

## **Exploring Variation in the Moroccan-Dutch Collective Narrative: An Intersectional Approach**

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*Collective identities are constructed and negotiated in interaction. The dynamics of collective identity construction in the interactions of group members, however, remain understudied. Taking into consideration public discourses of ethnicity and religion in the Netherlands, in this article we explore the uses of narrative in intragroup identity construction among Moroccan-Dutch young adults. In line with theories of intersectionality, we expected intragroup identity construction to be influenced by the specific location of participants in a matrix of intersecting identity categories. Narratives were elicited in focus groups that varied by gender and by the educational level of the participants. We compared the content and import of stories in each group. We found that participants across groups told similar stories in which they referred to the treatment of their group at a societal level. However, we also found that the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and level of educational attainment influenced the way our participants narrated their everyday experiences, and, in particular, their relations with native Dutch neighbors, fellow students, and coworkers. An intersectional analysis shows how, faced with negative stereotypes regarding their ethnic and religious background, Moroccan-Dutch young adults variously accept, reject, and act in relation to those stereotypes.*

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In the Netherlands, Moroccan-Dutch young adults<sup>1</sup> deal with a negatively valued ethnic and religious identity. Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands are popularly ranked lowest in the ethnic hierarchy (Hagendoorn & Pepels, 2003; Van Praag, 2006), and the second generation in particular is associated with drug abuse, school failure, delinquency, and crime (J. D. De Jong, 2007; Van Gemert, 1998; Werdmölder, 2005). Since 9/11, public criticism has shifted from Moroccan migrants' ethnic

<sup>1</sup> We use the term "Moroccan-Dutch young adults" to refer to second-generation Moroccan immigrants who have Dutch citizenship.

background to their religious background, with Islam increasingly portrayed as a threat to Dutch values of tolerance and liberalism, and, indeed, as a threat to Dutch society (De Koning & Meijer, 2010). These trends have serious consequences for young people. Despite their efforts to integrate into Dutch society, Moroccan-Dutch young adults indicate they experience episodes of exclusion and discrimination in their everyday lives (Omlo, 2011).

Negative evaluations of Moroccan-Dutch young people's ethnic and religious background in the public sphere has spurred a recent literature on Moroccan-Dutch youths' identification strategies (Buitelaar, 2008; De Koning, 2008; Ketner, 2008). However, focusing on relations with the dominant majority as the only significant "other" for minority groups ignores the centrality of ingroup issues (Verkuyten, 2005). Such within-group issues can be described in terms of *intersectionality*. Intersectionality theory recognizes that ethnic identifications among group members often intersect with other identities based on class, gender, and so on. Adopting an intersectional approach to the study of ethnic minorities moves beyond the essentialist assumption that ethnic identities are bipolar, oriented either toward the "original" culture or the dominant "host" culture (Espiritu, 1994). In this article, we focus on intragroup identification processes, and we examine how intersectionality works to construct a variegated collective identity.

Scholarly interest in how ethnic identification is acted out in everyday discourse and local interactions has increased considerably in the last decades (e.g., Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2006; Verkuyten, 1997; Waters, 1990). More recently, scholarship on ethnic identification has been characterized by a turn toward narrative (e.g., Anthias, 2002; De Fina, 2003, 2008; Spickard & Burroughs, 2000). Stories are considered important analytical tools in the study of identity since "narrators construct their identities as characters in opposition/ affiliation with other characters and in relation to social circumstances," thereby setting the boundaries of the social groups to which they belong and do not belong (De Fina, 2003, p. 185). Furthermore, it is argued that the shared schemas on which narratives are built can contribute to the creation and maintenance of shared representations of self and other (De Fina, 2003; Thorne, 2004). Shared narrative schemas contribute to the construction and maintenance of a shared identity.

