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Political Object or Individual Subject?: Dominant Dutch Narratives Vs. Migrant Identities

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Abstract

This research study analyzes the impact of public narratives in The Netherlands upon the individual narratives of second-generation migrant women in the labor force. Viewing narratives as on one hand, symbolic and rhetorical, and on the other hand, as pragmatic and structural, I attempt to draw a correlation between public narratives and individual narrative production, arguing that discourses and practices of discrimination originate—and often intensify—through the relationship between these two narrative modes. I hypothesize the ways in which both migrant and native Dutch narratives currently challenge, but also have the potential to challenge, this dually-produced and dually-reinforced discrimination narrative. Correspondingly, I develop a theoretical notion of "narrative agency" as a tool to acknowledge subjectivity and counteract this compounded discrimination narrative and its constraints over identity formation. My research promotes this discussion through a test-case of second-generation migrant women in their workplace environments. As often politicized policy objects, they exemplify a narrative construction between symbolic, political significance and structural measures. Through my theoretical lens, I thus attempt to build a framework for subjective narrative potential within these overarching narrative influences; significantly, it is a means to recognize a marginalized identity outside of their object value within the contemporary Dutch socio-political culture.

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Introduction

The public sphere in the Netherlands constructs particular narrative trajectories for migrant communities. Linked to dominant societal structures, these narratives manifest, on one hand, in an unaltered, observable and public form: living in segregated neighborhoods and amidst unequal representation in political offices. On the other hand, the public produces controlled, manufactured, and idealized images: migrants as "diversity props" and prized symbols of career success. Though these circumstances are a product of the socio-political atmosphere, they also define the life-courses, and thus life-stories, of individuals. In this way, migrant communities become the objects of a publicly-produced and normalized Dutch narrative which then shapes their everyday experiences. My research approach intends to link the creation of public narratives to individual narrative production in society, using the narratives of second-generation migrant employees as evidence of constrained identity formation within a workplace environment.

As for my specific analytical approach to this theoretical inquiry, I consider the macro and micro application of narrative control mechanisms—politically, institutionally, and individually—to the experiences of my participants. Scholars have formerly established that the narrative of the "tolerant" Netherlands, which condemns discrimination and promotes diversity, is a misnomer (Crul 2016; Duyvendak, Geschiere and Tonkens 2016; Farris 2017; Mepschen 2019; Wekker 2016); beneath the surface façade, the public ethos permeates micro-level institutions, stimulating the very discriminatory practices which it purports to reject. To combine this political and institutional impact with the influence of narrative upon individuals, I analyze identity construction within a workplace setting, as informed by my interview accounts. Specifically, I hypothesize identity formation as acts of narrative formation, drawing upon their

commonalities: progression, settings and characterization as comparable to status, institutions and identity. As a methodological lens, I first use narrative theory to identify how my participants' identity constructions adhere to normalized narrative structures and discursive practices. I then outline the effects of narrative projection and internalization upon their workplace identity enactment. I then consider identity formation beyond this standard narrative framework, thus preempting the notion of "narrative agency" as a process of identity creation outside societal constraints. This need for narrative self-construction—as distinct from the embedded structural and rhetorical influences of societal narrative construction—necessitates the first-component of my research question:

To what extent does narrative formation in Dutch workplaces depict second-generation migrant women as identity subjects—rather than politicized policy types of the Dutch socio-political climate?

Past scholarship has addressed the formation of political narratives through policy, highlighting the tension between migrant and native Dutch communities within these narratives. Here, the migrant becomes the politicized policy object of an overarching Dutch nationalist narrative. Specifically, in the context of second-generation migrant women in the labor force, migrant experience is conceived of in terms of economic significance. Society pins the image of the poster-child of economic success in spite of "disadvantaged beginnings" versus the normalized caricature of domestic care-worker. As these confining dominant narratives do not consider the employee as an individual, policy promotion follows in suit. Despite ample research on techniques of governmental control—from national integration models, re-direction of party agenda unto NGOs, and local implementation measures—the influence of local policy implementation upon individual migrant experience is a lacking domain of analysis. As a relevant example, the policy pursuit of labor force equality does not consider how workplace

cultural differences between individuals may contribute to the production of inequalities on the macro-scale. I attribute significance to my research intentions at this impasse. Narrative accounts provide evidence of policy implementation attempts while still accounting for individual attachment to social structures, unlike an analysis of institutional practices as a meso-level structure abiding by its own self-regulation. From this, my paper attempts to answer the second-component of my research question:

> *How do the participants' accounts display structural attempts of policy implementation—thus serving as a narrative object—while also displaying symbolic positioning as a character subject?*

Literature Review

The following literature review provides a considerable overview of contemporary Dutch politics, policy measures and various theoretical methodologies on the study of discrimination, identity and narrative, as in my line with my analytical framework. The public construction of "the migrant" is thus explained in terms of separate macro- and micro-level processes, comparable to a narrative whole and its structural elements. First, through a discussion of Dutch policy maneuvers and the present-day political climate, the migrant narrative type is defined in terms of the public domain and its corresponding impact upon Dutch versus migrant tensions. Specific attention is brought to the "Othering" rhetoric projected in the public domain. Situating such rhetoric as a source of discursive dominance, I consider how public "Othering" rhetoric informs discourses on "integration" and "diversity" emerging in the workplace. I map the construction of a "migrant Other" character type through workplace "Othering" discourses, which ultimately contributes to an overarching Dutch narrative facade of "tolerance" in The Netherlands. I then apply this background to contexts of identity formation such as workplace

treatment of "diversity". I follow this discussion with an assessment of standard notions of

narrative and rhetorical theory, which help to establish my subsequent theoretical framework.

      Projecting a politicized type and enabling the public conception of "the migrant" type, the

policy measures of the national government reveal national integration models entrenched with

"Othering" rhetoric. In recognition of broad national government philosophies, the 1960s marked

the introduction of "multi-cultural policy" in the Netherlands. As applied to group formation in

society, this notion incentivized individuals to "organize into groups on the basis of perceived

cultural similarity" (Schrover 233). The resulting emphasis upon inter-group differences

reinforces the tradition of dominating practices of the national government (Schrover 233).

Constructing a society which "denied the fluidity of ethnicity," the government promoted

colonialist notions of difference between ethnic groups (Schrover 233). Historically placed into

distinct boxes of "allochtoon" vs "autochtoon" in the language of Dutch policies, this

representation of migrants projected a rhetorical dominance reminiscent of "the racist regime of

the former East Indies" (Legene, Jones, and Walsum 151). In turn, society came to associate the

allochthonous ethnic category with a stagnate ethnic identity marked by stagnate character types:

the radical, conservative religious migrant man, the criminalized and poor migrant youth, and the

suppressed migrant female. As a result, the national government, in line with intended political

messages, enabled the 'aesthetising' of the "Other"—as coined by David Harvey (1989)—and

thus further projected a migrant character type in Dutch society as one that is politically

desirable. While this policy approach has *legally* changed over time, the impact of a multi-

culturalist frame is ever-present and continuously influential upon the contemporary political

atmosphere and ethnic identity formation, which I will address further.

In the mid-1990s, the Dutch government turned away from the multi-culturalism framework upon noting insufficient migrant social and economic growth as a result of their policies (Roggeband 947). In the labor market context, governmental actions presumed to improve migrant representation, such as the 1998 law, "Law on Civic Integration for Newcomers" which intended to generate labor market access and reduce welfare reliance (Roggeband 947). Short-lived and arguably unproductive, these proactive intentions met a politically-volatile period of right-wing political dominance, which then pervaded the public sphere. Adopting a new national government model, a proposed "assimilationist strategy" of "making the different similar", migrant representation shifted from deliberate separation to stripping "the Other" of its identity all together (Alexander 414). This attempt to couple migrant experience with Dutch experience ultimately positions this assimilationist policy as an avoidance policy; rather than promote increased labor force access for migrant women specifically, they place migrant women within the labor force position of all women in The Netherlands. In effect, the narrative construction of the migrant type is twofold: the migrant "Other" suppresses any cultural indicators and the government bypasses a meaningful intersection between ethnicity and socio-economic status, creating a gendered, yet un-ethnic, policy type.

