The racialization of ethnic minority police officers and researchers: on positionality and (auto)ethnographic fieldwork

European Journal of Policing Studies , 4(4) – *5*(1)*,* 119-132

Abstract
This article reflects on the personal, epistemological and methodological dilemmas of conducting(auto)ethnographic fieldwork within the police organisation. The argument is that positionality and ascribed identities complicate existing dilemmas of using participant observation within the police context, such as maintaining a researcher's role, acceptance, building trust and coping with ostracism. The article also deals with the tension of being a member of the organisation and a researcher at the same time, as well as the pains, but also the gains, of doing auto-ethnographic fieldwork within the police organisation as a frequently racialized (male) member of an ethnic minority.

Keywords: police, autoethnography, ethnic minorities, racialization, diversity

Sinan Cankaya (1982) is a writer and anthropologist. His PhD dissertation was on in- and exclusion within the Amsterdam police organization (Safer outside than inside, 2011). He then conducted a research on ethnic profiling (The Control of Martians and other scum, 2012). Sinan is currently working as an assistant professor at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (corresp: s.cankaya@vu.nl)

1. Introduction

Is this beat patrol? The exciting, adrenaline-driven work that police officers were provocatively talking about at lunch? Work where they have to take split-second decisions, sometimes about life and death? I feel utter boredom. But when we least expect it, we get a call about an accident where a car has crashed into a canal. We race to the location with sirens. The fire department is present, as well as four other police cars. 'Look at that, earlier nobody was responding to HQ, and now everyone is here', one of the officers says angrily. The two male officers step out, and since I am sitting in the back seat, I have to wait until the door is opened to me. Several police officers look up, at me in particular. Their suspicious facial expressions seem to say: why are they opening the door to that bearded suspect? When we approach the officers, who are rubbing their hands to get warmer, one of the officers that I am accompanying notices the suspicious and quizzical glances of his colleagues. He answers them by saying: 'he's one of us'. Which I was, officially at least: between 2007 and 2011, I was employed in the Netherlands by the Amsterdam police organisation as a fulltime ethnographer.

Not much later, I joined two police officers in the west of Amsterdam. We were driving around a working-class neighbourhood perceived and imagined as crimeridden. Since the police officers trusted me, they told me that this was 'due to Moroccan youngsters'. After hours of further boredom and, in my eyes, senseless and directionless driving around town, the officers decided to, as they called it, 'create their own work'. We drive into a small street where numerous cars are parked wrongly. The experienced female officer and the young male student get out of the police car, and frantically begin to write traffic fines. The experienced officer informs me that they repeatedly have warned the 'Moroccan' car repair shop that they are not allowed to park the repaired cars in this street. I nod, it makes perfect sense.

A few minutes later three men come running out of the car repair shop. 'Hey, what are you doing?' one of them asks, using the informal way of addressing a person. The officer grammatically corrects the man, reminding him of the formal register, with a loud voice. She goes on: 'I have given my last warning long before, you guys do not want to listen and hear. Those cars are not supposed to be there.' She now shouts and waves with her arms. Then she turns around, ignores the men and continues writing her ticket. To me, all

of this did not qualify as a 'de-escalating policing strategy', it was not in line with the formal procedures officers are taught at the police academy. So there I am, the police anthropologist, standing and observing the scene from a short distance. The men get unruly, raise their voices, and more and more people start walking out of the car repair shop. The atmosphere turns grim. There is shouting. Then things move fast. The two officers get in the car, start it, and drive away – forgetting me in the process.

Sheepishly I stare at the departing police car, dumbfounded. The Moroccan-Dutch men seem to be in a similar state of mind. After a shared silence, they simultaneously turn their heads towards me; some make a 'who are you' gesture with their hands. I am still looking at the departing police car, in shock, and then turn to the men, confused. In the distance the police car brakes loudly, and stops. Then the vehicle makes a shrill in reverse noise, for fifty meters. I salute the boys and take my seat in the back. The experienced officer turns her head towards me. 'Oh, I am so sorry,' she says. 'I thought you were one of them'.