In this article, we study how Moroccan-Dutch young adults, facing negative evaluations of both their ethnic and their religious identity, (re)construct their position in Dutch society. We use a narrative approach to explore the collective identity of Moroccan-Dutch young adults, taking into account the likelihood that the stories people tell, and the collective identity they construct, vary based on their position on an identity matrix. More specifically we ask: (1) How do the stories told by Moroccan-Dutch young adults vary by gender? (2) How do the stories told by Moroccan-Dutch young adults vary by educational level? (3) How do gender and educational level intersect to produce distinctive collective narratives and collective identities?

### Storytelling and Identity

Researchers have turned to narrative analysis to gain insight into individual identities and collective ones (Archakis & Tzanne, 2005; De Fina, 2003; McAdams, 1993; Polletta, 1998). Narratives or stories are accounts of events, but events that are "selected, organized, connected and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience" (Riessman, 1993, p. 1). The stories people tell offer insight into how they make sense of themselves and their social world. Stories, in this view, are not only things people tell, but also things people live (Polletta, Chen, Gardner, & Motes, 2011).

Researchers developed the concept of the *collective narrative* to refer to a collection of stories with similar themes told by group members (Cornell, 2000; Plummer, 2001; Salzer, 1998).<sup>2</sup> A

<sup>2</sup> In the following, we refer to the accounts given by focus-group participants as "stories." We refer to the account of what it is to be Moroccan-Dutch that these stories draw from and contribute to as "narrative."

collective narrative need not be a single story relating the same events in the same order with the same dénouement. Rather, it is present as common narrative themes in group members' stories. A collective narrative emerges both in recurrent experiences and recurrent interpretations of those experiences and their import (Cornell, 2000). The presence of collective narratives in individuals' self-accounts communicates a shared collective identity (Salzer, 1998).

While early research on narrative identity tended to rely on long personal accounts elicited in interviews, clinical encounters, and autobiographical writing (Freeman, 2007), scholars more recently have sought to capture the kinds of stories that people tell in their everyday lives. Stories elicited in natural contexts are closer to people's experiences and selves. Such "small stories" tend to be multiauthored, complex in structure, and often ambiguous in point (Georgakopoulou, 2006). The message or the moral of a story often requires interpretation on the part of audiences, who help the narrator decide what the point of the story is (Polanyi, 1989; Polletta et al., 2011).

Small stories play an important part in the negotiation of collective identities (De Fina, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006). In previous research into the narration of the collective Moroccan-Dutch identity (Prins, Van Stekelenburg, Polletta, & Klandermans, 2013), we found that short stories narrated in interaction played an important part in challenging and revising a Moroccan-Dutch narrative as it was represented in different focus groups. In the present article, we extend our knowledge of the negotiation of collective narratives by examining how the narration of a collective identity is affected by the experience of belonging to separate, but intersecting, identity categories.

### Intersectionality and Positioning

Identity refers to the ways we define ourselves in relation to others. The social constructionist perspective on identity holds that identity construction is an interactional process. The identities produced in interaction are not fixed but are changeable constructs (De Fina et al., 2006). Depending on the context and the interlocutor, people do not display only one identity derived from one social category to which they belong, but rather they choose from an inventory of possible identities (De Fina, 2006).

Spurred by discussions in the feminist movement in the 1980s, the intersectional approach to identity construction holds that these different possible identities do not exist as separate and unified entities. Rather, they work together in complex ways to produce unique and qualitatively different identities (Hill Collins, 1998). For example, in the feminist movement, dominated in the 1980s by white, heterosexual, middle-class women, it was recognized that women of different color, sexual orientation, and/or class were subjected to different or additional forms of oppression (Eijberts, 2013). In other words, a person's location at the intersection of different identity categories leads to distinct experiences.

How identities are experienced at the intersection of identity categories is related to how people are positioned within discursive practices regarding these identity categories. Positioning theory holds that people are constituted by discursive practices (Harré & Van Langenhoven, 1999). Yet at the same time, people are both subject to discourse *and* agents in the construction of discourse as they negotiate new positions in interaction with others (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Bamberg, 2004).

