



# Policing the Nation: Acculturation and Street-Level Bureaucrats in Professional Life

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## Abstract

Assimilation of migrants is assumed to happen through acculturation, which is depicted as neutral, unintended and invisible. In most accounts the role of social actors is pushed into the background, and the conditions that shape and determine the direction of the acculturation are ignored. A further critique of the acculturation concept is that the content of the conveyed culture is not disclosed nor are the outcomes hinted at. We argue that the concept of norm images redresses these criticisms by eliciting the cultural content and specifying the role of actors, that is, professionals, in the conveyance of culture. Using the example of the Amsterdam police force, we demonstrate that police officers impose crucial elements of the Dutch nationalistic discourse, specifically language and loyalty, on migrant citizens and migrant colleagues alike. Thus these police officers operate as reproducers of the social order cemented by Dutch nationalism.

## Keywords

acculturation, assimilation, ethnic minorities, nationalism, norm images, police culture, street-level bureaucrats

## Introduction

Assimilation is the dominant mode of incorporation for immigrants in the western world. In some cases, it is imposed by governments – for example, in the context of language

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requirements – but the major ‘mechanism’ engendering assimilation is considered social participation (Alba and Nee, 2003). However, individuals, including citizens and professionals, also impose assimilation, either privately (for example, in neighbourhoods and social life) or professionally (in education and work). The fact that individuals exert clout on migrants is an issue that has rarely been addressed in the literature on assimilation (Alba and Nee, 2003; Gans, 1994; Waters et al., 2010).

We make a distinction between two types of micro-level interactions that convey culture to migrants. The first consists of interactions in daily life such as encounters in shops, on the street and in neighbourhoods. This type of assimilation is allegedly achieved by participation in the receiving society and is sometimes desired by the immigrants themselves. The second type consists of interactions with professionals who enforce specific cultural behaviour and underlying norms. Usually, these types of interactions are encountered in schools and government agencies, and through other front office contacts. This enactment of culture is professionally inspired, often based on a job description providing discretionary power to act. This article deals with the second type of interaction.

Theoretically, the transfer of culture can be described as acculturation. This concept suffers from two drawbacks. First, the cultural flow is depicted as a neutral and largely unintended process. The specific content of the process of acculturation is not disclosed, nor are the outcomes hinted at (see Bloemraad et al., 2008; Gans, 1994; Waters et al., 2010). Second, acculturation happens through individual participation in the host society. Such an approach conceals the preconditions of power differentials that enable the acculturation and determine its direction, as has been noticed by another strand of scholars (see Berry, 1997; Bhatia and Ram, 2009; Sakamoto, 2007). This underscores the notion that acculturation is not a neutral process, but is probably one that induces subjugation and stratification.

We argue that these two drawbacks can be overcome by employing the concept of cultural norm images. Norm images can be part of the cultural heritage and – as with acculturation – can be imposed upon newcomers. However, the concept of norm images provides an important alternative to the emptiness of the acculturation concept as it (1) elicits the specificity of the cultural content and (2) draws attention to the explicit role of actors, that is, professionals, in the conveyance of culture. By employing the concept of norm images, this article aims to address the enactment of national culture as a way of assimilation.

We demonstrate our position by analysing the norm image of police officers in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The choice of the Netherlands may raise the question as to whether the assimilation perspective was well chosen, since this country is known for its assumed multiculturalism. However, this portrayal of the Netherlands has been questioned by an increasing number of scholars, who demonstrate the shift from alleged multiculturalism to overt assimilation (Duyvendak, 2011; Entzinger, 2003; Van Reekum, 2012; Vasta, 2007).

Police officers fit the preconditions for the enactment of norm images, including power differentials, the professional obligation to enact norms and the discretionary competence to determine those norms. These norms, specifically the command of language and demonstrated loyalty, appear to be nationalistic norms and are used as benchmarks for assessing citizenship and professionalism. Although both migrant citizens

and migrant police officers are subjected to language requirements, migrant police officers have to comply with an additional norm image of loyalty to the police corps consisting of neutrality, integrity and solidarity. Since the empirical research has been conducted mainly in the police force, we can only report the impact of the norm images on migrant police officers; the impact on migrant citizens remains unclear.