When considering the influence of the public sphere narratives upon community-level "Othering" discourses, the notion of "integration" proves particularly relevant. Rejecting "difference" and falsely projecting a mutual integration narrative, the previously noted assimilationist model forged a difficult transition from allochthonous status to "integrated" status and emerged a paradoxical culture of agency and self-interest among migrant communities. With migrant communities as "representative bodies" for their respective "country of origin," different ethnic groups often compete for national governmental funding (Shrover 233). Other research

accounts for resistance methods and the rejection of state-funding. Regardless, the actions of these organizations remain rooted in the dominant "Othering" discourse: their enactment of ethnic-based divisions prompts separate migrant and Dutch-oriented organizations, thereby mirroring and, in turn, extenuating the societal tensions between ethnic groups.

Surrounding these "integration" measures and their political significance, "integrated" status emerges as a symbolic label attached to migrant communities, and in effect, their construction as policy types of the Dutch political agenda. Scholarship has covered a wide range of integration discourses which construct "the Other". Language is a foundational premise for obtaining "integrated" status, wherein language proficiency has been linked to "sense of belonging" and "successful integration" (Ghorashi and Eijberts 164-165). However, in the research of Ghorashi and Eijberts (2017), such "belonging" was also correlated with emotional exclusion for second-generation women as a result of access to negative, "national discursive space" about migrants (165). Discursively, the construction of "the migrant" appears displaced by the national narrative in whichever direction the character type proceeds, as conducive of what scholars term a double-bind (Kamenou and Ferfull 2006). In fact, these discursive starting points of "belonging" and "inclusion" presuppose the dominance of the overarching narrative in the public sphere. Belonging—or inclusion within the norm—is constructed as the ideal to strive towards. Likewise, integration is linked with emotional "exclusion", whereby the (exclusion) *from Dutch acceptance* is implicit.

These discursive modes are compounded for intersectional identities—notably for religious migrant women. Similarly controlled by the Dutch public atmosphere, the preferred expectations for Muslim cultural expression manifest in the treatment of Muslim migrant women in the workplace. For instance, Muslim migrant women may be disrespected on account of their

religiously-influenced preferences, such as dietary restrictions (Ghorashi and Eijberts 173). Relatedly, this character "Other" is guided through a distinctly separate narrative trajectory on account of their differences. Whereas a Muslim employee's choice "not to bring in faith is connected to respect and not looking down on non-believers" in conversations surrounding religion, the same choice is not respected by Dutch colleagues (Hendricks, Lensvelt-Mulders and Ewijk 1012). This research conclusion implies a neglect of character subjectivity for Muslim employees; their choices are deemed unacceptable as an institutional employee practice, not as an expression of individuality. Consequently, if migrant women of Muslim backgrounds do not desire to engage in certain practices, they are ostracized for not taking part in the norm expected of their character type. Taken by some scholars as evidence of "discursive institutionalizing" (Pio and Essers 254) or as identities "socially and discursively (re)produced within power relations" (Bendl, Flesichmann and Metcalfe 386), the identities of Muslim migrant women in the workplace are not only politicized, but systematically constructed through narrative control mechanisms.

Alongside integration, "diversity politics" and "diversity" serve as discursive modes of public narrative control. Diversity management scholarship notes the gap in research wherein diversity is largely studied in terms of secondary source material linked to national government policy or through primary accounts from professionals in the management sector (Zanoni and Jannssens 1372). Zanoni and Janssens (2007) thus call for research which recognizes "subjects who are defined by diversity discourses and who represent the primary target of diversity management" (1372). I attempt to access this under researched space, not only by accounting for employee experiences but also the discursive production of character types as an exchange between the macro and the micro-level, not simply a top-down effect. Directly linked to public

discourses on multiculturalism (Schiller 2016), "diversity politics" was a band-aid solution to the public dissent about a failed multiculturalism in The Netherlands. In the vein of exclusive-inclusion practices, the diversity character type was constructed under certain conditions. First, the diversity subject was a victim-prop, a "member of a marginalized or suppressed social group that needs special attention in order to achieve organizational inclusion" (Just and Christiansen 324); then a symbolic asset: "an individual who is to be treated in the same way as every other organizational member in order to have the same opportunities of performing successfully" (Just and Christiansen 324); or a business asset: "An individual whose group membership(s) gives him or her special competencies that may prove beneficial to the organization" (Gotsis and Kortezi 18). These constructions presuppose adherence to the Dutch norms within the workplace environment. Fitting within my argument structure, these diversity narratives suggest ties between institutional positioning and a supposed recognition of the "individual"; the "diversity subject" therefore serves as a critical lens to assess "the migrant" as a character subject.

These discursive constructions of "diversity subjects" parallel processes of narrative construction. An emphasis upon "narrative construction" emerged in the early 2000s as a means of interpreting policymaking (Entzinger and Scholten 2014). Scholarship addressing this notion of "narrative construction" reveals an intrinsic connection between personal narrative production and political narrative production. Esser and Tedmanson's 2014 study of Turkish migrant entrepreneurial women is a prime example of research which corresponds governmental policies and political trends with the impact upon individual social practices and emotional responses. From its analytical focus upon entrepreneurial practices for Turkish migrant women, the complexities of workplace representation are taken into account alongside the intersectional nature of migrant lived experience. The research keenly considers the application of theoretical

perspectives into identity formation within integrated and non-integrated spaces, specifically the workplace and community, as informed by the political climate of the historical period. Given the tendency for legislation to target migrant women as societal outcasts, migrant women face a double-bind: embrace their native culture and suffer from labor-force discrimination practices or submit to the dominant political narrative and enable cultural essentialism. This notion is not only applicable to the social structures and their production of inequalities; rather, an individual migrant experiences straddles the line between victimhood and agenthood with a "fear of confirming and even reinforcing negative stereotypes about them in the public discourse, on the one hand, and fear of being treated as a traitor by their own communities, on the other hand" (Roggeband 946). Migrant women thus face competing narratives simultaneously; on one hand, they come up against their politicized representation—as inherently opposed to Dutch natives; and on the other hand, they actively construct a self-representation subject to cultural expectations of behavior. This example thereby illustrates the value of different methodological approaches to migrant experience and the necessity of achieving a common ground between identity construction within macro-level institutions and constructions of selfhood fundamental to the reclamation of historically and politically-manipulated histories.

Scholars have approached this relationship between identity formation and narrative construction as mediated by rhetorical acts. Given my focus upon the workplace environment, uses of rhetoric deployed in institutional settings are relevant. A foundational philosophical approach to institutional rhetoric argues that "organizations and their employees engage actively in rhetoric as a way of 'providing convincing accounts, regulating impressions and images'" (Green Jr. and Li 1663). Within this perspective constructed by Alvesson in 1993, individual subjects are "agents or rhetors who deploy language strategically" (Green Jr. and Li 1663).