In this study, we make use of combined theory on intersectionality and positioning to show that identity is differently constructed, and differently experienced, depending on participants' position in a matrix of social categories. How our participants experience these social categories depends on the way they are both positioned by existing discourses and how they actively reshape those discourses in their everyday interactions.

## Discourses about Moroccan-Dutch Young Adults

Previous research on Moroccan-Dutch young adults has pointed out that negative discourses of religion and ethnicity influence the experience of this group and their ethnic and religious identifications (Buitelaar, 2008; De Koning, 2008; Entzinger, 2009; Ketner, 2008). At the same time, in line with theories of intersectionality, researchers have observed that these negative discourses carry different consequences for men and women and for individuals enrolled in different educational programs (M. De Jong, 2012; Entzinger, 2009; Saharso, 1992).

The “Marokkanenprobleem” (Moroccan problem), for example, is often discussed as a problem related to Moroccan-Dutch young men. Criminal activities, aggression, loitering, and poor school performance are attributed to Moroccan-Dutch young men rather than young women (J. D. De Jong, 2007; Van Gemert, 1998; Werdmölder, 2005). As a consequence, Moroccan-Dutch young women tend to suffer less from these stereotypes (M. De Jong, 2012; Saharso, 1992). Similarly, differences between Moroccan-Dutch young men and women are observed in relation to discourses about Islam (Diehl, Koenig, & Ruckdeschel, 2009; Ewing, 2008; Korteweg & Yurkudal, 2009). Whereas anti-Islamic discourses predominantly cast males as violent or potential terrorists, more recently, the covered Muslim woman has become a symbol of anti-Islamic sentiment. The practice of veiling has become a symbol for the supposed oppression of Muslim women (Ewing, 2008).

The way Moroccan-Dutch young adults experience the consequences of ethnic and religious stereotyping has been shown to vary by level of educational attainment. Education is related to higher levels of ethnic consciousness among ethnic minority groups (Duncan, 2002). Education specifically about the subordinate position of ethnic minorities in society may increase levels of ethnic consciousness among higher educated individuals (Duncan, 2002).

Ethnic consciousness may also be increased by life experiences of discrimination or injustice (Duncan, 2002, 2012). Research in the Netherlands suggests that Moroccan-Dutch young men and women in higher educational levels, which tend to be more heterogeneous in terms of ethnic composition than the lower educational levels, are more frustrated by negative stereotypes, as they often feel they have to defend their ethnic and religious heritage in relation to their native Dutch<sup>3</sup> classmates (M. De Jong, 2012). In other words, being well educated, one of the ostensible requirements for successful integration, does not protect more highly educated individuals from the experience of exclusion. The increased sensitivity to experiences of exclusion by more highly educated (second-generation) immigrants is referred to as the “integration paradox” (Buijs, Demant, & Hamdy, 2006).

Thus variation can be found in the ways that stigmatizing discourses affect the everyday lives of Moroccan-Dutch young people. This means that we can also expect variation in the ways Moroccan-Dutch young people craft their identities in relation to these discourses. By applying an intersectional approach, we aim to study how the everyday lives of Moroccan-Dutch young men and women are affected by public and political discourses about them and how the combination of ethnicity, gender, and educational level gives rise to variation in the way they experience and respond to those discourses.

### Studying Storytelling in Focus Groups

#### *Focus Groups*

To study the construction and negotiation of identities in interaction, we used focus groups, a valuable means for capturing the social construction of meaning (Gamson, 1992): in this instance

<sup>3</sup> As members of a second generation of immigrants, Moroccan-Dutch young adults are also “native” to the Netherlands. We use the term anyway to mark the distinction between Moroccan-Dutch people and Dutch people without a recent immigrant background.

**Table 1.** Participants per Group

	MBO <sup>4</sup>	HBO <sup>5</sup>	WO <sup>6</sup>
<b>Male</b>	7	7	<b>7</b>
<b>Female</b>	6	6	<b>6</b>

being a Moroccan-Dutch young adult. The construction of shared meaning in focus groups is a complex process, and we expected there to be differences both in the experiences related and in how to interpret those experiences. We focused on the processes that led either to a resolution of these differences, to the explicit recognition of disagreement, or to some other response.

