an alternative language at their disposal for communicating with others. Reified ethnic categories are dominant ingredients of the language that is available for making sense of the world. As Baumann explains in the Southall case, the essentialist discourse is the 'hegemonic language', favored by dominant institutions and agents, which therefore forms the 'currency' within which ethnic minorities must deal with the establishment (ibid.: 192). This means that the language used in the general discourses, both among ethnic majorities as well as among ethnic minorities, makes it nearly impossible for the participants not to think and talk in the straight categories 'Moroccan', 'Turkish' and 'Dutch'.

The critical awareness of the essentialization of ethnic categories does not extend to culture in the same way. Whereas the participants seem to acknowledge that 'the Moroccan' or 'the Turk' does not exist, we saw in the previous chapter that they speak in un-reflexive terms about what is typically 'Dutch' (e.g. individuality, professionalism) and what is typically 'Moroccan' or 'Turkish' (e.g. hospitality, emotionality, social connectedness). Baumann presents a similar observation: 'In the parlance of most Southallians, the meaning of *culture* is not nearly as negotiable as the meaning of community (...) Most Southallians are in most contexts hesitant to use the word *culture* in its de-essentialized sense' (1996: 196, italics in original). Baumann explains that the definition of an ethnic group relies on what is seen as its culture. Applying this to my case, I would say that participants do not deconstruct culture like they (sometimes) do with identifications because in order to expose varieties and changes in identifications, they need anchored concepts to compose their argument. How can you claim you are only '*partly* Moroccan' when 'Moroccan' does not have a fixed meaning?

### **Reflection and responses (to subtle practices of 'Othering')**

How participants feel and identify in social settings such as their work places, is a complex issue. In contrast to how they described the interethnic relations in their childhoods, which were largely described in terms of dissonance and non-belonging, most participants indicate they have not (often) experienced overt discrimination in adulthood, and they feel they belong in their professional environments. However, this emphasis on consonance does not mean that there are not (subtle) practices of exclusion. Participants are often labeled as 'Moroccan' or 'Turkish', which is disturbing, even though (or rather: because) these practices are often ambiguous and subtle. Such instances of external categorization reduce individuals to a singular identity, suggest a prioritization of cultural explanations,

deny personal agency and emphasize the individual's non-belonging to the context at hand or to the Netherlands in general.

Interestingly, ethnic Dutch climbers describe similar feelings of insecurity about their belonging in their middle-class work environments, even without a minority ethnicity. A perceived gap in social and cultural capital, communication, presentation and knowledge makes ethnic Dutch climbers feel different from their middle-class colleagues (Brands 1992; Matthys 2010). These climbers feel especially rejected when middle-class others are ignorant about life-worlds that are different from than their own, as this shows that the middle-class standards are the undisputed norm and underlines the climbers' deviation (Matthys 2010: 334).

A set of responses to unwanted external categorization emerges from the interviews, paralleling the responses I described before (conform, convince, conceal and confront; which I discuss here in reverse order).<sup>v</sup> These responses roughly resemble the responses to unwanted categorization identified by Ellemers and colleagues (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears and Doosje 1999; Ellemers, Spears and Doosje 2002), which are (1) challenging the presumed stereotypical relation between category membership and behavior (similar to 'convincing' and 'confronting'), (2) 'disidentification' with the category of the ascription (concealing), and (3) strengthening one's identification with the category of the external ascription (conforming).

*(1) Confront: challenge the external categorization.* One way to respond to unwanted external categorization is to explicitly challenge or deny the exclusively ethnic identification. This can be done by refusing the ethnic label – as we have seen in the discussion of 'categorization resistance'. Another way is explicitly emphasizing one's Dutchness. Such claims of Dutchness occur in the interview with Adem who underlines the indisputability of his Dutchness in what seems to be a reaction to the (implicit) suggestion that he is not Dutch:

Marieke: When I ask you: 'Are you Dutch?' What would you say?

Adem: Um.... I am – Well... That JUST depends on what you call Dutch, doesn't it??

Marieke: What do YOU call Dutch?

Adem: I feel I do MORE than enough for THIS country, more than the average Dutch person. And I would defend this country MORE than enough. And I DO. So, when THIS is the condition for being Dutch, I am Dutch for one thousand percent. (Adem)

Another way to challenge the supposed singular character of identification is to challenge the stereotypical idea that identification as Dutch and Moroccan/Turkish are mutually exclusive by stressing one's 'bi-culturality' and explaining the value of 'bi-culturality'.