Alvesson, in particular, takes a philosophical approach to rhetorical performance by viewing speech acts as knowledge performances (Green Jr. and Li 1664). The argument follows that knowledge performances of the individual actor are products of macro-level institutions, embedded in the form of "myths" which "provide meaning and legitimacy to organizational practices and beliefs" (Green Jr. and Li 1664). This relationship suggests that the actor performs a false, mythologized narrative to fit into the prescribed mold for such organizational practices and beliefs. The actor's meaning derives from "appearance" or projection of a narrative. Arguably, then, this frame provides an actor a "story-telling" ability. This suggestion is evident in research conducted by Clark and Salaman. Positing that a manager's performances in the workplace grant them a story-telling power position (Clark and Salaman 1998), the resulting discourses are mechanisms of rhetorical control. Following this same logic, individual employees of a workplace environment have the ability to control discourse. Sandy Green Jr. and Yuan Li configure rhetorical acts as agency formation wherein individuals perform "distinct linguistic practices as they purposefully foreground some aspects of their institutional environments while ignoring or placing in the background other parts of their institutional environments" (1666). Interpreted as identity performance, this argument has valuable implications for my research angle: if individuals deploy rhetoric in line with their institutional environment, do they then possess control over their narrative trajectories within that institutional role?

Individual control over a narrative trajectory derives, in part, from philosophical arguments. If agency is embodied in rhetoric (Green Jr. and Li 1672), the "motives" of rhetorical agency serve as components of a standard narrative progression. Motives contribute to a pre-determined script, moving the subject from "who (agent), gets to do what (act), why (for what

purpose), where (scene), and in what way (agency)" (Green Jr. and Li 1673). This concept is

comparable to the narrative theory notion of temporality, defined in terms of "interrelated and

interconnected events, actions and characters" (Bruner 1990). Previous approaches to the

narrative theory notion of positioning theory examine the ties between identity construction and

narrator-audience relationships (Benwell and Stokoe 2006; Davies and Harre 1990; Harre and

Langenhove 1999; Harre and Modhaddam 2003). When taken structurally, the notion refers to

how the subject engages with overarching discourses or 'master narratives' (Benwell and Stokoe

139). It from this distinction that I situate my specific approach to the notion of "narrative

construction"—as one of identity enactment through discourse. Specifically, I interpret identity

formation in line with the following scholarly definitions:

"The emphasis is on identity as performed rather than as prior to language, as dynamic rather than fixed, as culturally and historically located, as constructed in interaction with other people and institutional structures, as continuously remade, and as contradictory and situational" (Benwell and Stokoe 138)

"The deployment of linguistic approaches in general and rhetorical insights in particular to explain how the strategic use of symbolic practices enable and constrain agency" (Green Jr. and Li 1666)

The first presents the theoretical basis for my argument: identity as performative, as

continuously constructed, and relational by means of narrative projection; The second provides

the analytical access point by which I construct my own argument: identity narratives as an

evaluation of access to agency. These definitions follow the same performative and structurally-

determined process as discourse analysis theory, wherein identities are continuously produced by

and through societal discourses. If "the goal of discourse analysis thus to show how these actions

and objects come to be socially constructed and what they mean for social organization and

interaction" (Fischer 73), then my research expands upon this definition with, on one hand, the

suggestion of a transactional identity construction between the micro and macro levels, and on

the other hand, a hypothesized narrative process of controlled subject positioning.

Taken together, this proposed transactional nature of identity formation can oppose traditional structures of narrative formation, thus initiating an anti-hierarchal form of "story-telling" akin to agency. Overall, I consider standards of the literary canon, and relevant notions of "temporality" and positioning theory, and their relationship to agency-creation processes. Relevant characteristics of canonical "story-telling" structure include a typical plot trajectory and character formation process. The plot standard establishes a standard exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution order. In terms of the character engagement with plot, the story presents a character who must overcome a core challenge or conflict as they progress through the story-line. Evaluated through the rhetorical technique of "emplotment," temporality is used "to describe how selves how selves are narratively configured by bringing together different temporal elements and 'directing them towards a conclusion or sequence of disconnected events into a unified story with a point or theme" (Polkinghorne 141). An identity described in temporal terms exists as a before and after, as a shifting self, as moving from agentless to agentive (Benwell and Stokoe 139). In effect, this agentic self is not confined in movements, in pathways, in story-lines; this agentic self is outside of limiting, systemic constructions of identity and narrative. Discussions on positioning theory "examine the co-construction of identity between storyteller and audience" as the subject relates to broader "master narratives" (Benwell and Stokoe 139). In studying public discourses and their impact upon identity representation, and vice versa, it is necessary to consider not only the deliberate and internalized processes of narrative control as objectifying mechanisms, but to consider their detriment upon individual subject representation.

Theoretical Framework

I develop my theoretical framework through a combined analysis of the previous narrative techniques and an interpretation of the theoretical notions of "agency" and "identity" as formational processes. By applying this theoretical framework to the experiences of second-generation migrant women in the workplace, I ask: how are identity and agency formed through narrative story-telling? And how do such "agent identity narratives" create a character subject? Standard notions of narrative structure, temporality and positioning serve as foundational material for the analytical assessment of narrative. Temporality signifies story-telling as a character trajectory; positioning theory exhibits stories as identity performances. Throughout the presentation of narrative accounts, I apply these notions in my analysis of the socio-political culture and workplace institutional practices. The resulting theoretical framework is as follows:

> *In the workplace experiences of second-generation migrant women in The Netherlands, a proposed notion of "narrative agency" functions as an identity formation process that grants migrant women subjective identity performances outside politicized narrative constructions.*

My argument holds that the migrant woman character type functions within a temporal logic: she experiences the transitionary period in the public consciousness, gravitating between overt "Other" and "diversity subject". In terms of positionality theory, the migrant woman undergoes a forced engagement with the politicized narrative as a gendered, ethnic type unaligned with hegemonic identities in the cultural and historical context. Tying these narrative elements to identity, I situate rhetoric as a primary mediating force.

Through an application of these narrative frames, I present a three-component hypothesis addressed in each analysis sub-section:

1. Narrative formation apparent in workplace discourses reveal the construction of second-generation migrant women as publicly-produced character "types" of The Netherlands socio-political climate.

2. A pairing of narrative analysis and identity formation reveals the dominance of the politicized narrative as a means of forced characterization and controlled character progression, exhibited through rhetoric.

3. A pairing of agency and identity formation displays the potential to enact identity outside the bounds of politicized narrative controls, achieved through re-structuring narrative.

Methodology

As a researcher selecting interview questions, I mirrored a narrative trajectory standard to the literary canon to then evaluate potential adherence or deviance from this trajectory as the participant defines their worker identity. I combined this choice with deliberate variation in trajectory—evoking plot shifts through interview questions—to evaluate participant agency over narrative formation. This frame not only enables me to assess narrative constructions on a macro and micro level, but to specifically evaluate the dominance of dominant narrative control mechanisms over individual narrative formation.

To maintain anonymity, I refer to participant A as Zara, participant B as Lisa, and participant C as Maria. The first questions in each interview about employee background serve as expository narrative material, often introductory, brief, and surface-level, as in line with the initial structural component of a story, the "exposition". I select the topic of "workplace diversity" as a symbolic climax point in the interview, knowingly inducing this as the interviewer. Building up to this climax point, the rising action entails questions around the organization, the workplace environment, and specific questions regarding individual

experiences. As to mirror a standard narrative structure, I allow for variation in follow-up questions as indicative of minor, plot shifts in a character's path towards a climax point. The climax section revolves around the "diversity question" and its implementation in each workplace. Conjoined together, "falling action" and "resolution" entails character opinions, thoughts, or reflections on "workplace diversity" attempts in their workplaces, as well as reflections on their identity in a workplace environment. Despite mirroring these structural elements of "story-telling," I ultimately ensure that the participant guides their story; they can select any responses and contribute additional, relevant information as they see fit. The specific interview questions and ethical considerations are available in the Appendices.