We used groups of peers as we expected peers to be more at ease with each other. Some researchers have argued that by composing groups of peers, the focus group resembles most the group of people with whom we would naturally discuss certain topics in our daily lives (Kitzinger, 1994). Other researchers however, have observed that the setting of the focus group (in terms of the introduction of a topic, the presence of group members, and the interaction with the researcher) poses limitations for the “natural” character of the conversation (Hollander, 2004). Rather than treating the stories we elicited in the focus groups as ones that came “naturally” to participants, and ones that they would have told in other settings, we paid attention to whether the stories were offered spontaneously or were told in response to the moderator’s prompt.

Six focus groups were conducted, with a total of 39 participants. All participants were second-generation Moroccan-Dutch, all were practicing Muslims, and all were resident citizens of the Netherlands. Groups consisted of six to seven participants, between 18 and 24 years old. Participants were enrolled through schools and through the networks of Moroccan-Dutch students already participating in the project. The focus-group sessions took place in the schools and universities that the participants attended. Each focus group consisted of either male or female participants and of participants enrolled either in lower vocational training, higher vocational training, or academic-level education (Table 1).<sup>7</sup> The focus-group sessions were semistructured. A topic list was used to ask participants about their experiences in school, at work, in their neighbourhood, and about conversations with friends and family. When participants mentioned topics that were not directly related to the topic list, they were encouraged to discuss those topics.

Since research has shown that the ethnicity of the interviewer has an effect on responses, especially when the interview is related to ethnicity (Van Heelsum, 1993), two Moroccan-Dutch interviewers (one male and one female) were trained to moderate the focus-group sessions. The first author of this article was always present to provide an introduction and take notes on the conversation. In the introduction to the focus group, we explained that the anonymity of the participants would be guaranteed. Each participant received a name card with a number on it. Later, we used pseudonyms for each number. With the permission of the participants, we audiotaped all focus-group sessions. The sessions lasted between 60 minutes and two hours.

### *Conceptualizing Stories*

In conceptualizing stories in our data, we depart from current perspectives on narrative, which pay attention to the partial and co-constructed nature of stories (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou,

<sup>4</sup> Lower vocational education for 16+.

<sup>5</sup> Higher technical and vocational education for 17+.

<sup>6</sup> Academic-level education for 18+.

<sup>7</sup> Students in lower vocational training are trained for lower-skilled jobs, mainly in construction, healthcare and childcare, and clerical work. Students in higher vocational training are trained for higher skilled jobs in all sectors of the job market. Academically trained (university) students are trained for careers in science but also for managerial positions in large companies and government agencies.

2008; Bamberg, 2007; Georgakopoulou, 2006). Rather than treating stories as revealing the “truth” behind past events, we consider them a way for narrators to express their perspective on events as well as to communicate a preferred identity in relation to their audience (Patterson, 2008; Squire, 2008).

Central to our approach is the evaluative function of narratives. The evaluation refers to that part of the story in which the narrator conveys the “point” of the story or what he or she is getting at (Labov, 1972). Riessman (1993) observes that the “evaluation” may be considered the “soul of the narrative,” in which the narrator not only expresses the point of the story, but crucially, how he or she “wants to be understood” (p. 20; also see Patterson, 2008). This addition is important as it suggests that it is through the evaluation that a story functions to express or validate a claimed identity (Patterson, 2008). Rather than only presenting events or experiences, a story is a way of presenting the self. By means of presenting the self as protagonist possessing certain (moral) characteristics and attitudes in contrast to its antagonist(s) and social circumstances, the narrator defines the boundaries of the social groups to which he or she belongs (De Fina, 2003, 2006)