In being both 'one of us' and 'one of them', my theorising on the position of ethnic minority police officers, the topic of my then PhD dissertation, is clearly shaped by my own experiences. My somatic characteristics, albeit socially constructed – male, from Turkish origins – undoubtedly impacted on my data gathering within the Amsterdam police organisation. I was constantly swinging back and forth between 'being of the police' and 'being one of them', the out-group, which officers mostly constructed along the lines of marginalised, male ethnic minorities (Cankaya, 2011, 2012). In this article, I will reflect on the existing methodological dilemmas the ethnographer faces when studying the police organisation, well-known issues pertaining to access, gaining and maintaining trust, negotiating the researcher's role, and ethical dilemma's regarding loyalties. Reading the 'confessional tales' of Maurice Punch (1989), John van Maanen (1979) and recently the work of Didier Fassin (2015), I felt huge relief, in retrospect, because I recognised most of their research dilemmas. At the same time, there is an apparent omission in their accounts: the ways in which positionality and ascribed identities – and in my case the straightforward racialisation of the researcher's role – creates additional tensions during the research process. Positionality refers to the ways in which the self (in terms of age, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality and class) influences the data collection and dilemmas that may arise during the research process. As Rose (1997, p. 308) puts it, 'facets of the self – institutional privilege, for example, as well as aspects of social identity – are articulated as "positions" in a multidimensional geography of power relations'.

Feminist theorising has long critiqued the positivist assumption of research as objective and value-free (Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1991). The researcher and the researched influence each other. Also, in accounts by female police researchers there *is* frequently a reflection on positionality, presumably because of the prevailing dominance of hegemonic masculinity within the police organisation. Prokos and Padavic (2002), for instance, mention the dilemma of how to handle mistreatment and sexist remarks; Punch (1989) and Van Maanen (1979) do not refer to this dilemma at all. Prokos and Padavic also describe how gendered structural inequalities within the police organisation intersected with their research endeavours: acceptance among police officers implied acting in a stereotypically feminine way with the paradoxical outcome of undermining their capability and professionalism. This raises the question, as I am writing from the axiom of multiple and crosscutting identities, of how the intersections of gender and perceived ethnic 'otherness' played out during my research, but unfortunately a thorough reflection on this falls outside of the scope of my article. In my contribution, I will reflect *mostly* on the pains, but also on the gains, of doing (auto)ethnographic fieldwork within the police organisation as a researcher who, unwillingly, was racialised as a (male) member of an ethnic minority.

2. Researching the police organisation

My academic socialisation as an anthropologist impacted on my methodological choices, and my bias for using the ethnographic method. The fundamental idea of ethnographic fieldwork is to conduct prolonged participant observation in natural settings to grasp, through the process of role-taking (Turner, 1956) and *verstehen* (Weber, 1947), the norms, taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs, axiomatic truths and routinised

behaviour of a group. The aim is to get at the meaning-making and meaning-giving processes through the eyes of the researched. This assumption implies that the researcher and the researched stand in a mutually constitutive relationship, breaking with the positivist notion of an external world outside of the researcher, wherein 'objective facts' are waiting to be 'discovered' like hidden Easter eggs. My epistemological axiom is rather that data collection is an interactional process in which researcher and researched co-construct social facts. Giddens (1984) notion of 'double hermeneutics' underlines that the researcher interacts with a pre-interpreted world, and not 'real reality'. In short, the researcher interprets the interpretations of the researched (Wester & Peters, 2004). The researcher thus cannot take a meta- or outside position vis-a-vis social reality (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1999), and stands in an inter-subjective relation to the researched, wherein both mutually influence each other (Creswell, 2006).

Feminist studies refute the possibility of starting research without preconceptions and biases, and emphasise the importance of being transparent and reflexive in the process of data gathering, rather than sustaining the idea of a detached and impartial observer (see Plummer, 1983; Stanley & Wise, 1993). My interpretations are therefore the result of the interaction between my conceptual framework – even the stereotypes – I had *before* I started working for the Amsterdam police organisation, my preliminary concepts with which I began my empirical research, but also my intuitions, gut feeling and preconceived ideas *during* my first months; then of course the actual research, my own personal experiences and interactions, the analysis of the material and the final reporting. These views add nuance to the role of objectivity in conducting qualitative research. In traditional ethnographies the anthropologist was also expected to demonstrate textual objectivity and neutrality (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), but ultimately all texts, even those presented as 'objective', are mediated by a previous phase of the researchers decisions, interpretations and analysis. The mere presence of the ethnographer 'does something' in the natural research setting; moreover, interpretive research does not aim to distance itself from, but rather tries to empathise and identify with research subjects. Take, for instance, the different implicit assumptions and the underlying ideas of producing knowledge, reliability and objectivity in the following textual representation: 'The researcher does not belong to the dominant ethnic group within the organisation'. This could be contrasted with a more explicit positioning, which could read as follows: 'I am a male, young, originally Turkish, yet born in the Netherlands, and clearly fall outside of the historically and structurally shaped somatic standard image of the police organisation: I am smaller, a "person of colour", and higher educated.' The purpose of this position is to articulate the role of the participant observer and the way the research is interpreted, knowledge produced and made transparent (Prins, 2004).