My interview subjects were selected on account of their second-generation migrant background, gender identity, language capabilities, and educational background. Since all participants identified as second-generation migrants and women, this ensured that my accounts were consistent in their representations of a gendered and ethnic minority perspective. However, there were variations in ethnic background, with one participant identifying with a Moroccan background, another of a Turkish background, and another of a Southeast Asian background. Moreover, two of the three participants accounted for a Muslim religious and cultural background as an influencer in their workplace environment. I can only draw tentative correlations from their accounts and fail to thoroughly address religious background given it was not a shared identity within my population. All participants noted language fluency in both Dutch and English; other language knowledge was not accounted for. In terms of educational history, all participants held master's degrees, thus characterized here as "highly-educated".

I acknowledge the lack of generalizability of my research study. Given my small population of narrative accounts, my research must be valued for its contribution to a broader

discourse on migrant representation and discrimination, and not for its direct applicability to the production of systematic inequalities for whole social groups. As for specific drawbacks to my research, my interviews do not account for a comprehensive group of participants. Conducted in a snowball effect, my participants were located through a series of correspondences initiated by my research advisor. Two of the three participants selected knew me prior to the research study, serving as staff members within my study abroad organization. Relatedly, my research fails to account for a workforce range. Of the participants, all three hold backgrounds in organizations linked to diversity and culture; two of the three are notably tied to social and cultural development programs. Further research would benefit from a consideration of the cultural experience of second-generation workforce women in fields perhaps ranging from domestic labor to entrepreneurship, thereby situating formally politicized, dichotomous character types as existing within the same narrative plane.

It should be noted that my interview questions contain slight variations in order, specificity, and quantity due to the use of relevant "follow-up" questions and circumstantial differences in workplace histories. I choose not to control for these variations in my analysis, deeming the variations an accurate representation of distinct micro-ethnographic accounts. Additionally, the accounts of my interview participants present opinionated, and perhaps emotionally-driven, accounts of workplace experience. To mitigate this bias concern, I conduct and explain my research with a clear statement of interview conditions. However, I also accredit this potential for bias as a source of honesty and personal sharing, therefore supporting my desire to recognize cultural backgrounds as an individualized experience, as opposed to the generalizability of the politicized type in this contemporary period.

Analysis

Within each of the following subsections, I apply the narrative accounts of my interview participants as evidence of my hypotheses. I thus present the interview accounts as representations of the Dutch politicized narrative including its diffusion into and reproduction through personal narratives. In the first sub-section, I apply standards of narrative theory to politicized narrative construction, distinguishing between institutional identity and individual identity formation. In the second sub-section, I apply rhetorical analysis to assess participant story creation as a series of replications and deviations from dominant discourses, with a specific focus upon the dynamics between ethnic identities and employee identities. In the final subsection, I use these narrative constructions to explain my hypothesized notion of "narrative agency".

Section I: Structuring the "Dominant Narrative"

The Netherlands projects seemingly contradictory story lines for migrant women. From the surface, The Netherlands doubles as sympathetic supporter and judgmental critic, all under the guise of enthusiastic aid: while they promote "integration", "emancipation", "equality", and so forth, they also want to guide migrants towards a Dutch-oriented transition. In this way, public narratives project their own façade of achieving social harmony, yet outline a very narrow margin to obtain it. As Farris' research on civic integration suggests, The Netherlands narrates a story along the lines of: Let us reunite families and then tell them how to act the part (Farris 94). On an institutional level, organizations tend to promote the success of migrant women at the same time that they promote the adoption of Dutch norms. Existing in the nuanced space between these conflicting stories, the actual experiences of migrants are ignored, dismissed, rejected, and sometimes celebrated. Taking the Dutch workplace as a story setting, I recount the

narratives of women who navigate this complicated nature of acceptance through the balance of their employee and ethnic identities. As these women enact their own expression of story-telling through the lens of narrative structures, I argue that public narratives pervade and alter their narrative pathways, ultimately defining their story-construction as within the dominant narrative, including its characters, settings, and significance.

A story exposition functions as the point where the narrator defines its character(s) or where the character(s) define their story. This distinction can be read as simply biographical vs autobiographical; but on a metaphorical level, it speaks to the nature of character construction: is a character's action their own choice or does the storyline move them along as if they are objects? It is from this narrative subject versus narrative object distinction that I attribute significance to narrative construction for migrant women. When asked to describe their position, two "options" present themselves: to describe the story of their individual employee identity or to inadvertently mold into an archetypal employee type linked to public discourses; their exposition suggests the latter.

Participant A, Zara, works at a local municipality in The Netherlands. The following script details her responses to my "exposition" questions:

Interviewer: "What position do you hold?"
Zara: "Policy advisor, EU related topics; what I now do is lobbying."
Interviewer: "What do you do in your position?"
Zara: "Connecting European Commissions to the local level—so, the municipality. To see how we can link municipalities with the EU better; agenda-setting, subsidies, funds, work together with partners from the EU on social matters, climate change, circular economy, etc."

Responses of participant B, Lisa, and participant C, Maria, to the initial expository questions:

Lisa: "I was a public employer, if you translate that directly. It means that you are a customer service worker…basically I did everything in terms of practicalities, like coordinating the visitors; for example, there are several desks on a working day coordinating the line of people."
Maria: "Culture director. Creating networks between schools and art, music, community-organizing."

At this opportunity to define workplace identity, each participant begins with reference to their institutional title, and significantly, its association to national government matters. In this story temporality, individual narrative formation occurs after public narrative projection. Choosing not to characterize themselves as individuals, they instead choose to describe their institution, guiding the audience towards the role they play in an institutional setting and the matters relevant to that setting.

In particular, this choice evokes a setting that is, in a tangible sense, a structured environment within an overarching governmental system. As participants ascribe their employee selves to an official label, they reflect a characterization within an institutional mode, often attached to governmental policy. Choice of syntax confirms this characterization. The practices which define their position follow the title attached to such position. If title precedes role—or narrative surface precedes narrative context—then this narrative trajectory is performative, perhaps suggesting either the participant's self-determined desire to project their workplace role as a successful structural achievement or an inadvertent, reactionary response. Regardless, the participant reveals a subconscious adherence to a dominant public narrative which mythologizes migrant career success. This compounded emphasis upon institutional identity further mirrors the public context in The Netherlands which corresponds migrant women with their labor force positionality rather than their individual achievements. In this story construction, the successful migrant type is not "successful" for her workplace practices, but for her symbolic value as a title holder. The story exposition of these second-generation workforce women thus maintains the narrative angle of the public discourses in The Netherlands whereby the migrant employee is a policy character type—one whose individuality is inherently linked to their institutional structures.

In a logical, structural move from exposition to rising action, participants establish greater narrative depth yet maintain a trajectory towards a public character type. The rising action serves as a series of plot changes which develop the character(s), the story setting(s), and presents as a series of events accumulating in a climax. Situating employee identity as the focus point for narrative construction, and the grounds by which the climax unfolds, my rising action interview questions inquire about the obtainment and selection of jobs, as well as the environment within workplace settings. In these instances, where the participants display recognition of their individual backgrounds, thus noting the relationship between personal identity and employee identity, their identity construction remains tied to public images and societal identity. Building upon the significance of their identities as institutional objects, their stories now ask: "Who am I as a citizen of The Netherlands? As a member of Dutch society?"

The following interview question and responses serve as "rising action" narrative material:

"What brought you to this position?"

Zara: "I did my bachelor's in public administration; Two masters: International European Government and Governance of Migration and Diversity"
Lisa: "It was several factors. I was always interested in social justice issues and cultures, differences, diversity in general, and I think anthropology enforced that, made it stronger. My sense of 'I really want to do something with justice issues' developed during my studies. I think my studies were a really big factor… there were also practical reasons. I knew that I needed experience."
Maria: "I did cultural studies. Before that, I had been active in several student organizations. Combined with my knowledge of my studies and with a friend who had been working for that organization and who had to leave on pregnancy leave, she suggested me to her employer because she knew what I did before. So it is like a combination of everything."