I feel REALLY blessed in that respect. I really feel blessed that I have two countries where I can live, and that I feel at home in both countries. That's a REAL privilege. (Berkant)

(2) *Conceal: avoid external categorization by disidentification.* Another set of responses aims to entirely avoid the unwanted external categorization as ethnic. To avoid being Othered, some try to hide or de-emphasize their minority identity in order to 'pass' for a member of a different category. We have seen that these strategies were common for many participants during their childhood, when they wanted to downplay or even conceal their ethnicities. Yet, as we saw in the discussion on classification resistance, in their adulthood, participants sometimes refrain from labeling themselves as Turkish or Moroccan. Karim's quote shows that he made a deliberate move from emphasizing to de-emphasizing his minority identity:

Karim: After a while, I was done with being a minority. Just like my friend. (...) We felt that we became like stereotypes... instead of real people...

Marieke: And then you kind of 'undid' your minority status?

Karim: Then, I undid my minority status. Um... yes, over time I did so.<sup>vi</sup>

A way to de-emphasize one's ethnicity is to designate the ethnic categorization as irrelevant to the situation at hand by stressing other dimensions, such as one's professional identity, as have already seen with Aysel:

– In Turkey I feel more Dutch, and in the Netherlands I feel more Turkish; let's phrase it THIS way. But at my work, I just feel like a consultant (Aysel).

Another approach for designating the ethnic categorization as irrelevant is pointing to one's individuality, emphasizing the futility of categorizing people:

Well... you just switch somewhat, you know. You want – At some moments you really strive to belong. Then you want to be EITHER Dutch OR really Moroccan. At other moments, you feel extremely rebellious and you think: 'You know what? NEVER MIND! I am who I am. I just don't care. It's a bit of a compromise...' (Karim)

Well... I'm not like a standard employee or anything. I somewhat divert from the standard. But that's fine. They have to take me as I am (...). I am Moroccan and Dutch. I am who I am, I cannot separate these things. (Imane)

(3) *Convince: challenge the applied stereotype.* Others take up the challenge. They try to influence the debate and change the widespread negative stereotypes. They publish articles, start social initiatives or enter 'white' bulwarks to bridge the gap between the ethnic minority and the rest of society. They try and 'convince' the

audience that the stereotypical assumptions are untrue and misleading. To show that negative stereotypes of the ethnic group are too negative and simplistic and certainly do not apply to all members of the specific category, it is crucial to highlight both one's ethnic minority background *and* one's success (measured against dominant standards). This is why – as we have read – Said accentuates his 'Moroccan' and 'Muslim' side whenever he can to show that these characteristics indeed can be combined with achieving success. This strategy of showing socially desired behavior to change negative stereotypes appears to be common. It is the most commonly applied behavior among the Moroccan Dutch students in the study of De Jong (2012: 79), and Ketner's Moroccan Dutch respondents also frequently employ this approach (2010).

Another way to challenge negative stereotypes is to 'play' with stereotypical images. The aim is to trigger critical reflection, to make the audience reconsider their simplistic assumptions by behaving in stereotypical ways with-a-twist...:

I remember, once – I was with friends in the train at peak hour, the train was packed – that we started to speak Dutch with such awful, faltering accents. ON PURPOSE, just to shock people. And meanwhile, we just said incredibly smart things, you know (both laughing). To trigger people, so they think: 'Huh??' You know. Just to, kind of, annoy them. To make them REALIZE: 'There's something wrong here... These kids are saying really intelligent stuff. But with an awful accent.' On purpose! (Said)

This is how I also interpret Said's sudden remark at the end of what had been a pleasant interview:

Well, what do you think of my Dutch?? Isn't it faultless?? (Said)

His remark amazed me and made me feel extremely uncomfortable, as it never occurred to me that as a higher educated person with a high status job he would not speak Dutch well, and I would never have wanted to make give him this impression. This remark might be seen as a cynical way to make me aware of the absurd presumptions he often encounters.