Whereas the evaluation was long thought to be present in so-called “evaluative clauses” (reporting how the narrator feels about what happened), current approaches to narrative draw attention to the fragmented and partial nature of evaluations. Now, any clause may be considered relevant in fulfilling the evaluative function (Phoenix, 2008). References to events, rather than serving to inform the audience of “what happened,” may be consciously introduced by narrators to support the point of the narrative or to support the identity claim the narrator wants to make for him or herself in relation to a specific audience (Patterson, 2008). Also, it is argued that the evaluative element of stories may be present in more refined categories such as “intensity markers” (*really, very, huge, terribly*), referring to an individual’s emotional expression of commitment to a story or proposition (Labov, 1984), but also in instances of repetition, direct speech, thought, and dialogue (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 2004). Such expressive devices are vital elements in contributing to the story’s overall meaning (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 2004). Based on these insights, we used the term “story” both to refer to material that is neatly storied by way of episodes or events as well as to more fragmented references to identities claimed on the basis of experience (Patterson, 2008).

Short stories shared in interaction are based on their theme rather than their structure (Squire, 2008). We defined story themes as what the story was about, who was involved, and/or when and where the events took place. In the rest of the article, we will refer to the theme as the *topic* of the story.

We believed that a focus on recurrent topics and evaluations used in stories by group members would provide useful insights into collective-identity construction. It would allow us to see patterns in the way group members expressed and evaluated experiences they had had as members of a particular group. By recounting the same experiences, group members express their identity in terms of “we are the people who. . .” The lacuna is filled by a tale of some sort, a record of events that captures central understandings about what it means to be a member of the group (Cornell, 2000, p. 42). Our aim, however, was not to reify existing story structures: By studying variation in topics and evaluations, we gained insight into how shared representations were negotiated and collectively interpreted.

We reviewed our transcripts looking for sections in which one or more participants recounted an experience along with an evaluation of the experience or when experiences were introduced as a means of supporting a particular evaluation. Experiences could be one-time events, but they were sometimes routine or repeated episodes. When participants told stories about particular events, a topic was attributed to the story based on the location of the event, the main activity described in the story, or a main character. For example, many storied events took place at school or work. These stories were then coded “school” or “work.” Another common topic was the “image of

Moroccan-Dutch young adults.” Stories with this topic included more descriptive accounts of how Moroccan-Dutch young adults perceive themselves to be viewed by native Dutch people.

In addition to common topics, we looked for similarities in the ways experiences were evaluated. Stories set in “school” or about “wearing the headscarf” can make very different points: one might tell a story set in school to draw attention to the injustices Moroccan-Dutch youth confront or to draw attention to how ethnic differences fade in the context of the classroom. In coding evaluations, we were interested in the normative point participants sought to make with their stories. The analysis of meaning is a controversial project, and we cannot expect a single meaning to emerge from one story. Accordingly, we coded a wide range of different evaluations. Based on careful analysis of the story topics, story actors, value judgments, and aspects of the conversational context, we narrowed down the types of evaluations. Different types of evaluations, we found, supported different identity claims.

For the analysis of evaluations, we considered whether a story was aimed at relating a positive experience or a negative experience. We distinguished whether positive experiences were the outcome of other people’s actions (*inclusion*) or the outcome of the narrator’s actions (*individual responsibility*). For the negative experiences, we coded the stories according to their consequences. One of the most common evaluations in the stories we analyzed was *injustice*. In these stories, participants described incidents that they characterized as typical of the unjust treatment of their ethnic group. Narrators themselves were often not involved in the incident nor did they suffer direct consequences of the events they described. This evaluation was different from *discrimination*, where narrators referred to incidents in which they themselves (or someone they were close to) suffered direct negative consequences of unjust treatment, such as not getting hired for a job or being denied entrance to a night club or access to an educational program. Sometimes negative experiences were presented and accepted as a fact of life, and sometimes participants expressed their disapproval of those experiences. Both responses were coded as ways of *coping*. When our participants told stories about how they had confronted people who engaged in the stigmatizing behavior (e.g., prejudice or injustice), we coded them as *confronting*.