All three participant responses foreground educational background as a primary influence upon their employee position, but given the variations between their accounts, they either adopt or reject standards of public narrative formation. Narratively, their stories are slightly different projections of character alignment with an educational past. Zara's portrayal is an overt embodiment of the successful migrant character type wherein identity is attached to institutional

structure, outlining a character micro-narrative from ambitious student to high-achieving professional. Zara's re-telling of this micro-narrative is direct and official, forgoing emotion. By this, Zara further personifies the migrant policy type: one whose path to success is enabled by a clear institutional track, or to put in terms of Dutch "tolerance" facade, success by making the *right* choices along the way. Lisa, in contrast, focuses upon education by framing it as the cultivation of her interests first and foremost. In Lisa's story, her workforce position aligns with her "studies" rather than her titles, and thus not with her educational attainment, but her intellectual and creative self-growth. Distinct from both Zara and Lisa, Maria's characterization is action and experience-oriented. Viewing her studies as a task she "did" and deeming educational history as relevant to her past activities, she prioritizes both work ethic and educational knowledge. Though neither Lisa nor Maria replicate the public emphasis upon titles as validations of social achievement in Dutch society, they stress the importance of combined societal influences. "Experience" is an essential prerequisite for workplace success in Lisa and Maria's stories; but these other contributing factors such as "experience" function as reinforcements for their educational foundation. These variations in narrative creation all diverge from an education-centric core identity, suggesting a dominant model of social success dependent upon educational development. As an educated symbol of this dominant narrative structure, migrant women embody the publicly-enforced caricature of migrant labor market success whether or not they emphasize individual values in their character construction; at this "rising action" point, the dominant narrative indirectly governs character subjectivity. Arguably, then, their character trajectories remain within the realm of object shifts towards a finite story conclusion as character types of Dutch society.

The following statement and responses serve as additional "rising action" narrative material:

"Describe your organization/workplace.*

Zara: "Municipality of Amsterdam: Local implementation achieved through correspondence with the national government; 'to start projects, to make lives better of the people of Rotterdam'"
Maria: "Synerkri: Organization that has five sub divisions. Sports, culture, social welfare, commercial… community-focused… to improve cohesion in the village."

When prompted with questions regarding the institutional setting in which they perform their employee identity, participant responses reflect spaces which enable the public narrative to exert its dominance. Their exchanges exist within the organizational practices of their institutions and sustain the Dutch socio-political narrative. On the macro scale, their words mirror an organizational promotion of a desirable public image; as members of a micro-level institution, they fashion the same identity as any prototypical employee projecting the organization message. As passive messengers, they do not engage with narrative significance, presenting no opinion or commentary, but act as diligent employees whose indifference maintains the construction of their character type. They participate in a Dutch performative script marked by non-specific attempts of change: the general claims "to make lives better" and "to improve cohesion" have no definitive narrative closure, and rather, are intentionally ambiguous while still suggestive of an all-encompassing change for the common good. Enacting these simultaneously open-ended and far-reaching narrative expectations as employees, they choose to define organization goals as if they are explicitly clear and bypass the opportunity to expand upon their contributions as individual actors of the narrative. By these actions, Zara and Maria reaffirm the idealized expectation of conforming migrant, attaching it to their institutional identities.

*Lisa's response is omitted here due to ethical concerns; see discussion section.

From rising action to climax point, narratives typically begin to focus upon a particular scene in a particular setting; this is also the point where characterization pervades the narrative subtext. Zara, Lisa, and Maria present three different climax descriptions, all surrounding the notion of "diversity" in the workplace, as directed by my interview question:

"How does your organization treat diversity in the workplace?"

Zara: "Municipality of _____ is known for its diversity topic now because they really care about it. We want to make sure diversity happens in every level of this organization; but that does not mean that everyone accepts it and wants diversity."

Affirming the narrative of a tolerant Netherlands who "really care" about diversity, Zara's initial response is a direct engagement with the dominant script. In the process of projecting this script, she speaks as an institutional member, not a subject who encounters diversity measures. As her actions confirm the dominant script, her speech maintains a complacent, indifferent stance to the same end. Diversity becomes an organizational goal to be systematically implemented "in every level" of the organization. She then frames diversity measures as influences upon workplace dynamics, but from a bystander's perspective; diversity is an institutional measure that impacts "everyone"—the whole organizational team. By this move, Zara does not personalize her experience of diversity, nor acknowledge her ethnic identity, despite its relevance to diversity dynamics in Dutch workplaces. Zara's choice to abstain from commentary again characterizes herself as an object character navigating an institutional structure and playing the part of neutral employee, not ethnic employee. This object character is a plot device of the dominant narrative to promote the enactment of an institutional identity.

Maria: "When I would go to the organizations I was to network with, it was most often difficult to be taken seriously because I would always feel this kind of friction; they would always think I would go there because I wanted to do something cultural in the sense of cultural diversity…; this was funny because this was, of course, not was I doing at all. So I always had to make sure 'No, this is not about Indonesian culture; this is not about bringing together of different parts of the world. This is just about music. This is just about theater.' This was kind of frustrating so I dropped that quite fast and then I moved on to other things. But that was the one organization and one experience I did experience where I really felt that I wasn't Dutch."

As a point of narrative climax, Maria focuses upon her employee tasks as key factors in her employee identity formation. Viewing tasks through the lens of the dominant narrative builds upon the established meanings attached to migrant character types as members of an organization to also include meanings attached to their performances as employees. Here, the "token" migrant type becomes an assumed state of being and an assumed expectation for institutional behavior regardless of institutional space. It is associated with Maria when she enacts her employee identity, including when she is outside her workplace or interacting with people outside her organizational group. Narratively, Maria's plot choices—in this case employee actions—are made into deliberate expressions of a migrant employee status simply by virtue of her ethnic background. The public narrative herein manifests as a public expectation of migrant behavior provoked by the construction of policy types. With migrants serving as targets of diversity policy initiatives, the public associates their public narrative with their identity; they must seek to "do something cultural" to enforce a diversity agenda, as if the agenda is self-imposed and not publicly-endorsed. In fact, this very diversity agenda narrative depends upon the existence of the policy target. The dominant narrative prescribes Maria an intertwined Dutch institutional and ethnic employee identity, promoting their reinforcement for political gain. Restricting her from Dutch structural customs, on account of her ethnic presentation, while also promoting the same identity expression, the dominant narrative fosters a dual identity expectation that is Dutch in order to advantage organization practices, but at the same time, a

minority object to advantage the organization image. This created dual identity type assumes a Dutch environment, a Dutch expression, but an ethnic presentation for institutional advantage. Maria's characterization moves her character throughout institutional settings as an object type who must suppress and express ethnic identity per Dutch institutional request.

Lisa: "They make it very difficult for people who are not the norm to actually stay at that organization…Even though you get hired, and they are conscious of the fact that they need more diversity, which is my case is mostly ethnic…even if that happens but organization structures do not actually accommodate diversity, then the thing that happens is that I get hired, I don't feel that I belong there and then I'm gone in a couple of months; that did happen."