*(4) Conform: increase identification with the category of ascription.* The variety of responses demonstrates that individuals often have agency over how they identify in many situations. However, even though external categorizations do not entirely pin people down, individual agency is not unlimited. The influence of external categorizations can be extreme and often cannot be ignored. When external categorizations happen, they need to be dealt with in one way or the other. Categorizations can be overwhelming, and attempts to challenge these might simply seem futile. People do not always feel the freedom or have the energy to challenge them. In those cases, conforming to them – at least in how you present yourself – might seem like the best option. It is a way to protect one's



self-esteem (Ellemers, Spears and Doosje 2002). Consequently, noted by others participants sometimes present themselves according to the ascribed ethnic label, even if they do not (entirely) feel this way. This is also observed in other studies, see for example Omlo (2011), Van der Welle (2011), De Jong (2012), Eijberts (2013). Ahmed explains:

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

The pressure to identify in a certain way can also lead to an increased identification with the ethnic or religious identity on a deeper level, for example, when focusing on being Turkish, Moroccan or Muslim makes one more conscious of one's minority ethnicity and religion. Rumbaut calls this a 'reactive ethnicity' (2008). This is also what De Koning (2008) and Ketner (2009, 2010) notice in relation to religious identification among Moroccan Dutch youth. The social importance of ethnicity (or religion) may lead one to further explore these identities, and it can make these identifications more salient, as Hicham's quote illustrates:

Before, people were much less aware of their being Moroccan or Muslim, they possessed multiple identities. It was more dynamic; it was just how you felt at a particular moment. In the afternoon, at the snack bar with your peers, you use slang, while in the evening with your mom, you speak Berber. Currently, it happens that one identity becomes more and more prominent. That you are Moroccan or Muslim becomes imprinted as the most prominent identity. I feel pushed into this identity, by people questioning me about it, or write about it in the papers, and those who study the second and third generation, whatever. That makes me think about my identity and wonder: 'What actually IS my identity?' Then I suddenly have to make decisions, whereas, before, my identity was like: it all fits together. (...) Now it seems like some sort of a make-or-breakpoint. It is almost like: 'Take it or leave it, it belongs with me and it's important to me'. Things that you were not aware of, previously, become more and more important. (Hicham)

External pressure can also lead to an increased association with a co-ethnic or co-religious community. Bouchra explained that as a result of her experiences of exclusion from Dutch society, she only feels truly welcomed and accepted by the worldwide Islamic community (Ummah).

On an even deeper level, being categorized as 'Moroccan' or 'Turkish' and as 'non-Dutch' can lead to the internalization of this view and to a weakening identification as Dutch. When people do not feel accepted for who they are, this might lead to a reconsideration of their belonging in Dutch society and doubts

about their futures is in the Netherlands. Will they and their children really be happy here? Aysel's feelings of belonging changed over time:

(...) For a long while, I thought: 'We are Dutch... This society is ours...'. Fortuyn's murder sort of – I started to realize: 'You are an immigrant and you will remain one, FOREVER. Whatever happens'. (...) So I told my children: 'You might THINK that you can be like Jan or Piet [which are typically Dutch names], but you should really know: If you're involved in something – in the bus, or on a street corner – you are much more likely to be seen as a troublemaker than Piet or Jan... Always be aware of your position in a society.' (Aysel)

Sometimes, the idea that one is 'Moroccan' and therefore is not-Dutch is even too internalised to be problematized, as Hind's quote illustrates:

I KNOW I'm darker and everything, but I am not fully aware of it myself... (laughs). Sometimes, when I am abroad, I happen to say: 'I'm Dutch'. Then they respond with: 'Are you DUTCH??' 'Um, no, sorry, sorry, sorry, I am Moroccan...' (laughs). You know... that I just forget for a moment... (Hind)

The occurrence of this response of 'conforming', when ethnic labeling by others leads individuals to apply the label to themselves or even to further strengthen their broader co-ethnic orientation, shows the reverse (or perverse) effect of the culturalist and emotive integration discourse. The consistent labeling of immigrants and their offspring as the ethnic Other, often leads them to identify as such. This then forms yet another reason for exclusion, as all citizens are required to feel Dutch and identify as Dutch in order to belong (see also Duyvendak and Slootman 2011). Other studies show that feelings of exclusion hampers national identification (Ersanilli 2009; Georgiadis and Manning 2012) This illustrates how the personal side of belonging, feelings of belonging is affected by that other side of belonging, the politics of belonging.