These evaluations were discussed with participants in individual interviews and in informal conversations outside the focus groups. In these settings, participants were asked to reflect on their contributions to the focus group and on the dynamics of the conversation. Participants confirmed the evaluations we had identified and characterized their stories as about their common experiences as Moroccan-Dutch young adults. Interestingly, several participants suggested that the context of a discussion with Moroccan-Dutch young adults at a time when this identity was controversial led them to emphasize experiences that they shared with other Moroccan-Dutch young adults, and indeed, to highlight experiences of prejudice and discrimination. Our participants thus recognized that their stories, like all stories, were constructed in relation both to their direct audience and to wider societal discourses in which their collective identity was cast in a negative way.

It is beyond the scope of this article to probe the situated and performative nature of storytelling. However, participants’ emphasis on common experiences in their storytelling makes the variation in the stories told especially interesting. Based on theories of intersectionality, we expected that while participants would tell some similar stories, their position at the intersection of identity categories lead also to variation in the experiences they recounted and/or the narrative inflections they gave those experiences.

### **Intersectionality in Storytelling**

In our theoretical framework, we argued that Moroccan-Dutch young men and women are positioned differently by public discourse. To explain how the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and educational levels affects the way Moroccan-Dutch young adults (re)position themselves in relation

to this discourse, we provide an overview of the variation in the experience of Moroccan-Dutch young men and women enrolled in lower vocational training, higher vocational training, and academic-level training.

### *Storytelling on the Intersection of Ethnicity and Gender*

In total, we coded 279 stories. In accordance with earlier findings (Prins et al., 2013), we observed that story themes among young women and young men across educational levels were very similar. We found that the topic of “school” was mentioned most often across all groups (61 stories had this topic). The prominence of this topic reflects the everyday reality of our participants, who were all in school at the time and who participated in focus groups held in schools. Related to this, many participants were involved in traineeships or had a job outside school and narrated their experiences in the workplace (50 stories had the topic of “work”). These topics also reflected the interviewer’s questions which were aimed at exploring the participants’ everyday experiences.

Another topic that was mentioned often in all groups was the “image of Moroccan-Dutch young adults” (42 stories), referring to the negative image of Moroccan-Dutch young adults in the media and politics. Moroccan-Dutch young men recounted stories with this topic more often than young women did (28 stories against 14). Personal stories with this topic told by the young men in our groups typically involved experiences in which teachers, colleagues, or fellow students showed themselves to be prejudiced about the narrator’s assumed lack of language proficiency, presumed involvement in crime, or adherence to religious practices considered “radical” or “backward” by his antagonists. The salience of this topic in our young men’s group reflects the prominence of young men in discussions about the “Moroccan problem.”

The young women in our groups used the topic “image of Moroccan-Dutch young adults” to refer to generic experiences of Moroccan-Dutch young adults in the Netherlands. In their stories, the news media figured as a principal character in the dissemination of a negative image of Moroccan-Dutch young people. This finding suggests that although young women support young men in their construction of a collective story concerning the “image of Moroccan-Dutch young adults,” this collective story doesn’t necessarily concern them personally.

In our young women’s groups, we found that “wearing the headscarf” was a prominent topic (15 stories had this topic). Stories with this topic, in contrast to the “image of Moroccan-Dutch young people” topic, always concerned either the narrator or someone she felt close to, such as a friend or a family member. This means that whereas the negative image of Moroccan-Dutch young people did not seem to affect the personal experience of our female group members, of whom a majority wore headscarves, the practice of veiling did.<sup>8</sup> The salience of this topic in our young women’s groups shows how public discourses about veiling affect the everyday experiences of Moroccan-Dutch young women.

The topics we found in the stories of Moroccan-Dutch young men and women reflect their daily experiences in school and in the workplace. How Moroccan-Dutch young adults construct their identity, however, depends not only on the way they thematized their stories but also on the positions they create for themselves in these stories. These positions, we argued, are conveyed by means of the “evaluation” part of the story, in which the narrator conveys the point of the story, and how he or she wants to be known by their audience (Riessman, 1993).