Inspired by the axioms of symbolic interactionism and the autoethnography, I deliberately write in the first person. Ellis and Bochner (2003, p. 209) define the autoethnography as 'an autobiographic genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural'. The analytical lens is shifted to the researcher *within* the research context, or as Doloriert and Sambrook put it (2009, p. 29) we move 'along a continuum from a more separate researcher-*and*-researched to that where the researcher-*is*-researched'. Frankly, doing research as a person who was born in the Netherlands, but with parents who were born in Turkey – or being *Dutch-in-limbo* as I call it – I do not have the luxury of writing about myself in the third person: I was racialised as an 'ethnic other' in many situations during my research. We define ourselves, but are also defined, and I was perceived as not-quite-Dutch by white police officers at several moments, in specific contexts. In lieu of effacing my role in conducting and in reporting on my research, I project myself within this text. I will therefore reflect on my own experiences as a researcher/member of an ethnic minority group within the police organisation.

These assumptions do not suggest an 'everything goes' mentality in which (auto) ethnographic research is condemned to an inescapable relativism of 'truths' (see Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The autoethnography is criticised on several grounds, and I do share some of these criticisms: these accounts are perceived as being devoid of empiricism, as self-indulgent personal memoires or anecdotes. Doloriert and Sambrook (2012, p. 85) have grouped some of the harsher criticisms, in which the autoethnography is slammed as 'intellectually lazy' (Delamont, 2007), 'egotistical' (Coffey, 1999) and 'academic wank' (Sparkes, 2000). I agree with Doloriert and Sambrook (2012), Roth (2009) and Ellis (2007) that personal accounts *should* highlight large-

scale social and cultural processes. Our everyday encounters are connected to a larger context, in which structures manifest themselves in microlevel interactions, and 'the general' shows through in 'the unique'. As a member of an ethnic minority within the police organisation, my experiences were similar to those of ethnic minority police officers. I became part of my own research against my will, and could not escape the structural constraints in which my respondents and myself were maneuvering.

While my perspective questions the axioms of positivism, I do plead for rigorous and systematic qualitative research. Combining my two research projects, I conducted a total of 103 in-depth interviews, 23 focus groups, supplemented by 200 hours of direct observations of beat patrol, prolonged observations of 5 community police officers, the observation of 15 application interviews with police students, participant observation of a group of new police students during a 5-day introduction week, I applied to the police as a *Mystery Shopper* undergoing the interview procedure, attended numerous meetings, conferences, seminars, and had thousands of hours of informal discussions with police officers since I was, after all, working there. The observations of street-level policing included all daily activities that go with it, from lunching together in the cafeteria to attending the debriefing. It would be erroneous to reduce my research to the autoethnographic tale, but in this particular article I reflect on the day-to-day interactions in which I was perceived as an ethnic minority within the police organisation, a matter that impacted on my research.

3. Gaining access, gaining trust

I had to prove myself, over and over again, just like all new recruits within the police. Many of the methodological reflections on gaining access to the police mention how time consuming this process is (Demaree, Verwee & Enhus, 2013), as well as the general distrust and suspicion towards researchers among police departments (Reiner, 1992). My initial *formal* entry to the police organisation is perhaps incomparable to most of these accounts. I was officially employed by the Amsterdam-Amstelland police organisation. The head commissioner of the organisation had launched the Juxta programme – derived from the word to juxtapose – with the aim that twelve academics and artists were to keep the police 'sharp' and 'point out their blind spots'. The background of this entire programme was the Schiedammer Park murder, a case in which detectives made errors in their investigative research, with numerous accounts of confirmation bias, ultimately leading to the conviction of an innocent man. It is fair to say that while the Juxta programme was courageous, it was also a media intervention, a public relations programme of sorts: the police wanted to demonstrate its willingness to 'acknowledge criticism' within the organisation. An evaluation of the Schiedammer Park murder had concluded that elements of police culture – the reluctance to disagree with fellow detectives – played a part in the conviction.