## **6.5 The role of education, ethnicity, gender, generation and religion**

It is clear by now that the participants' self-identifications need to be understood in their social contexts. How others see and approach them affects the participants' feelings of belonging and therefore affects how they position themselves in particular situations. Hence, how individuals present themselves in particular situations is not only based on a 'cognitive component' (the individual's independent, autonomous affiliations). The interviews show that there is also a 'strategic component', based on interactions with the social other, the 'audience' (see Goffman 1959; Barreto, Spears, Ellemers and Shahinper 2003). A range of responses is available when the audience exerts strong behavioral

expectations or ascribes a certain label, and when this endangers one's position of belonging because the stances of the individual and the social other are dissonant. These responses – confronting, concealing, convincing and conforming – vary in terms of how an individual balances one's independent preferences with one's belonging. Although external demands and ascriptions can be fierce, and personal agency can be (severely) limited, individuals rarely completely lack agency.

Obviously, no individual and no context is the same. Nevertheless, the interviews reveal trends that are indicative of the roles that social mobility, ethnicity, gender, generation and religion, play in various cases. I will show in this section, based on the empirical material presented in this chapter, that social mobility affects social bonds and responses in unexpected ways. Furthermore, I will argue, based on the comparison with ethnic majority climbers, that the role of minority ethnicity is smaller than is often assumed, even by many of the participants themselves. I will also briefly touch upon the roles of gender, ethnicity (having a Moroccan versus Turkish background) and generation. The section concludes with a note on the meaning of religion in the context of ethnicity and ethnic identification.

*The role of social mobility. Refuting common assumptions*

High levels of education and a middle-class status shape the participants' belonging and their self-identifications in particular ways. Social mobility makes the participants feel that they have proven themselves as valuable individuals, as citizens and as ethnic minority citizens in particular (see also Buitelaar 2009: 53). They have proven themselves to themselves, their families and to the broader society. Achieving a higher education level and a middle-class status seem to enhance belonging, creating special opportunities, both in co-ethnic and interethnic contexts.

As explained in the theoretical chapter, classical theories on incorporation predict that socioeconomic advancement among ethnic minorities generally leads to weaker ethnic identification and an increasing gap with co-ethnics. This chapter offers no support for this view. The participants did not experience an unequivocally widening gap with co-ethnics due to their social mobility. For them, as (the eldest) children of Moroccan and Turkish immigrants, a gap between their own life worlds and those of their parents had always been a given. Ever since they were young, they had been more oriented to and familiar with Dutch society than their parents, regardless of their rising education levels. Contrary to the predications based on classical integration theories, but also contrary to experiences of ethnic Dutch social climbers, the participants' social advancement did not further increase the gap with their parents. Instead, their educational achievements helped to somewhat bridge the gap. Their achievements made their parents proud and increased their parents' trust in them. It even helped to

slightly increase the freedom their parents allowed them. In other words: their social mobility can be seen to contribute to their belonging among co-ethnics. (This is particularly true for the relations with parents, as participants sometimes confront suspicion from other co-ethnics.) Additionally, as we have seen, and as I discuss further in the next chapter, processes of social mobility did not generally result in a weak ethnic identification or a distancing from co-ethnics. Instead, many participants showed an increasing ethnic identification after their process of mobility and had many co-ethnic (and higher educated) friends.

With respect to interethnic contexts, it is widely assumed – in line with classical integration theories – that higher education leads to assimilation and belonging. This is also the case among Moroccan Dutch students who hope that climbing the social ladder will finally lead to their acknowledgement as valuable citizens (De Jong 2012). However, the idea that social mobility makes ethnic minority backgrounds irrelevant needs nuancing. First of all, the interviews show that being higher educated does not prevent feelings of exclusion. Most participants regularly experience subtle practices of Othering. These practices are complicated to interpret and respond to, but they nevertheless feel exclusionary. This is particularly frustrating because the participants themselves do not differ. They feel similar to others in their environment, such as their colleagues. They feel Dutch and are skilled professionals. They do not differ from others in any aspect relevant to the situation at hand. Despite these experiences of dissonance, the participants primarily reflect on their daily interethnic interactions in terms of belonging.<sup>vii</sup>