As Lisa's response directly attests to the disconnect between organization intentions and organization accommodations, it represents the foundational techniques of public narrative creation, specifically its performative nature and its corresponding symbolic implementation. Contrary to a general understanding of the "token diversity employee" type as a sought after minority hired largely for their minority status, Lisa assumes the role after the fact (the fact being the hiring process). It thus appears that regardless if an organization hires objectively and treats the "diversity subject" with "good intentions"—or what Lisa later describes as "not like they are trying to exclude" intentions—adopting a starting point for acceptance does not guarantee its success. In other words, a motion to oppose the "token" type is not effective if it derives from a symbolic value judgment. The value judgment, in this case, is the assumed status of the migrant policy type as inherently manipulated, as victimized, as in need of Dutch intervention. The problem with this adopted frame is that upon the mere inclusion of "the victim" into their organization, the institution assumes they fulfilled their part. They neglect to consider policy subjects as objectified policy objects under the false pretense that the physical separation of migrant from their public narrative—as now included rather than "Other-ed"—suffices to be called inclusionary. The emotional, personal, intersectional and layered manifestation of

individual migrant narratives are not taken into account. From these responses, the institutional promotion of the public narrative is evident, regardless if the participants personalize their employee experiences of diversity. The dominant narrative ultimately uses migrants as institutional object props in one of two ways: to knowingly put on a pedestal for institutional clout or to ignorantly celebrate as statement pieces.

In the literary canon, "falling action" typically follows the climax before the "resolution" is reached. For the narratives of these second-generation migrant women, the term "falling action" is rather accurate; extensive, recurring character struggles plague their narrative paths and "resolution" serves more as an illusion or a hypothetical gesture towards change. All three women recount tensions between their employee identities and ethnic identities as evoking challenges in their workplace environment. In other words, the "falling action" plot elements thus reveal the significance of narrative construction for these women, unveiling the impact of public narratives upon the effects, in addition to the processes and contexts, of story formation. I analyze this narrative segment in the following section, where rhetoric and identity analyses contribute to an assessment of the outcomes of public narratives upon workplace dynamics.

Section II: Navigating Identities within the "Dominant Narrative"

In terms of identity expression as an object type, the dominant narrative initiates a "double-bind" experience of ethnic employee identity: individuals must either suppress their ethnic identity to "integrate" as an employee or leave their organization all together. Each workplace story provided by these interview accounts conveys the dualities of identity expression for ethnic employees, exposing a storyline of false "diversity" projections. Serving as a commonality between accounts, each participant's choice to leave an organization on account of treatment—in this case of a failed "diversity" culture—signifies the tangible impact of the

overarching public narrative over the trajectory of migrant life-stories. Attempts of challenging the dominant narrative present as situational plot re-directions, not agentic character choices. As a source of conflict for intersectional identities in the workplace, I inquired about the "diversity question" in the workplace environments of each participant. I analyze their responses separately below.

Interviewer: "Are there any assumptions made about you on account of your background?"
Zara: "They ask "what do you think of Ardiwon? How did your parents raise you?

In response to this question, Zara appears to challenge the public "pro-diversity" façade and the "integration to diversify" promotional narrative. Zara's responses contribute a personal narrative account that displays the contrast between the types, wherein the public façade is intentional in discriminatory gestures, but the promotional narrative is an unintentional product of ignorance. Portraying the questions from her colleagues as reductive and limiting, Zara's responses narrate a story of historic identity manipulation: routinely reduced to stereotypes, Zara does not perceive the inquiries into her past as genuine, personal curiosity but as a reminder of the stereotypes ascribed to her identity. The intentions of her co-worker are irrelevant so long as their impact is detrimental to her embodiment of identity in her workplace. In this narrative discourse, the co-worker engages in promotional rhetoric and Zara's employee identity portrayal falls into the politicized character type role. Attempting to create a dialogue of "accepting diversity" in line with the political narrative and its institutional initiatives, the colleague perceives Zara as a "diversity subject" employee. Responding to her coworker's interrogation, she states, "why does it matter?". Taken less as an inclusionary inquiry and more as an unwelcome assessment of her identity expression, the co-worker question fosters a strained dynamic between ethnic and non-ethnic employees in Zara's workplace setting. As Zara deems this assessment as unnecessary, she implies that her individual choice of ethnic identity

expression should not rest on the evaluation of her Dutch colleagues. Zara's response does not

discount her ethnic identity, but nonetheless, it suggests her ethnic identity is an obstacle to her

enactment of an individual employee identity, but instead, limits her to the singular option of

politicized character type. As an ethnic employee in a Dutch workplace setting, Zara faces

narrative conflicts of which she has no control over: challenges to her identity expression which

prompt undesirable shifts in identity enactment are challenges to characterization which prompt

involuntary shifts in her character development.

Zara also responds to the "diversity" question in her workplace through an act of

conformity to dominant discursive practices:

Zara: "The diversity position of the municipality of Rotterdam is politicized and also we don't talk about diversity because people get really scared. Diversity scares them so we talk about inclusion."

Rhetorically speaking, Zara corresponds public, political rhetoric to feelings of "people"

generally. The end goal of achieving "diversity" is redirected; the narrative is now oriented

towards "inclusion", though equally performative from Zara's perspective. Zara speaks as an

employee of the organization in part, stating "*we* don't talk about diversity" but also ascribes the

fear of diversity to "them"—an implied public persona which is not of a diverse identity

background. This construction situates her embrace of diversity as stunted by a politicized

"them" whom she does not identify with. This active dis-identification with public discourse

collides with her enactment of public rhetoric. Despite conceiving of diversity as a public

mindset and discursive practice, she produces the antithesis of "diversity rhetoric" in the Dutch

context— "Othering" rhetoric. Arguably counter-productive, these rhetorical practices maintain

ethnically-divisive workplace discourses. In a practical engagement with the realities of a Dutch

workplace, her narrative is an adoption of dominant rhetorical modes. The suggestion of

"inclusion" holds Zara within a "diversity subject" character type. Though characterized within

the "we" who initiates the transition from diversity discussion to integration discussion, she does not discount institutional diversity measures, but instead simplifies the transition as if it is widely accepted as a politicized narrative shift. The masked "pro-diversity" culture, embodied by the public sphere of The Netherlands and here reinforced by rhetorical means, enables the often performative diversity guise to dismiss pragmatic diversity measures on an institutional level. Her use of "Othering" rhetoric thereby re-inscribes the false diversity performance by constructing a personal account where anti-diversity intentions align with the anti-diversity measures of her workplace.

In a second response to my question, Zara attempts to embrace an ethnic employee identity to no avail, further representing the control of the dominant narrative over character progression for migrant employees. Illustrating this, she provides an account of a co-worker who speaks Turkish in the hallways of her workplace:

Zara: "So this one girl came up to him and was like, 'we get really annoyed when you are speaking Turkish because you should speak Dutch'; and he was like… 'and this is the reason people radicalize; this is the reason why people turn their back to society; this is the reason people don't feel included in the organization; and you're the ones always yelling 'why aren't they here?'; this is the reason. Why am I not allowed to speak my own language?"

It is apparent from her description that Zara's workplace overtly adopts an institutional implementation of the public "integration" discourse, presenting a Dutch workplace that follows unspoken prerequisites for Dutch identity performance. The ambiguous surface, yet underlying specificity, of adequate "Dutchness" acts as a situational tool for the dominant narrative. Expecting assimilation into Dutch norms of behavior, in this case of a singular language practice, the constructed dynamic signifies the failure to consider intersections of ethnic and employee identity. Correspondingly, when the politicized narrative may intend to achieve labor force equality for migrants, for instance, it evaluates their representation as employees, not migrant

employees. The dominant narrative expectation in Netherlands workplaces is that all employees will follow the same storyline—as long as that storyline is Dutch-serving. This circumstantial creation of ideal Dutch behaviors contributes to the narrative objectification of migrant employees. Promoting constantly changing expectations of identity performance, the dominant narrative hinders these character plot movements as they attempt to enact ethnic employee identities.