In Section 2, we argue that the literature on acculturation is largely ignorant of micro-level interactions. Subsequently, we introduce the concept of a norm image, which discloses the cultural content that is transferred and outlines how this is linked with the national, meso and individual levels. Section 3 describes these elements regarding Dutch norm images. Section 4 briefly outlines the methodology of this research and the data collection, followed by a presentation in Section 5 of the empirical case describing how the enactment of nationalism occurs in the police force of Amsterdam. Section 6 concludes with a stipulation of the wider relevance of our work and some suggestions for further research.

## **Acculturation and Norm Images**

Having an anthropological pedigree, 'acculturation' was originally used to describe the cultural flow from a dominant to a subordinate culture, and was mostly encountered in colonial situations. The concept drifted away from anthropology and found a niche in sociology and cross-cultural and intercultural psychology. In both disciplines, it has been used to describe immigrant adaptation, although the unit of analysis differs (groups vs individuals).

Most of the literature on assimilation does not disclose the operating forces. The classical post-Second World War position in US sociology is Gordon's (1964: 71), who distinguishes between structural assimilation – the 'large scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society, on a primary group level' – and cultural assimilation – the 'change of cultural patterns to those of the host society'. Of these two forms, structural assimilation predominates because all other types of assimilation follow (Gordon, 1964). Cultural assimilation happens through acculturation, but Gordon did not specify the mechanisms that engender this outcome. From the primacy of structural assimilation, one can infer that assimilation is an outcome of participation in the host society.

It is almost impossible to review the vast literature on assimilation produced after Gordon in a short article such as this. It is sufficient to say that the recent plethora of sociological literature includes topics such as modes of incorporation (Alba and Nee, 2003; Alexander, 2001; Bloemraad et al., 2008), the fate of the second generation (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Waldinger and Feliciano, 2004; Waters, 1990; Waters et al., 2010) and the incorporation of immigrants as a result of assimilation (Alba and Nee, 2003; Gans, 2007; Smith, 2003). The divergent outcomes of the assimilation process have been described in such terms as segmented assimilation (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Waters et al., 2010) and symbolic ethnicity (Gans, 1979, 1994). Assimilation is conceived as largely unintended and invisible, and as the consequence of myriad individual actions and choices in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts. Thus, it is easy to see why Gans (2007: 153) described acculturation as something that 'happens virtually automatically and is usually unintentional'.

Slightly different is the observation that contemporary assimilation tends to be partial; it is accomplished by individuals rather than happening to 'meltable' groups of people (Brubaker, 2001). Other examples of actors activating group ties are found in the literature about nationalist mobilisation by leaders, the invention of tradition or the expression of national identities (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Smith, 1991; Wimmer, 2002). However, all these – undoubtedly assimilating – accounts are conceptualised at the macro level rather than being micro-situated.

The psychological literature suffers from a similar problem, as exemplified by Berry's (1997) seminal article on acculturation. He distinguishes between group-level and individual acculturation. Combined with a variety of attitudes and actual behaviours, cultural contacts yield four outcomes (called 'acculturation strategies'): assimilation; integration; separation; and marginalisation.

Berry's approach has been criticised on many grounds, most regarding that acculturation theory glosses over power differentials between immigrants and host societies and fails to capture the larger context (Ngo, 2008; Sakamoto, 2007). The explicit assumption is that acculturation is universally a one-way street, whereas cultural flows in diaspora communities are also directed at cultures of the home country (Bhatia and Ram, 2001, 2009). Discrimination, the degree of cultural similarity and conflict, also affects the direction of acculturation (Schwartz et al., 2010; Waldram, 2009; Weinreich, 2009); by individualising or avoiding the actor's perspective, researchers do not investigate cultural flow, but rather relations between variables (Chirkov, 2009). All criticisms undermine Berry's assumption of unidirectional acculturation and highlight that, in psychology and the sociological literature, the content and the actors involved are absent. These omissions are redressed by the concept of norm images.

The concept of somatic norm images originated in the work of the Dutch scholar Hoetink in his work on the Caribbean. Hoetink (1967: 120) described norm images as 'the complex of physical (somatic) characteristics which are accepted by a group as its norm and its ideal'. Somatic norm images are, by definition, culturally specific and vary within and between cultures. The concept combines both analytical and normative elements. Somatic norm images appear to be both ideal profiles and actual selection mechanisms. Hoetink emphasised that this selection was not only based on the prevailing social hierarchy, but also on aesthetic considerations. They change over time, yet they retain 'constant' elements, making the norm image recognisable. The major advantage of the concept is that it enables a description of what actors do while taking into account their moral and cultural values.