Secondly, it appears that a high education level makes it especially important to articulate one's ethnic minority background in interethnic settings. As social climbers, the participants are in a particular position that enables them to challenge negative stereotypes, to prove them wrong. Their successful position (measured against dominant social standards) makes them appointed persons to challenge negative stereotypes and to show that being 'Moroccan', 'Turkish' or active 'Muslim' does not preclude social mobility and full participation in society. Their position as social climbers increases the chances that they are heard and taken seriously. It not only instills in them some sort of responsibility to highlight their ethnicity, but also *enables* them to highlight their ethnicity. Given the acceptance based on their achieved positions, the minority climbers can accentuate their 'deviant' characteristic without immediately threatening their position of belonging. This leads many ethnic minority members to sometimes highlight their ethnic background, not despite – but *because of* their positions as social climbers.

*The role of minority ethnicity. Exposing an ethnic lens*

The comparison with ethnic majority climbers made throughout the chapter reveals many interesting parallels with the stories of the second generation Moroccan and Turkish climbers, which nuance the role of ethnicity. We have seen that it is not only ethnic minority climbers who struggle with their belonging on two sides. Both in the contexts of their family and in their school and work environments, ethnic majority climbers face very similar struggles. As children, ethnic majority climbers also felt the ambiguous pressures from their parents to succeed on the one hand, but to stay close and not become alienated on the other hand. They have to deal with a similar gap between their life worlds and the life worlds of their parents. And like many of the ethnic minority climbers, ethnic majority climbers often feel out of place in their school and work-settings. Interestingly, in these struggles of belonging, educational success is also a means of attaining belonging for ethnic majority climbers. Educational achievements form a way of proving both to their classmates and to themselves that they indeed belong at that school (Brands 1992: 119). Again in their later lives, professional achievements help to counter the uncomfortable perception that one is seen as an intruder (1992: 233).

This suggests that the prominence of ethnicity as a sole explanation for feelings of difference and struggles of belonging is overestimated. The unease at receptions forms a telling illustration. Remember that for Karim being invited to receptions felt like an outright confrontation with his Moroccan 'foreignness'. At these 'typically Dutch' receptions, he felt completely out of place, which he attributed to his Moroccan upbringing. However, not only (several of) my participants feel uneasy at receptions, ethnic Dutch climbers in Matthys' study share this unease (2010: 221, 327). They feel awkward and incapable of having informal conversations because of their unfamiliarity with the reigning communication codes at receptions. Apparently, others without ethnic minority backgrounds share the deep unease that Karim feels at receptions, which for him forms the ultimate demarcation of the boundary that separates him (having Moroccan parents) from 'Dutch society'. This suggests that in Karim's case, this unease is at least partly a consequence of his lower-class background. The similarities with ethnic majority climbers show that the 'ethnic explanation' for experiences of difference and non-belonging among ethnic minority climbers is partly a consequence of employing an ethnic lens.

*The role of gender and ethnicity. Revealing the relevance of generation*

Besides education level, how do other dimensions affect the belonging and identifications of the second generation climbers? What is the role of gender and of having a Moroccan or Turkish background? Do additional dimensions emerge as relevant? The central observation is that gender and the specific ethnic background are not relevant for the main arguments in this chapter. The parallel occurrence of consonance and dissonance, both in co-ethnic as well as in

interethnic settings, applies to both men and women and to participants with Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds. Regardless of gender and ethnicity, they aim for belonging in the various situations, and they have the same choice of approaches for responding to dissonance. In addition, the role of social mobility does not seem different for participants in these various categories.

This does not mean that gender and the specific ethnic minority background do not matter. The gendered images of a typical 'Moroccan' or 'Turk' do influence the experiences of second generation climbers. Many participants mentioned that female siblings have less freedom than male siblings or are less stimulated in their educational careers. However, when we look at the individual cases, the picture is more complex. Yes, the strictest upbringings were those of women, but also some men were raised relatively strictly. There were also women who experienced relatively more freedom, just like some of the male participants. Considering the different stereotypes of Moroccan/Turkish/Muslim women and men in the dominant integration discourse (as subordinate victims respectively as abusive perpetrators), it is surprising that in the interviews gender does not pop up as a major theme in interethnic contexts. Only Bouchra refers to the gendered prejudices she encounters.