Before the research started, I made a set of formal and practical arrangements. The bulk of these agreements had a clear inclination towards protecting the interests of the police organisation, with high demands on secrecy, which raised the issue of academic independence while being employed by the police organisation. For instance, authorship remained with the police organisation, a matter I will return to later. A thorough reflection on possible ethical dilemmas that could arise during police-citizen interactions, or on my own personal safety, was absent. Only halfway through the project was I given a one-day self-defence course, with instructions that boiled down to just running away in a situation involving risk and danger. Some street-level police officers had different expectations: one police officer nonchalantly instructed me to 'jump on us in case we are spinning on the ground with a suspect, it would be weird if you would stand around, right?' I only reflected on the issue of informed consent in interactions with citizens in hindsight – long after the publication of my PhD dissertation in 2011. I did, however, feel great discomfort at intruding in the personal lives of citizens, at suddenly standing in their living rooms, standing in the middle of their stories, for instance when emotions were running high in cases of domestic violence or when a traumatised kid had seen a man committing suicide from a flat. In retrospect, the ethical dilemmas of my research needed more rigorous attention.

Gaining formal access to an organisation such as the police is only a necessary first barrier one has to overcome, with many others to follow. Despite my formal access to every department or service within the police organisation, I constantly had to negotiate my role as an ethnographer. The higher echelons of the organisation, the top-ranked police officers, backed the project and saw its benefits, but going out in the field meant building trust with department chiefs first, and ultimately street-level police officers. I was very aware that relying on the admission that was granted to me by high-ranked officials could backfire: using that card could raise suspicion among department chiefs, and then ultimately among the lower-ranked police officer. I had to convince street-level officers that I was not evaluating their individual work on behalf of the management, that I was not a spy and that I was not auditing them.

In an introductory period of three months we were given the opportunity to get acquainted with the full spectrum of police work, we visited practically all departments, even specialised divisions. During my first months, I was very impressed by the way the police organisation operated. These days soon turned out to be my honeymoon period. I was clearly presented with what Skolnick (1966) referred to as a 'whitewash tour', a polished, idealised representation of the everyday thinking and doing of organisational members. To be clear, to get acquainted with the police organisation, I literally did several tours of different facets of policing, ranging from beat patrol, community policing, criminal investigation units, and the vice squad to the police dog service. These initial interactions were loaded with impression management; it was much later that I penetrated through the professional façade of the organisation. I cannot agree more with the observation of Punch (1989, p. 179): 'The primary insight that I gained then was that there exists a wide disparity between the public presentation of police work – as sober, legal, competent, professional and even "sacred" – and the backstage reality'. I am in full agreement with Punch (1989) that prolonged participant observation is the most appropriate method for researching and penetrating the police organisation, the operational facade and hidden elements of police culture. There is an apparent duality many have already pointed out: the front and back stage of policing, the talk and action (Waddington, 1999), the presentational and operational data (Van Maanen, 1979), and, more generally, the 'what people say' versus the 'what people do' (Deutscher, 1973). Based on these reflections, I think it is justified to be sceptical of formal research methods on street-level policing, methods that heavily rely on interviews and questionnaires, as well as short-term observations without having gained the necessary trust.

4. Personal saturation

I developed a special interest in the position of ethnic minorities within the police organisation early on because of my personal encounters and my academic background. I was also inspired by a publication that dealt with the position of women and ethnic minorities within the police organisation (Haas, Zaagsma, Hoing, Berlo & Vanwesenbeeck, 2007). But it soon became clear that, while I was explicitly invited to be critical of police work, I wasn't supposed to be *too* critical. The moment I decided on conducting an engaged research project that dealt with the experiences of ethnic minority police officers, I faced ostracism within the police organisation. The matter was deemed too sensitive and controversial by higher-ranked police officers. Merely mentioning my intention to study the inclusion and exclusion processes of ethnic minority police officers triggered an unexpected response from midlevel and higher ranking officers who believed that I wanted to slap the police in the face with a negative report. This initial distrust of my intentions remained, and I can only say that they intensified after the publication of my PhD dissertation in 2011 – which drew media attention and led to questions to the national parliament – and worsened after my research on racial profiling in 2012. The resistance within the police organisation translated into the question 'are you on our side or not?' Classic elements of police culture were activated, such as feelings of isolation and being misunderstood by the general public, the us-them divide, and the demands of solidarity and loyalty from organisational members (Skolnick, 1966; Van Maanen, 1974).