Gowricharn (1992, 2002, 2005) broadened the concept from somatic norm images to cultural norm images. He emphasised that the latter concept had a powerful potential to enact norms. By circumscribing a desirable social role, for example, that of a good student, the ideal norm image of a student is to assess other students. Cultural norm images are implicitly used to select and influence the actual behaviour of individuals (in streets, schools or organisations). Hence, cultural norm images operate not only as selection devices, but also discipline behaviour (see also Çankaya, 2011 for specifications).

We contend that what happens in daily micro-interactions between migrants and indigenous citizens can be adequately described by the concept of cultural norm images. What is conveyed as culture are norm images enacted by dominant actors who use their

agency and morality to impose their views on newcomers. This position differs from the mainstream literature wherein acculturation, and, by extension, assimilation, are considered to happen when newcomers participate in the new society. The dominant actors in this research are street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980), that is, police officers, who impose their nationalistic conceptions of civic culture on migrants. As the national image is crucially linked to language, this element is deployed as a benchmark to assess all migrants, citizens and colleagues alike. In addition, for police officers with a migrant background, the loyalty to the force and fellow police officers appears to be vital for their professional acceptance. In this way, individuals who claim indigeneity exert pressure on immigrants to conform to desired behaviour.

## The Dutch Norm Images

The migrant population in the Netherlands consists mainly of people from former colonies, Suriname (348,291 – 2.06% of the population) and the former Dutch Antilles (146,855 – 0.87% of the population), guest labourers, which, today, includes mainly Turks (396,414 – 2.35% of the population) and Moroccans (374,996 – 2.22% of the population) and a wide variety of political refugees (Van der Vliet et al., 2012). Since the 1990s, the Dutch language has become a central part of the policy regimes intended to incorporate these ‘newcomers’ into society. Bjornson (2007) interprets the growing language fetish in the Netherlands as a product of a ‘language as commodity’ ideology in which ethnic minorities’ marginalisation is excused. Deficient command of the Dutch language has been extended to explain all types of lower participation or performance, especially in the fields of labour, education and politics. Further, the command of the Dutch language is required as an element of the norm image of citizenship.

This hegemonic ‘language as commodity’ ideology in the Netherlands reflects the emergence of an exclusionary linguistic nationalism (Bjornson, 2007). Nowadays, the political spectrum widely shares the belief that language forms a core component of Dutch cultural identity; language forms an important symbolic marker of the nation and a ‘people’ (Blommaert, 2011). In many ways the old ‘one nation, one language’ ideology, in which language is seen as a prerequisite for order, solidarity and collectivity (Bauman, 1991; Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998) has resurfaced in the Netherlands. The Dutch language has increasingly become a key indicator of national identity and an emotional precondition for belonging to Dutch society.

Simultaneously, from the 1990s onwards, central issues in public and political debates have revolved around the assumption that the various social problems of newcomers in Dutch society are defined culturally (Van Reekum, 2012). This entailed a ‘culturalisation of citizenship’, of which inadequate language skills is just one element, underscoring the increasing importance of culture and morality in integration policies (Schinkel, 2008; Tonkens et al., 2008). The interplay of morality and culture is mostly manifested in the sexualisation of citizenship. For instance, sexuality plays a prominent role in framing Muslims as conservative and backward in opposition to the Dutch self-images of being sexually free and tolerant of gay identities (Mepschen et al., 2010). Highly mediated instances of homophobia by imams in the Netherlands are centred on simplistic dichotomies: sexually liberated/confined; modern/

traditional; and individualistic/communitarian. In many ways, the highlighting of Muslim homophobia in the last decade served as an instrument for the moral and cultural exclusion of Muslims from Dutch society.

This remark is relevant for the additional specification of the Dutch nationalist norm image. Ethnic minorities are defined as 'other' precisely because of deviations from these alleged national characteristics. Because of their alleged groupism and their putative traditionalism, ethnic minorities depart from the present self-image of the indigenous Dutch. It is true that contemporary Dutch nationalism has modern, tolerant, progressive and open-minded features (Van Reekum, 2012), yet it is also beyond doubt that the open-mindedness has diminished tremendously in the past two decades (Entzinger, 2003; Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2007; Vasta, 2007). In public discourses about integration, national identity has become a central element. In particular, a command of the Dutch language, knowledge of Dutch history and adoption of Dutch habits and customs are supposed to be distinct elements (Gowricharn, 1992). Ethnic minorities are reminded of these 'essential features' into which they should assimilate. In this process, Dutch culture is pictured as homogeneous and massive, a process that has been described as 'white ethnicization' (Verkuyten, 2006). All parties, across the Dutch political spectrum, agree that migrants should assimilate into this massive culture (Duyvendak, 2011).