As an example of failed individual identity enactment, Lisa's narrative "falling action" addresses workplace dynamics around her migrant background as the result of her self-presentation in addition to socially-constructed stereotypes. She holds herself accountable for her narrative path, though she moves within the dominant framework. Lisa positions herself as a performative character by virtue of the performative workplace climate. The migrant character types projected unto Lisa encompass a wide breadth: "So Dutch"; "So Western"; "Modern"; "Progressive"; "One of them". Yet, her response is not to foreground her ethnic identity in the workplace setting, but to analyze her positioning as somewhere between migrant type and Dutch employee.

Lisa: "I don't think you would ever know that I am a person of color. That created access for me to a lot of jobs, but the assumption is then that I am 'completely Dutch'"

Despite Lisa's noted distance from her ethnic background, she satisfies the very factors that construct the ideal character type for second-gen migrants in the public discourse: as educated, as actively assimilating, as integrating to the dominant language, as "Dutch" enough to not be cast as an outsider. While her presentation as "light-skinned" and non-Muslim further conceals her ethnic and cultural background, it simultaneously enables her labor force success, prompting job access on the assumed ties between her employee identity and Dutch identity. Taken together, Lisa's narrative exposes a dichotomy in the politicized narrative: she embodies

the success narrative for the migrant policy type but does not align with the "diversity subject"—as in not suitable for a migrant identity on promotional workplace display. In short, Lisa's "falling action" adds yet another control mechanism to the politicized narrative in a workplace setting: characterizing successful migrant employee status in terms of displacement from ethnic background. In fact, the certain forces which "help me present myself in the workplace and kinda allow me to adapt," Lisa notes, are the combined effect of identity constraint and identity performance; by restricting migrant identity expression, Lisa confirms "Dutchness". Despite acknowledging this interplay, and its suppressive effect upon her ethnic identity, Lisa goes along with the dominant narrative in order to achieve her desired character achievement. Pinned between character success and public characterization, Lisa encounters a narrative double-bind. Lisa's predicament illustrates the inherent paradox of the dominant narrative: when it attempts to raise minority status through a politicized promotion of difference, it presents a public migrant: one whose achievements are institutional, whose identity expressions are surface-level, and whose narrative is simple and sequential, not tangential. In significance, the dominant narrative constructs a public migrant to the detriment of the individual migrant.

Maria tells a story of an internal conflict between a desire to be treated as ethnic and a desire to be treated as non-ethic in the workplace. Describing the challenges of corresponding ethnicity and job performance, Maria implies that both she and her co-workers internalize "pro-diversity" performances and token character props:

Maria: "In the team itself, it kinda translated into having to talk to these people without feeling like a token and making sure that they would address me not as a token, but as a colleague."

Induced by the overarching tools of dominant narrative construction, Maria perceives her circumstance as an unfortunate outcome of intersecting employee and ethnic identities. Her tokenization relies upon her treatment and her structural positioning as a member of the

organization, so fittingly, she accesses a medium which exists at the exchange of interpersonal dynamics and institutional structures: discourse. She assesses rhetoric as a means of re-structuring workplace diversity culture for her own experience. Despite these intentions, Maria does not deem her ethnic background as relevant to her workplace setting, and rather, as misconstruing her role in the workplace. Though this provoked her to leave workplaces, her outlook was not critical of the dominant narrative as a limitation upon performances for migrant women, but suggested a longing to be deemed Dutch. The sensation of feeling that one "wasn't Dutch" is an experience Maria attributes to the objectification of her ethnicity only indirectly; her focus lies more in workplace performances as a "non-Dutch" employee. This narrative construction therefore maintains the dominance of discursive and structural powers which position minorities and native Dutch as oppositional members of society, and not as oppositional ethnic categories, thus maintaining a "tolerant" image in The Netherlands.

As participants experience symbolic diversity and diversity implementation at odds in their workplaces, they illustrate the disconnect between a politicized narrative construction and its manifestation in individual experiences of migrant employees. In all of these accounts, ethnic identity serves as a plot obstacle to individual identity enactment, provoking migrant employees to suppress their characterization and plot movements to achieve institutional success as an employee; the result confines them to character type roles wherein they are either the "successful migrant" or the political "diversity subject" or the "Dutch enough" migrant. Working in an environment that projects the dominant narrative of diversity as integration, the migrant employee storyline is predetermined; they must suppress their ethnic identity to succeed within their employee identity.

Section III: Subject vs Object Narratives

As these narrative constructions align with public narratives, they are significant revelations of public narrative internalization; what is detrimental to migrant experience is also avoidable if narrators, whether of the dominant narrative or its targets, recognize their narratives as means of self- and re-definition. This suggestion guides my theoretical frame of "narrative agency", which I define as the following: Narrative agency is the idea that an individual can enact agency through narrative. Narrative agency is here conceived of as an act of self-definition outside of the public, politicized and dominant narratives that define the experience of societal members. It holds that narratives are not cumulative stories, but rather are temporally linked to society in a structural and symbolic sense. In turn, their structural formation is dependent upon preconceptions of identity, including its individual membership and group membership. Given that the process of story-telling is historically and culturally grounded in a period and contextual moment, it can be difficult to detach from the dominant narrative; similarly, it can be difficult to detach from a social structure; but narrative agency presents one means of recognizing positionality outside of the systems which limit expression. These interview accounts exemplify "narrative agency" in their revelations of a nuanced space between identity subjectivity and identity objectivity. I return to Zara's workplace experience in particular to exemplify this notion.

The recounted migrant narratives emerge a narrative formation process which challenges the pro-diversity facade by exposing its control mechanisms. Specifically, these narratives negotiate identity narratives between institutional membership and public character type embodiment. In one interview response, Zara challenges the image of the dominant narrative, suggesting it has flawed motives:

Zara: "They work on topics that matter to the citizens of [the city], and like 207 different nationalities live in [the city]; imagine only white people working from their own biases on topics that affect those people—it went all wrong. They thought 'Oh, we need more diversity' because [the city] is diverse."

Notably, this is a directional change in narrative course achieved by dis-identifying with her institutional identity. While perhaps not consciously distinguishing between these accounts as micro-level institutional efforts and macro-level initiatives, Zara's choice nevertheless shifts her narrative from diversity workplace dynamics to diversity agenda-setting in the public domain. This transitionary moment in Zara's narrative reflects a personal recognition of the public conception of diversity. By this logic, her narrative attaches the "pro-diversity" façade to intentional institutional maneuvers; and in characterization terms, she detaches: her status as an institutional member cannot co-exist with her challenge to the public narrative. Her account therefore represents the struggled embodiment of employee identity as migrant women suffer forced characterization under public narrative control. However, it also presents an access point to control over narrative formation. If detachment from institutional membership enables detachment from a migrant policy type, then perhaps, the migrant character type can intentionally detach from the institutional structures which objectify their status positioning. Achievement of this potential detachment requires an awareness of the dominant narrative and its institutional practices. Arguably, Zara achieves subjectivity through a discursive re-direction of her characterization. Considering society at-large, framing herself as outside the "they" of her organization, she moves away from her object characterization under the dominant narrative. No longer an employee striving towards a title, she is a self-critical member of society unbound by an institutional structure. By embodying societal membership, Zara creates subjectivity in the public domain despite its historic control over her identity progression. Zara goes to the source of public narrative creation to obtain my hypothesized "narrative agency".

Discussion

All three participants define politicized diversity relative to its creation of public discourse. The dominant narrative achieves prevalence and prominence when the public sphere reaffirms the dominant ideologies. In this respect, the public sphere not only accounts for the practices of a politicized narrative, but initiates and condones its ideological formation. If, then, institutions like workplaces participate in the policy practices of the dominant narrative, they also participate in its ideological impacts on society. As a result, attempts of diversity implementation must not be seen as objective or historically-bound and isolated occurrences, but as culturally-contrived. Recognition of performative public discourse on migrants stems from a recognition of its ideological foundations as deeply rooted in social structures and identity processes over time, not the insightful choice of a progressive governmental institution or the willful endorsement by a local organization. Like policy gestures, narrative story-telling is rooted in attitudes, ideologies, and identities, and can be performative, but un-like public narratives, it creates individualized personal narratives which have the potential to move within and without of dominant narrative controls—but only if narrative formation is understood; hence the objective of my research.