The main conclusion of my dissertation was that ethnic minority police officers were constantly mistrusted and reduced to marginalised positions within the organisation, both in micro-interactions with colleagues and supervisors, as well through structural processes, such as diversity policies (Cankaya, 2015). I concluded that

the racialisation of ethnic minorities members raised the question of double loyalties: in several situations, ethnic minority police officers were distrusted on the basis of core policing norms, namely integrity, neutrality and loyalty. Vis-à-vis the normal image of the incorruptible and honest police officer, essentialist ideas hold that the ethnic, religious and cultural loyalties of ethnic minorities put them in a special risk category, as they are perceived as representatives and extensions of their 'communities'. The assumption was that an ethnic minority police officer would be unable to remain neutral and objective in interactions with members of their presumed 'own ethnic group', because of contrasting loyalties between the police organisation on the one hand and the presumed 'ethnic community' on the other hand. For the loyal police officer, the *grouping* of ethnic minority police officers, for instance in networks or lobby groups, was seen as a deliberate attempt to isolate them from the larger imagined community of the police. The interactions of white officers amongst themselves, or between white officers and white citizens were, however, never problematised in terms of incorruptibility, neutrality and loyalty.

When I organised focus groups, among others to introduce a member check of my findings, I was confronted with the same essentialist notion of double loyalties, but this time it involved my own research and persona. White police officers sometimes straightforwardly asked me if my research was not skewed, biased and subjective, after all, as they put it, I was 'a Turk doing research on ethnic minorities', and implied that 'the findings are fixed from the get-go'. Earlier, I clarified my epistemological take on the research praxis. My axiomatic standpoint is that knowledge is produced – it is therefore socially constructed, partial and situated (Rose, 1997). And since knowledge production is inherently partial and situational, it will merely highlight a *dimension* of social reality – I do not claim otherwise. But these criticisms were not of an epistemological nature, these were not arguments that necessarily disfavoured post-positivist research in general. My Turkish background was taken as a fixed, essentialist category that inherently blocks scientific objectivity and detachment. I took this poisoning-the-well argumentation personally, because these assumptions *a priori* questioned my scientific integrity. In essence, *being* a person of colour is apparently sufficient to disqualify a researcher. My own experiences mirrored what ethnic minority police officers were dealing with in micro-interactions, albeit in different ways. I became analytically sensitive, because of enhanced role-taking and *verstehen* – without suggesting the illusion of a monolithic experience among minority members or favouring the problematic idea of 'standpoint epistemology' – to the issue whereby ethnic minorities had to constantly prove they were incorruptible, neutral and loyal, and white police officers, at least on the analytical level of ethnicity, were automatically assumed to match the ideal type of the police officer. I also reflected on the issue of non-experts and laymen who do not seem to systematically raise the question whether research conducted by white researchers on white research subjects is, by definition, subjective or biased. Whiteness is therefore the norm within the police organisation, operates in taken-for-granted ways, and remains unquestioned, and as a Turkish-Dutch anthropologist I could not escape this racialised context.

Doing ethnography puts high demands on the researcher, but several of the existing practical and ethical issues of researching the police were exacerbated due to my positionality. For instance, trying to work my way through midlevel management was, to me, an exhausting process. I noticed that my entry to the station was easier through engagement with the formal ranks, instead of opting for the informal route. Most of the time, I contacted the department chief, and informed them about my research goals in an email. I always made sure to mention that I was security cleared, had signed confidentiality agreements, and name-dropped that the head commissioner had introduced the Juxta programme to open the organization to outsiders. Undoubtedly, the fact that I introduced myself by engaging with the higher ranks could backfire, but I found interactions with department chiefs exhausting and fuzzy when I did not take this route.