Comparing the Moroccan Dutch with the Turkish Dutch participants, I observe two differences, in support of the literature describing the Turkish Dutch as generally more cohesive than Moroccan Dutch, and in support of the results of the previous chapter (that ethnic identification among Turkish Dutch on average is more substantive or 'thick'). Turkish Dutch participants grew up in close connection with children of befriended Turkish families. This contrasts with the stories of Moroccan Dutch participants, who did not report on such close co-ethnic family relations, even though their parents did seem to have connections with other co-ethnic parents. Nevertheless, a frequent interaction among Turkish Dutch children does not automatically imply that these were also close friends (as Esra told), nor that their presence fully alleviated the burdens of discrimination (Berkant). Furthermore, there is a difference in the use of the parental language, as the Turkish Dutch spoke Turkish much more frequently (both with siblings as well as with Turkish-Dutch peers) than the Moroccan Dutch. The main explanation is that the language landscape of the Moroccan Dutch is far less crystallized than the Turkish Dutch landscape (the Arabic language of the Quran differs from the Arabic that is the official language in Morocco, and the various indigenous peoples have different tribal languages, which for a long time have only existed in oral form). So, for Moroccan Dutch to speak with other Moroccan Dutch, they often resorted to Dutch. Moroccan Dutch siblings also spoke Dutch with each other, which can be interpreted as an expression of a stronger Dutch orientation among the Moroccan Dutch than among the Turkish Dutch participants.

Actually, it appears that generation matters more than gender and ethnicity. Many of the participants' experiences are characteristic of their growing up shortly after the moment of migration. Observing their parents' hardships and sacrifices, the looming expectation of return to Morocco and Turkey, the parental inexperience in Dutch society and the lack of support, the relative strictness of their parents, but also the dominance of ethnic Dutch in their schools and neighborhoods (particularly at the higher education levels) and the lack of successful co-ethnic role models in Dutch society are all characteristic of the children of immigrants born around the moment of migration. The centrality of these immigration experiences distinguishes the 'early' second generation from the 'later' second generation. The later second generation, born roughly ten years later in the '80s, grew up further from the moment of migration. Their parents had become more progressive and attached more value to education. The later second generation was more likely to grow up in environments with larger shares of co-ethnics and peers with other ethnic minority backgrounds and grew up with the presence of co-ethnic role models. They also grew up in a different 'Zeitgeist', as over the years the tone of the integration debate has harshened.

*The role of religion. Commenting on a conflation of religion and ethnicity*

In line with the high correlation in the TIES data presented in Chapter 5, between ethnic and religious identification, in the interviews religious identification was often mentioned in the same breath as ethnic identification, both in relation to co-ethnic and interethnic contexts. The reason is that in both contexts the concepts of religion and ethnicity are closely intertwined. In the dominant integration discourse, ethnicity and religion are generally conflated; for example in the argument that 'Moroccans' and 'Turks' do not belong in the Netherlands because of their Islamic cultures. Because the ethnic and the religious labels are used in comparable ways to denote Otherness, the second generation climbers need to challenge both stereotypes at the same time.

In co-ethnic contexts, ethnic and religious concepts are also closely intertwined. Being a 'good' 'Moroccan' or 'Turk' often means that one is also a 'good' Muslim. For parents (as well as for many of the participants), being a 'good' Muslim often is even more important. This means that being a Muslim strongly contributes to belonging among co-ethnics. Ketner lucidly describes how this works among adolescents with Moroccan backgrounds (2009, 2010). She describes how Islam for them is not only a source of ideological inspiration but also an instrument that they use in negotiations with their parents. By showing that they are good Muslims and/or arguing that certain values are propagated in Islam (such as education, individual autonomy and participation in Dutch society), the adolescents manage to acquire more personal freedom and carve out their own routes and identities while they prevent alienation from their parents.

## 6.6 Summary and reflection

The answer to the question why second generation Moroccan and Turkish climbers identify as they do is partly: to respond to the social situation at hand. In this chapter we explored social relations, which were characterized by consonance or dissonance. Disagreement, either about behavioral preferences or about labels of identification, forms a possible threat to the individual's acceptance by that particular audience, threatening one's belonging. How one positions oneself in response is a balance between the pursuit of belonging and the pursuit of one's independent wishes. One can choose to conform to the demands of the other, to convince the other to change his stance, to pursue one's own independent wishes but conceal this, or to just confront the other by open pursuit of these wishes.