Regarding the norm images of the police organisation, three features should be taken into account. First, the enactment of the nation's norm images also applies to colleagues with an ethnic minority background. Similar to the work of Loftus (2008) in Britain and Peterson and Uhnoo (2012) in Sweden, ethnic minority police officers in the Netherlands are viewed with suspicion and mistrust (Siebers and Mutsaers, 2009). Ethnic minority police officers are continuously tested concerning loyalty, and are persistently construed as internal outsiders (see Holdaway, 1997). Second, street police enjoy a large degree of discretion because of their professional autonomy as street-level bureaucrats and their poor visibility to supervisors (Goldstein, 1960). This enables them to decide if and how they will enforce the law. Third, as argued earlier, the large power differential between police officers and citizens is an important precondition for the conveyance of cultural norms. Recent Dutch research reveals this conveyance is embedded in and legitimised by a nationalistic climate, and is often instructed by police superiors (Mutsaers, 2015).

Consequently, the case of the police organisation differs slightly from other street-level bureaucracies. However, police officers cannot impose cultural norms in an absolute way, for the conveyance of cultural norms has no basis in law. For instance, the power to stop and search citizens is unrelated to the degree in which police officers stretch their formalised powers to impose their nationalistic norms. The police can only succeed in the latter if the citizen submits freely to becoming a culturalised subject.

These conditions of discretionary power, power differentials and informality enable street police to impose their norm images of the nation, professionalism and citizenship on migrants, including migrant police officers. The hierarchical position from which they enact their norm images makes them, as Ericson (1982: 7–8) puts it, almost perfect 'reproducers of order' or, more specifically, reproducers of the national community. In this sense, police officers guard the nation as they conceive it ideally.

## Data Collection

Since the 1980s, the Dutch police organisation has struggled with both the recruitment and retention of police officers with migrant backgrounds (De Ruijter et al., 1998; Hart-Kemper and Nas, 1998; Siebers and Mutsaers, 2009). It is assumed that cultural factors, including ethnic jokes and stereotypes, negatively affect the proper functioning of ethnic minority police officers. These cultural factors, which are erroneously lumped together as 'police culture', cause ethnic minority police officers to leave the police corps (Broekhuizen et al., 2007). However, the literature fails to determine the content of the cultural norms and values that influence these processes of inclusion and exclusion. A second problem is that the acculturation of ethnic minority police officers, specifically the transfer of cultural norms by colleagues, has rarely been addressed.

The data collection took place during an ethnographic research study on the social inclusion and exclusion of ethnic minority police officers in the Netherlands. Central to this research was the exploration of how norm images of police officers were ethnicised in daily interactions. As outlined earlier, this norm image functions as both a selection criterion and a normative template for police officers. A situational and multi-sited approach was chosen to observe this ethnicisation. The observation of the enactment of norms in different situations entailed 25 shifts on beat patrol (200 hours). The researcher sat in the back of a police car to observe the interactions among police officers and between the police and the public. Furthermore, five community police officers from five different police stations were closely followed in their daily tasks for several months.

Conducting ethnographic research of police work implies a different set of ethical issues (Rowe, 2007). It should be mentioned that one researcher was officially employed by the Amsterdam police force. While gaining trust remained an issue that had to be negotiated constantly, being perceived as a 'management officer' helped in building trust. In general, police officers were aware of the research aim and goals. Due to practical complications, informed consent towards citizens has not been met in all circumstances.

The observations also included numerous workshops, training and other activities in the police organisation. In addition, 44 in-depth interviews were conducted with police officers from ethnic minority groups (29 in total, 22 of whom were males and seven were females) and the ethnic majority (15 in total, 11 of whom were males and four were females). The underrepresentation of females in the sample roughly matches their general underrepresentation in the Dutch police force (the Amsterdam police comprise 71.8% males and 28.2% females; LECD, 2008). The interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. A supplementary method was informal interviewing: the informality of this method produced slightly different data than in-depth interviewing. Precise information on the informal interviews has not been recorded, but since one researcher was employed by the Amsterdam police force, it comprises about 1000 hours with hundreds of participants. Finally, 15 focus groups were held because they rendered insights into the specific interactions between the research subjects (Krueger and Casey, 2000) and served as a member check when the research findings were presented. One hundred and twenty police managers, mainly lieutenants, captains, inspectors and commissioners, attended the focus groups.