I always made sure to arrive early at local police stations, get acquainted with everyone, and attend the briefing prior to the shift. This way I introduced myself to all the officers that were going to be present. This was not mere common courtesy and common sense thinking to gain trust, it also tied in to previous experiences. On one occasion, where I made sure to arrive early at the station, attended the briefing and introduced myself to the present officers and supervisors, I was tagged to two males officers. I had clearly mentioned in my introduction that I was 'from the police', and that I was security cleared. When we walked

through the hallway I was chatting to one of the officers, exchanging personal information. The other was silently listening to us, then abruptly interfered and asked: 'By the way, have you been screened?' By this time, I was visibly wearing my police badge at the centre of my chest. When my badge had just been hanging from my belt, I was on many occasions asked who I was, what I was doing, if I was from the police, and whether I would be so friendly as to show my badge. I got the idea to wear my badge on the centre of my chest from a Surinamese-Dutch detective, who also worked in civilian clothing – it was a coping strategy of sorts. Obviously this strategy was not always effective. I pointed to my badge, told the officer that I was 'from the police', and that the badge, by definition, implied that I was security checked.

Several ethnic minority police officers corroborated this experience. I concluded that ethnic minorities are perceived as the walking paradoxes within the police organisation, of blurring the outside world of the police organisation with the inside world. Ethnic minority police officers are symbolically associated with the racialized and ethnicised criminal 'Other' – young, non-native males (Cankaya, 2011). Because of the similarities between the somatic bodies of the *criminal* 'Other' and the racialised and ethnicised 'Other', ethnic minority police officers are perceived as transgressions of the symbolic moral order, insiders and outsiders at the same time as they represent both the morally just police organisation *and* the racialized disloyal, dirty and despicable criminal 'Other'. I came to this analytical insight through my own experiences within the police organisation. Ethnic minorities are tested concerning their loyalty, and construed as internal outsiders (Gowricharn & Cankaya, 2015). Also, these inclusion and exclusion processes are structural, and visible in other national contexts, for instance in the work of Holdaway (1997) and Loftus (2008) in Britain, Peterson and Uhnoo (2012) in Sweden, but also Kleijer-Kool (2013) and Mutsaers (2014, 2016) in the Netherlands.

But continuous suspicion and distrust was not the only issue, I was also allocated and ascribed an inferior status within the police organisation, presumably the result of several crosscutting identities, such as age, gender, and ethnicity. I was asked whether I was the cleaner, the guy who came to fill-up the vending machine and whether I was delivering food. At all times, my reference point were my colleagues from the Juxta programme, the other eleven researchers and artists. I compared my experiences to theirs whenever we came together to reflect on our individual projects. Of course, they had to negotiate their researcher role as well, but none of their stories came even close to mine. That I was treated differently became apparent in the first week of my stay at the police organisation. The Juxtas, the twelve of us, were expected to be in a large administrative office somewhere in Amsterdam. When I arrived at the establishment, I stated my name to the desk officer, and told him about the Juxta programme, and that we were expected. He asked me for identification. He then asked me if I was from the police. I responded that I was. 'So where is your badge then?' he continued. I told him that we had just been recruited, and that we were expected at this location so that we could take pictures for our badges. He then scanned some papers, asked my name again, and suddenly told me I could pass. I was a little taken aback, but immediately started rationalising it because it seemed a fair procedure for anyone who wants to enter a police building. At lunch I asked the other Juxtas how they were greeted at the entrance, still slightly sceptical. All of my colleagues had only stated their names and said they were coming for the Juxta programme. I was flabbergasted. I asked them to describe the person that had helped them, and without a doubt they described the same officer. All things considered, one of the main reasons for cutting my fieldwork short, and instead opting for interviews and focus groups, was that I had reached personal (but not theoretical) saturation. The constant negotiation of my researcher role was taking its toll on me. It was dissatisfying, exhausting and even emotionally draining to have the permanent feeling of being questioned about my integrity and trustworthiness.

It would be, however, incorrect to suggest that distrust and suspicion is a permanent condition for ethnic minority organisational members (Cankaya, 2011). Police officers create symbolic boundaries between themselves, but also in interactions with citizens, *at specific moments* of time and place. I distinguish four catalysts that incite feelings of distrust among the white ethnic majority, namely, (a) when someone is new to the organisation or division, (b) when a non-native language is being spoken, (c) when officers work in civilian clothing, and (d) when ethnic minority police officers interact with people of their presumed 'own ethnic group'. It is therefore understandable, in some ways, that my numerous small visits to (a) new police

divisions, and (c) in civilian clothing, activated the exclusion processes. Once trust was gained, the interactions normalised, and I was 'one of them'. Feelings of general distrust towards newcomers is a constant finding in sociological and anthropological surveys of the police. Nevertheless, my argument is that positionality, in the form of ascribed identities and racialisation, impacts on these assumedly 'neutral' organisational processes.