My paper attempts to discuss this dominant narrative as if it is a societal system of power defining expression for its societal members. Post-structuralism lends insight into this perspective of narrative as a production of identity and a result of power structures. Arguing a post-structuralism angle rather than an anthropological approach to identity formation, Bendl, Fleischmann and Walenta write, "…It is precisely this emphasis on the discursive production of identity that politicises political agency" (386). In other words, a public conception of agency is formed through identity production. Without identities attached to agency, agency cannot exist. With this in mind, it is important to consider not only the performative quality of identities as

being a result of social structures, but as forces which create social understandings. This distinction applies to my interpretation of oppositional subjective and objective identities. What society may consider a stereotype produced by societal structures, is also a character type produced for those social structures to exploit, perform, and mold particular character pathways—thus objectifying its societal members. The agency within identity exists at this crossroads; an object is a product of social structures and a tool of social structures, but a subject adds meaning to social structures in place. The subject has the potential to politicize its object meaning.

When applied to narrative this frame focuses upon the construction of character types, forced characterization and constrained character trajectories as comparable to constraints over societal members. Existing within the figurative and the literal, I use identity formation as my unit of comparison. The first component of my analysis serves as a guide for my literature review, but especially for the first component of my hypothesis. The interview participants reveal narratives which adhere to character type constructions in the public sphere, often describing themselves as befitting to the archetypal employee mold. While such descriptions may be subconscious, internalized, learned and likely unintentional, the parallels between the accounts and the public narrative projection of their identities is noteworthy. As the characters adhere to character type construction, they occupy what I term an "object type". This "object type" not only defines character expression, but the spaces and contexts for that object, usually with respect to institutional practices and expectations. These character control mechanisms of the dominant narrative do not allow for individual subjectivity on a purely performative level. The following section divulges processes of character progression and identity formation over time. Now considering the "object type" as an "object identity", individual identity is not only a

controlled performance, but a controlled identity expression. Individual subjectivity exists within a narrative tradeoff: the individual must suppress one identity in order to enact another. The final sub-section considers opportunities to enact individual subjectivity within the dominant narrative and its "object type" and "object identity" constructions. This final sub-section, at the very least, hopes to open a dialogue for future theoretical analysis. At most, it aspires to suggest the importance of narrative formation to control over subjectivity and identity formation in spite of an objectifying narrative power.

I recognize that the presented accounts are not generalizable; yet my emphasis rests on the methodological and analytical framework established. My argument strives to present this framework as a means of interpretation that is applicable to any rhetorical narrative construction process. My analytical starting point is biased, but intentionally so: my research assesses identity formation through discourse from the analytical starting point of a known identity, not a blank identity label. My argument does not intend to portray identity as solely an agentic choice, but it does intend to show how societies strip certain identities of self-definition by imposing normalized expectations for behavior. The result prompts a particular subjectivity to the selected interview questions and narrative types. Subjectivity is, in this sense, an analytical tool deployed to establish the grounds for narrative construction.

The commonalities between these accounts may prove to be significant if a comparative study is conducted and reveals a pattern of a different response to the same questions from a large group of native Dutch participants. If this is a conclusion drawn, then it would confirm the projection of a dominant narrative trajectory. For instance, the correlation in response from the migrant perspective to my rising action question, "what do you do in your position?", may vary from another participant angle. However, because education is seen as the avenue to labor

market success for migrants, a variation would confirm my hypothesized internalization of the dominant narrative attached to migrant experiences in The Netherlands. Linguistically, research on a native Dutch population, or a group of men, or a group of teenagers, may reflect the same rhetorical mannerisms as the participants I interviewed. This apparent fallacy actually aids my argument. What appears as normative language use may, in fact, be intrinsically tied to systems of power which marginalize certain groups in society. Such language is then another instance of internalized rhetoric worth analyzing through my framework.

Conclusion

It is widely understood that discrimination has a detrimental impact on its targeted individuals and groups. While an ethnographic approach to discrimination may assess micro-level inequality production as a microcosm for discrimination, but speak in generalized criticism of "the system", or a policy critique may target governmental institutions for their misrepresentation of a social group, but not account for the varying experiences of "the actor", the exchanges in-between are often difficult to evaluate. My research attempts to access this methodological gap by tying an actor's story to a group's story to a systemic story. My paper thus considers narrative as a microcosm *and* a macrocosm of societal discrimination. I believe it is necessary to critique the forces which produce the dominant narrative as not only publicly-constituted but self-constituted. When a migrant's ability to complete their job is at stake due to the system which intends to equalize, diversify, and provide access to that same position, then the public narrative must be critically analyzed as a mechanism which constructs narrative trajectories for both migrants and native Dutch; though the former may suffer the implications of a diversity façade against their will, the latter may perpetuate it against their knowledge.

This critical lens signifies subjectivity as a tool that is already linked to dominant narrative controls; the agentic quality is therefore to recognize and understand one's positioning in order to alter it. If we want to consider how marginalized groups experience acceptance, then we need to consider the ways in which they can obtain that acceptance. Rather than asking Dutch natives to "accept the Other"—and thus re-inscribing "Othering" rhetoric, the policy facades of integration, and public sphere "tolerance" narratives in The Netherlands—I show how narrative can provide marginalized identities a tool for identity construction outside societal inscriptions of migrant employee experience.

[Appendix A]

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INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

The purpose of this study is to analyze the narrative accounts of second-generation migrant women in the labor as representations of larger processes of narrative formation in the public sphere of The Netherlands.

This interview will be completed in a duration of approximately 30-45 minutes. Any questions asked during this interview are optional; you may choose to abstain from a question if you so choose. You may also choose to withdraw your responses at any point throughout the interview.

Additionally, the interview is anonymous so your responses will remain confidential. Any recorded responses will be stored in confidence as well as erased at the end of the research project, concluding December 3rd, 2019.

The research avoids inclusion of any identifying information, using instead false names and workplace titles.

Please address any questions or concerns to the email and/or phone number listed at the top of this form. You may also address questions or concerns to the SIT Academic Director, Dr. Jana Byars (Jana.Byars@sit.edu).

The following Rights Notice outlines specific conditions of the interview procedure.

RIGHTS NOTICE:

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT ISP proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by a Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.

    a. *Privacy* - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.

    b. *Anonymity* - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.

c. ***Confidentiality*** - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.

_____   _____

Participant's name printed   **Participant's signature and date**

Ashley Little   Ashley Little   11-20-19

Interviewer's name printed   **Interviewer's signature and date**

[Appendix B]

Interview Questions:

1) Brief overview of career background:
    a. What position do you hold?
    b. What brought you to this job (i.e. personal job searching out of interest, out of qualifications due to education and/or work history, etc.)?
    c. (Briefly) What are your tasks/duties in your workplace?

2) Brief overview of workplace:
    a. Describe your most recent or current workplace environment.
        i. What are your thoughts on your workplace environment, generally?
    b. How does your place of employment treat diversity in the workplace?
    c. (If applicable) How does your organization implement diversity initiatives?

3) Identity Questions:
    a. Do you believe your identity as a migrant woman impacts your treatment in the workplace?
        i. Are there any assumptions made about you on the basis of Dutch language proficiency, employment history, religious affiliation, etc.?
    b. Do you believe Dutch workplaces are representative of your community?
        i. Do they reach you as an audience?
        ii. Do they foster an "exclusive" environment (i.e. on the basis of religion, gender, etc.)?

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