## Conveyance of National Culture

Both in the Dutch public debate and in our research, two cultural elements are crucially linked with the norm image of the nation: language and loyalty. The first element is considered a precondition for citizenship and professionalism: every citizen, like every government official, especially when s/he has regular contact with the public, should have a proper command of Dutch. Thus, language is conceived as operating at three levels of abstraction: the national image; the professional group; and citizens. The element of loyalty is specifically demanded of police officers from an ethnic minority background. The conveyance of national culture is, thus, directed towards citizens of ethnic minority groups and ethnic minority police officers.

### Language

Command of the Dutch language is not only a functional requirement but is also part of the norm image of the Dutch nation and, therefore, a criterion for assessing one's membership of the national community. The norm images of the nation are substantiated through citizenship and professionalism, which are subject to a command of the Dutch language. The linking of these three levels – the nation, the professionalism of the police corps and citizens – results in police officers' policing citizens and migrant colleagues who are perceived to fail to meet these components:

A car is wrongly parked with the driver still behind the steering wheel. The driver seems to belong to an ethnic minority group and is about 50 years old. 'Sir, you cannot park here', the police officer says. 'Please, drive away.' The man shakes his head, murmurs unintelligible words and then says a number of times, 'no Dutch speak'. 'You cannot park here, sir, drive away.' The officer makes a gesture, which seems to be saying, 'Car should go.' Then, 'Do you understand, sir?' Next, he restates the same phrase, but in a higher pitch: 'Do you understand me?' The man still shakes his head and points to a residence. The police officer then says, 'Sir, I do not know where you come from, but in the Netherlands we do not behave like this. This is not the way we do things in the Netherlands, sir.' The police officer makes a gesture meaning 'hurry up', and pulls the steering wheel.

In this example, the police officer instructs the driver about the normative rules in the Netherlands. By underscoring that 'in the Netherlands' we do not behave like this, the police officer links the Dutch nation with a command of the language. During the fieldwork, it was often observed in various situations that citizens of ethnic minority backgrounds were reminded that 'it does not work like this in the Netherlands' or that 'we do not behave like this in the Netherlands'. In interviews, street-level police officers from ethnic minority groups mentioned that their white colleagues regularly used such phrases. Similar treatment of white autochthonous citizens was not observed. As reproducers of order, police officers take the status quo for granted in their interactions with migrants. This results in *the policing of ethnicity*, referring to the daily routines of police officers in guarding the content of the cultural-normative order towards ethnic 'others'.

Another officer revealed that he regularly sends away Moroccan-Dutch citizens with deficient Dutch language skills when they want to file a complaint. This agitates him, he

said, and he states that they should first learn Dutch or return with an interpreter. It should be noted that the Dutch police are judicially obliged to arrange for an interpreter if citizens have need of one. In practice, however, police officers deviate from this rule. Albeit the power asymmetry is manifest in this type of micro-interaction, police officers *stretch* their formal duties by culturalising their tasks. By enforcing the cultural norms of 'language skills' on ethnic 'others', they mould the latter into the national identity. Thus, police officers stabilise the contingent norms, values and traditions in Dutch society and produce images of a quasi-homogeneous national and cultural community.

Language skills are policed not only towards ethnic minority citizens but towards ethnic minority police officers as well. The connection between the norm images of the nation, the profession and citizenship informs a specific neo-nationalist interpretation among a subculture of police officers that the Dutch police should speak only Dutch. This view is also supported by some ethnic minority police officers (Çankaya, 2011). A recurrent issue is the usage of an 'ethnic' language during police work. The policy discourse on 'diversity' and 'professionalism' encourages ethnic minority police officers to use their own language functionally when dealing with 'their' ethnic communities. Yet, in face-to-face interactions, this positioning causes white colleagues to become indignant:

There is a proposal that 50 per cent of the police officers in the west of Amsterdam should be of Moroccan descent. That is ridiculous. That does not help their [Moroccan-Dutch citizens'] integration. Then they [colleagues] are going to speak Moroccan with the citizens there. Look ... I understand that these colleagues have an added value there, but you should continue to speak Dutch. After all, we do live in the Netherlands, don't we? (Sergeant, male, white Dutch)

In the above, the policing of ethnicity is manifest. The police officer should apparently discipline, monitor and correct citizens with perceived inadequate cultural socialisation in the national community. The increasing culturalisation and moralisation of citizens comes together in the notion of 'good' citizens who ought to participate actively in Dutch society, have a singular loyalty to the receiving country and assimilate into the dominant culture (Schinkel, 2008). In this view, language skills are important cultural norm images because they are considered as culturist and moralised notions of ideal citizens (Gowricharn, 2012). A police employee of Surinamese descent said: 'When I meet people on the street and they speak poor Dutch, then I comment on that. For example, I say that they should learn how to speak Dutch. Yes, otherwise we will never understand each other' (Head constable, male, Surinamese-Dutch). In this example, the police officer reminds people of their deficient integration into Dutch culture and conveys an image of a Dutch national identity in which language skills are an indicator of belonging to the nation. However, attitudes with regard to speaking Dutch while on police duty are ambivalent:

During my training, we had a class from a traffic teacher. He asked, 'Where do you come from?' I replied, 'Morocco.' He said, 'Suppose you get a Moroccan citizen who does not speak Dutch well, and he does not want to pay the fine. Would you then address him in Moroccan?' I had to think about this. Really, we were with 16 students in class and 11 of them said, 'No, that cannot be done if you live in the Netherlands. If that driver does not want the fine, then he should return to Morocco.' This silenced me for a moment. I just did not know what to say, you

know. But, recently, I had a case of domestic violence. The people were Moroccans. We arrived there and these people did not speak Dutch, not a single word of Dutch. My colleague pushed me forward although, for years, he had had such a big mouth: 'Yes, go ahead, you talk Arabic now.' When it suits them, then you are allowed to speak Moroccan, otherwise you are not. (Police officer, male, Moroccan-Dutch)

From the above, it appears that speaking the Surinamese, Turkish and Moroccan languages should be functional and have an added value for street-level police work. Many police officers from ethnic minority groups are aware of this. Numerous corrective mechanisms, such as ethnic jokes and remarks, engender a fit between prescribed and actual behaviour. The motivations of ethnic minorities for their adaptations vary; assimilation often creates opportunities for vertical mobility in the workplace or increases identification with the profession and colleagues (Çankaya, 2011). Their actions, however, are shaped in a context of existing inequalities and latent cultural norm images that are activated in specific situations to ensure the orderly and recognisable behaviour of police officers:

Once there was a Turkish man and he did not understand anything. Thus, I began to speak Turkish with him. It was a quiet and jovial conversation; we both made jokes and the tension faded. My Dutch colleague was standing just behind me. I had concluded the conversation, and we walked back to the car. Suddenly my colleague turned fiercely to me and said, 'What did you do now? You spoke Turkish!' I did not understand it. I just tried to do our job efficiently. He thought that I was gossiping behind his back. He should trust me that I would never do that! (Police officer, male, Turkish-Dutch)

In this extract, the norm image of the Dutch-speaking police officer is related to the notions of integrity and loyalty of police officers. Speaking an ethnic minority language leads to suspicion and mistrust among the white officers. Exceptions to the rule that 'the Dutch police should speak Dutch' are English, French or Spanish. Knowledge of these languages is appreciated, which implies that there is a hierarchy of languages:

Once we had to search a house. I heard the occupants talking in Spanish. My colleagues were speaking in Dutch and English, but these people continued to speak Spanish. I speak a little Spanish, so I engaged those people. Everything went smooth. Afterwards, my colleagues praised me: 'Oh you speak Spanish, that was so helpful.' I was patted on the back. Not much longer after this incident, there was a call about a stolen car. We had to interrogate two Moroccan males. I spoke in Dutch to these guys, but they responded that they only spoke Moroccan-Arabic. So after I while, I switched to Arabic. And immediately, I thought to myself: what will my colleague think of this? After I handled the case, my native Dutch colleague and I started walking back to our car. My colleague turned to me: 'I have to say something. I really did not like it when you talked in Arabic with these guys.' After this incident, I refused to talk in Moroccan, even if it could've been useful for our work. (Inspector, male, Moroccan-Dutch)

The languages of migrant groups, such as Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean, are not the equals of European languages and are marginalised. This example also demonstrates the self-disciplining of this officer: he inscribed himself into the idealised norm image of language, despite its ambiguities in practice.