Even though in this chapter I have shown that individuals have agency in their self-identification, that – in Song's words (2003) – people do have ethnic options, it is important not to overestimate the individual agency and not to underestimate the influence of external actors. There is a danger when the image of 'victim' shifts to the image of 'resilient actor' that the responsibility for social oppression shifts from society to the individual, and that failures to cope are seen as personal rather than societal failings (Meyer 2003, p. 23). As is clear from this chapter, individuals are not free to choose whether or not to be subject to external pressures, whether from co-ethnics or others. In particular, the dominant integration discourse is felt as extremely exclusionary and insulting. Participants often feel judged 'as Moroccans' and 'as Turks' and measured along specific yardsticks. It is important to realize how social others limit and shape the individual's options, by granting or withholding appreciation, acceptance and the permission to belong. It would be unjust to hold the minority individual (entirely) responsible for their experiences and expressions of non-belonging, as feelings of belonging are strongly affected by politics of belonging. This is why the exclusivist discourse has reverse effects.

The findings show the inappropriateness of thinking in terms of ethnic 'ingroup' (characterized by consonance and belonging) and ethnic 'outgroup' (characterized by dissonance and non-belonging). We have seen that in both kinds of settings, strategies are needed to achieve belonging. It appears untrue that only among co-ethnics and not among interethnics there is need for belonging, as thinking in terms of ethnic 'ingroup' and ethnic 'outgroup' implies. In both kinds of settings, individuals strive to belong. Nor is it true that belonging among co-ethnics is self-evident and among interethnics is always disputed. Belonging among co-ethnics often needs to be negotiated, and in many interethnic situations, participants feel they belong. This theme of interethnic consonance will be further explored in the next chapter. Nor is it true that



'ethnicity' shapes experiences and dispositions in such a way that it is justified to think in internally homogenous and externally bounded groups. Other characteristics such as social mobility, gender and generation also affect the experiences of second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch. Besides the broader trends, it is important to acknowledge variations between individuals and even between contexts. All these findings warn against any form of 'groupist' thinking and against thinking in terms of a consonant ethnic 'ingroup' and a dissonant ethnic 'outgroup'.

The fact that co-ethnic relationships are not always consonant shows that minority individuals are not seamlessly immersed in homogeneous co-ethnic communities. Ethnic minority individuals are exposed to behavioral and other identificational expectations by co-ethnics, on which one's belonging as a respected member partially depends. In order to be able to recognize these mechanisms, it is important to consistently separate the individual level and the collective level. In addition to much of the empirical literature on ethnic minorities where the focus is on the group level, in more conceptual arguments, the individual and the collective levels are often confused. This is illustrated by the use of 'internal' and 'external' identification by Jenkins (2008a). This is an important case, as Jenkins provides a structured analysis of the concept of ethnic identity, and his use of the concepts of internal and external identification is very common. Even though he criticizes the 'misleading' 'homology between collective identity and individual identity' (2008: 55), he fails to apply this distinction in his definition of internal and external identification. Jenkins describes internal identification as 'an individual process or a collective, group process' and external identification as 'categorizations: of "us" by "them", and of "them" by "us"' (2008: 55, 171). Consequently, this analytical framework ignores a specific process of identification: the external identification of the individual by the 'own' (co-ethnic) group. Even though Jenkins states that he does not regard the individual and the group as one and the same, by using the same analytical concept 'internal definition' for self-definition on both levels, he suggests that the identification of the individual is equal to the identification of 'the group', thereby implying some sort of ('ingroup') homogeneity among co-ethnics, at least in terms of identification. This confusion or conflation of (minority) individuals and entire (minority) categories occurs in many studies, as Brubaker and Cooper also note (2000).

I have solved this confusion of individuals and categories by the use of 'internal' identification (which I called 'self-identification', or 'identification' for reasons of readability) exclusively in reference to the individual level. I have used 'self-identification' to refer to how one defines and positions oneself. 'External identification' (or 'labelling' or 'categorization') refers to all kinds of identity ascriptions by social others, whether these are co-ethnics or not. This requires

explicit mentioning of the relevant actors when discussing practices of external identification. Such mentioning of actors prevents a biased approach towards processes of identification, as it avoids the implicit assumption that a minority individual only (and always) feels unwanted identificational pressure in interethnic contexts and only (and always) feels acceptance and support in co-ethnic contexts.