5. Balancing on a thin blue line

After four years of being officially employed by the police organisation, one develops a loyalty to that organisation. In my earlier period at the police organisation, selfcensorship and self-silencing undoubtedly informed my thinking and subsequently my writing. But the paradoxical position of being at once included and excluded, never allowed me to 'go native'. It seemed to me that 'my rite of passage' (Van Gennep, 1960) was going to be permanent, particularly because of the controversial research topics that I chose. But as Vidich (1955) mentions, I do believe that possible 'new' knowledge gains are precisely within this marginal and liminal space, so I to exploit this tension to my own advantage. Walking the line of the included/excluded, of being neither in nor out, these interactions produced insight into the daily workings of the police organisation.

Reiss (1971) describes a pattern in which observers gradually become more pro-police in the course of their fieldwork. My professional take toward the police organisation has always been that of a 'critical friend', a position that grew organically, shaped by my experiences. Long after leaving the organisation, I also dealt with being branded as the 'black sheep' of the police family, because to some I was exposing and demystifying the idealised and mediatised 'clean' versions of policing. These conflicting interests and loyalties cannot be taken lightly. For instance, when I handed in my manuscript on racial profiling, the organisation initially did not want to publish the results. Legally, the organisation had the rights to the data, but a research commission of high-ranked officers had given me a verbal confirmation that the research was going to be published and accessible to the general public. The matter escalated, leading to a rollercoaster of emotions. Ultimately, a group of higher-ranked police managers took the courageous decision to go public with the research in 2012: after years of negligence, racial profiling was back on the agenda of researchers, journalists and administrators. But in the backstage, and on a personal level, this matter was the final straw for me. The negotiations on going public were extremely draining, and I was explicitly excluded by the organization that I had worked for. The police also had decided to not renew my contract, very understandably, but I had made up my mind too: it was time to say goodbye to the Amsterdam police organisation, at least as a fulltime researcher.

Years later I did return to the Dutch police organisation, visiting my former friends and colleagues, giving lectures and classes at the police academy. The police organisation is too interesting, too important, too relevant and too bizarre to ignore. I revisited, but always as a critical friend.

Bibliography

Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. London: Routledge.
Cankaya, S. (2011). *Buiten veiliger dan binnen: in- en uitsluiting van etnische minderheden binnen de politieorganisatie*. Delft: Academische Uitgeverij Eburon.
Cankaya, S. (2012). *De controle van marsmannetjes en ander schorriemorrie: het beslissingsproces tijdens proactief politiewerk*. Den Haag: Boom Lemma.
Cankaya, S. (2015). Professional anomalies: diversity policies policing ethnic minority police officers. *European Journal of Policing Studies*, *2*(4), 383-404.
Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. (1986). *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Coffey, A. (1999). *The ethnographic self*. London: Sage.
Creswell, J. (2006). *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five approaches*. London/New York: Sage Publications.