## Loyalty

Loyalty to the profession is imbued in culturalist integration policies in the Netherlands (see Schinkel, 2008), according to which, the 'good' citizen has a singular cultural loyalty, as does the 'good' police officer. Within the police organisation, the professional norm images act as taken-for-granted guiding principles in micro-interactions, structuring the feelings and actions of police officers. The professional norm image consists of three components: neutrality, integrity and solidarity (Çankaya, 2011). Of these, the element of neutrality fits into the national image as the police organisation pretends to be culturally neutral.

The supposed neutrality of the police organisation can be divided into somatic and cultural components. The somatic component requires the visual neutrality of police employees, including the discouragement of symbols or decorations on the body, such as tattoos and piercings, unusual hairstyles and dress. In practice, visual neutrality is less consistent since it was often observed that some street police carry visible crucifixes. Although turbans on Sikhs and kippahs on Jews are also excluded from street-level police work, the norm image of the neutral police officer is mainly constructed in opposition to the Islamic headscarf. The symbolism ensures an intensification of alleged group contrasts within the organisation as argued by Çankaya (2011).

The cultural dimension of neutrality relates to dominant ideas that problematise the assumed multiple loyalties of ethnic minority police officers. Loyalty is a powerful professional requirement since police officers suffer from an ambivalent relationship with the citizenry, punitive supervision by management and the feeling that police work is potentially dangerous and harmful (Moskos, 2008; Paoline, 2003; Peterson and Uhnoo, 2012; Reiner, 1992; Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993). That makes trust among officers crucial. Fijnaut and Bovenkerk (1995) repeatedly pointed to the loyalty problems with which police employees of ethnic minority groups struggle. They argued that recruiting ethnic minority police officers implied special risks concerning corruption. Stereotypes of the supposed contradictory loyalties of ethnic minority groups created the image that they are representatives and extensions of their communities, including family members and friends. In this line, Huberts and Naeyé (2005) argued that ethnic police officers are less likely to report criminal co-ethnics.

The presupposition of multiple loyalties and the problematisation of ethnic culture are noticeable. However, one can argue that *all* police personnel may have to deal with conflicts regarding loyalty or integrity when it concerns family members and friends. In our research, the burden of honesty, reliability, objectivity and neutrality was vested only in ethnic minority police officers. The dominant norm image of the culturally loyal 'good' citizen permeates the professional demand for loyalty to the police institution. The loyalty of white Dutch police officers is not problematised, as they are presumed to be loyal to the police force and meet the requirement of belonging undisputedly to the nation. White Dutch officers are exempt from proving their loyalty as citizens to the corps and to the nation. As with language, the requirement of 'loyalty' within the police organisation is not ethnically neutral: it is part of the nationalist norm image that encapsulates images of the 'good' police officer and the 'good' citizen.

Ethnic minority police officers are evaluated based on the cultural norm images of the loyal, incorruptible and neutral police officer. A police officer talks about the permanent doubt of his neutrality:

Once I had an aged Moroccan man. However, he had something like three fines or so. Okay, but [using discretion] I never issue three fines; I always issue only one. Just then, a [Dutch] colleague walked behind me; he did not even know me, and he says, 'Yes, he will probably not get even one!' This colleague gave me the feeling that I would not be neutral. (Police officer, male, Moroccan-Dutch)

The remark of the white Dutch officer constitutes an implicit ethnic demarcation, which was professionally not relevant to the Moroccan-Dutch police officer. The problematisation of the integrity and the neutrality of ethnic minority police officers mask inequalities between the ethnic minority and the majority. This implies that the norm images are not ethnically and culturally neutral: white autochthonous police employees are assumed to be objective and neutral, whereas police officers from ethnic minority groups have to prove themselves when dealing with co-ethnics. Feelings of distrust are central shaping forces in this interaction:

Look, when I am on duty with an autochthonic colleague and he addresses a criminal whom I know is a criminal and they have grown up in the same neighbourhood, then I rarely interpret this as a risk. When a Moroccan colleague does the same in a similar situation, I would interpret this as a probable risk. (Commissioner of Police, male, Dutch)

These interactional inequalities create a burden of proof among ethnic police officers. They have to demonstrate that they do not comply with the ethnic stereotypes of their loyalty to their 'own' ethnic group. It is apparent that the presumed neutral image of 'good' police officers is ethnicised when they deal with ethnic minorities.

The same interpretation applies to the prescriptive norm of 'solidarity among police officers'. Police employees of ethnic minority groups are perceived as extensions of their 'communities'. When they spend time together, they are blamed for purposely isolating themselves from colleagues, the department, or worse, the entire police force. During an interview, a Moroccan-Dutch employee provided an example of how the interactions between himself and the people of his 'own' group (or other minority groups) are perceived by colleagues:

One day I had a meal with a Moroccan colleague in the canteen. A Dutch inspector, whom I knew well, came past. He said, 'Hi, boys, how are you? Oh, I see that you are sitting together again.' He wore a judgemental facial expression. I looked at him and said, 'Yes, and two chiefs sit over there, two young students there, a number of older colleagues there, and a few older women over here.' (Sergeant, male, Moroccan-Dutch)

The observation of the Moroccan-Dutch police employee reveals the terms of the interaction; they should mix with the white police and not isolate themselves by 'grouping' with their co-ethnics. The effects or 'negative outcomes' of this ethnic grouping are attributed to ethnic minority police officers who supposedly exclude themselves willingly. Ethnic

grouping is resented in Dutch society, except the 'grouping' of the white majority. Ethnic grouping is often interpreted as an unwillingness of minority groups to integrate and as a rejection of Dutch society for which the immigrants should be grateful. Young ethnic police officers mention that they tend to score low on *collaboration* as a competence when they stick together and spend a lot of time together:

Lately, I was told by a coach that I spend too much time with Abdul. To begin with, this is not true! The coach said that I have to spend more time with other colleagues and not only with Abdul. It just so happens that I can get along with him very well, but because we both are Moroccan, it gets noticed and I overhear such remarks. Now I am afraid that the fact that I can get along with him very well will play a role in my evaluation of social skills within my group, and this is all wrong! (Student officer, male, Moroccan-Dutch)

Apparently, police employees of ethnic minority groups do not comply with the norm image of having good and amicable contacts with police employees. Consequently, the responsibility for social degradation or exclusion lies with ethnic minorities.

## Conclusion

In this article, we argued that the concept of acculturation does not disclose the specific content of the cultural flow nor the power differentials and the specific cultural mechanisms involved. Taking the interactions of police officers in Amsterdam as an example, we demonstrated that the concept of norm images represents a better analytical tool since it specifies the cultural content, reveals power inequalities and highlights the explicit role of professionals in the conveyance of culture. In so doing, we questioned the current conceptualisations of acculturation as neutral, unintended and invisible processes.

The case study discloses that police officers have intentional and clear goals to socialise and discipline members of ethnic minorities who are perceived as 'possessing' ethnicity, a poor command of the Dutch language and multiple loyalties. These norms are part of an encompassing Dutch nationalistic discourse and are prescribed, if not imposed, in daily interactions by police officers in order to make citizens and fellow police officers comply with their norm images. We repeat that the outcome of this intention requires additional research.

It should be noted that this research has a broader relevance. Although the police represent a specific organisation, a similar enactment of culture is conducted in all private and public street-level bureaucracies in daily public life, including schools, banks, social security administration and job agencies. In some of these organisations, language and similar constitutive elements of norm images are imposed on their citizens and colleagues. Thus, institutions, by means of their front desk officers, reproduce the socio-cultural order. We speculate that this conveyance of norm images also happens in semi-total institutions such as hospitals.

This research has revealed the conveyance of normative culture under conditions of power differentials engendering assimilation. However, two issues need to be researched for a fuller understanding of this type of acculturation. The first is that street-level bureaucrats differ according to their institution. Street-level bureaucrats in a hospital

might respond differently than street police or primary school teachers. These specificities need to be highlighted and reflected upon. The second issue is the question of agency. The institutional power of street-level bureaucrats in imposing norm images is not absolute. Because of their legal and social vulnerability, we assume that the majority of newcomers comply with the directives of police officers. However, we do not rule out the possibility that some of the newcomers are reluctant to do so. Their attitude matters for the outcome, as does the cultural distance between the street-level bureaucrats and the migrants. Taken together, these two issues call for a comparative transactional analysis of the assimilation process, which could highlight conflicting norm images.

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