Delamont, S. (2007). Arguments against autoethnography. *Qualitative Researcher*, *4*, 2-4.
Demaree C., Verwee I., & Enhus, E. (2013). Observing the observers. participant observation In K. Beyens, J. Christiaens, B. Claes, S. De Ridder, H. Tournel, & H. Tubex (eds.), *The pains of doing criminological research* (p. 105-124). Brussel: VUBPRESS. Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). *The landscape of qualitative research: theories and issues*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
Deutscher, I. (1973). *What we say/what we do*: *Sentiments and acts*. IL: Scott, Foresman & Co.
Doloriert, C., & Sambrook, S. (2009). Ethical confessions of the "I" of autoethnography: the student's dilemma. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, *4*(1), 27-45.
Doloriert, C., & Sambrook, S. (2012). Organisational autoethnography. *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, *1*(1), 83-95.
Ellis, C. (2007). Telling secrets, revealing lives: relational ethics in research with intimate others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *13*(3), 1-28.
Ellis, C. &, Bochner, A. P. (2003). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: researcher as subject In N. K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*, 2nd ed. (p. 199-258). CA: Sage.
Ellis, C. &, Bochner, A.P. (2006). Analyzing analytic autoethnography: an autopsy. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *35*(4), 429-48.
Fassin, D. (2015). The public afterlife of ethnography. *American Ethnologist*, *42*(4), 592-609.
Gennep, A. V. (1960). *The rites of passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Gergen, K. J. (1999). *An invitation to social construction*. London: Sage Publications.
Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Gowricharn, R. S. &, S. Cankaya (2015). Policing the nation: assimilation and street-level bureaucracies in professional life. *Sociology*, 1-17.
Haas, de S., Zaagsma, M., Hoing, M., Berlo, van W., & Vanwesenbeeck, I. (2007). Omgangsvormen, werkbeleving en diversiteit bij de Nederlandse politie anno 2006. Onderzoeksrapport. Delft: Eburon.
Haraway, D. J. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs and women: the reinvention of nature*. London: Free Association Books.
Harding, S. (1991). *Whose science? Whose knowledge?* New York: Cornell University Press.
Holdaway, S. (1997). Constructing and sustaining 'race' within the police workforce. *British Journal of Sociology*, *48*(1), 18–34.
Kamboureli, S. (2008). The politics of the beyond: theses on autoethnography and complicity In C. Verduyn & E. Ty (eds.), *Asian Canadian Writing: Beyond Autoethnography* (p. 31-54). Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
Kleijer-Kool, L. (2013). *Multicultureel politiewerk*. Den Haag: Boom Lemma Uitgevers.
Loftus, B. (2008). Dominant culture interrupted: recognition, resentment and the politics of change in an English police force. *British Journal of Criminology*, *48*(6),
756–77.
Maanen, van, J. (1974). Working the streets: a developmental view of police behaviors In H. Jacobs (ed.)., *Reality and reform: The criminal justice system*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
Maanen, van J. (1979). The fact of fiction in organizational ethnography. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *24*(4), 539-550.
Mutsaers, P. (2014). "All of me". Psychologizing Turkish-Dutch police officers in the Netherlands. *Anthropology of Work Review*, *35*(2), 72–83.
Mutsaers, P. (2016). Contributions to an anthropology of work: on the role of psychotechnicians in the management of freedom within the Dutch police. *Critique of Anthropology*, *36*(2), 122-144.
Peterson, A. & S. Uhnoo (2012). Trials of loyalty: ethnic minority police officers as 'outsiders' a greedy institution. *European Journal of Criminology*, *9*(4), 354–69.
Plummer, K. (1983). *Documents of life: an introduction to the problems and literature of a humanistic method*. London: Unwin Hyman.
Prins, B. (2004). *Voorbij de onschuld: Het debat over integratie in Nederland*. Amsterdam: Van Gennep.
Prokos, A., & Padavic, I. (2002). 'There oughtta be a law against bitches': masculinity lessons in police academy training. *Gender, Work & Organization*, *9*(4), 439-459.
Punch, M. (1989). Researching police deviance: a personal encounter with the limitations and liabilities of field-work. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *40*(2), 177-204.
Reiner, R. (1992). *Politics of the police*. London: Wheatsheaf.
Reiss, A. J. (1971). Systematic observation of natural social phenomenon. *Sociological Methodology*, 3, 3– 33.
Rose, G. (1997). Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in Human Geography*, *21*(3), 305-320.
Roth, W. M. (2009). Auto/ethnography and the question of ethics. In: *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 10(1)
Skolnick, J., 1966. *Justice Without trial*. New York: Wiley.
Spano, R. (2005). Potential sources of observer bias in police observational data. *Social Science Research*, *34*(3), 591-617.

Sparkes, A. C. (2000). Autoethnography and narratives of self: reflections on criteria in action. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *17*(1), 21-41.
Stanley, L. & Wise, S. (1993*). Breaking out again: feminist ontology and epistemology*. London: Routledge.
Turner, R. H. (1956). Role-taking, role standpoint, and reference-group behavior. *American Journal of Sociology*, 61(4), 316-328.
Vidich, A. J. (1955). Participant observation and the collection and interpretation of data. *American Journal of Sociology*, 60(4),354-360.
Waddington, P. A. J. (1999). Police (canteen) sub-culture. *British Journal of Criminology*, *39*(2), 287-309.
Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organization.* New York: The Free Press.
Wester, F., & Peters, V. (2004). *Kwalitatieve analyse. Uitgangspunten en procedures*. Bussum: Uitgeverij Coutinho.