We found that both young men and women shared *injustice* (42 occurrences) as one of the dominant evaluations of their experiences, indicating that there was agreement within and across

<sup>8</sup> As Sirin and Fine (2007) observe, the headscarf can be an equally important topic for Muslim young women not wearing headscarves, as they are often asked to explain why they don’t wear headscarves, or they observe they are treated differently than other headscarf-wearing young women.



groups with regard to the position Moroccan-Dutch young adults hold in Dutch society. However, there was an important difference in how *injustice* figured in the different groups.

Similar to the topic of “image of Moroccan-Dutch young people,” our female participants were less likely to narrate their experiences in terms of *injustice* (14 stories told by women as compared to 28 by young men had an injustice evaluation). When young women did tell a story whose point was about *injustice*, they were far less likely to be the main characters of the stories. The young women in our groups used this evaluation to describe generic experiences of unjust behavior manifested in relation to Moroccan-Dutch young adults. These findings underscore our earlier observation that although Moroccan-Dutch young women joined their male peers in the construction of a narrative about the unjust treatment of Moroccan-Dutch adults in Dutch society, they did not necessarily share the same experiences.

In addition we found that, whenever young women *did* tell stories about *injustice*, the point they made was about the ways in which they *coped* with the negative image of their group. Finally, we found they preferred *inclusion* as an evaluation of their personal experiences. Whereas the female groups in lower vocational training used *inclusion* to refer to personal experiences of inclusion in their multicultural neighborhood or school, in the higher educational levels, the young women referred to their inclusion by native Dutch neighbors, class mates, or friends:

Aicha: I see it the other way around with the Dutch people I know: people are really open, they don't judge you, but just ask questions [. . .] A Dutch friend once told me that she prefers not to show a lot of cleavage and that this is actually similar to wearing a headscarf. Look, it isn't exactly the same, but at least she understands and I hear that more often. (Young woman, academic-level training)

The contrast between young men's emphasis on *exclusion* and young women's on *inclusion* is interesting. Earlier, we suggested that the young men and young women in our groups tell different stories based on differences in their everyday experiences (in which the “image of Moroccan-Dutch young adults” as a topic and *injustice* as an evaluation figured less prominently). Gilligan (1982) however, sensitizes us to the possibility that the young women in our groups may not have experienced more inclusion, but rather they valorized that dimension of their everyday interactions more than men: When faced with moral conflict, men are more likely to emphasize principles of justice, while women are more likely to stress tolerance and the primacy of maintaining relationships. In that sense, we may understand young women's contributions to the collective storyline not only in terms of the distinctive experiences they brought to the storyline but also in terms of the different emphases they placed on the same experiences.

#### *Storytelling on the Intersection of Ethnicity, Gender, and Educational Level*

In addition to gender differences, we found interesting differences in how the evaluation of *injustice* was narrated across educational levels. When we studied the stories of Moroccan-Dutch young men and women in lower vocational training, we found that the use of generic storytelling in relation to *injustice* was very common in both these groups. Stories about the unjust treatment of Moroccan-Dutch young people were based upon experiences the narrator had heard or read about in the newspaper or they were descriptions of hypothetical experiences. When studying other stories in lower vocational training in more detail, we found a similar pattern of generic storytelling in relation to evaluations of *injustice*, *discrimination*, and *exclusion*.

Although many of the stories in our lower vocational-training groups were generic stories about unjust treatment or discrimination, we found that when our participants at this level narrated their

everyday experiences in school, they evaluated them in terms of *inclusion*, referring to the sense of inclusion that narrators experienced in their (multicultural) school and neighborhood:

Interviewer: How is your relationship with your teachers?

Yassin: It's okay.

Najim: The contact with the teachers is okay, they understand us here.

Yassin: They are used to Moroccans.

Imraan: The teachers adapted themselves.

Najim: Yes, the Dutch teachers adapted to the Moroccans, which actually is a good thing, for once.

This example suggests that while participants in lower vocational training were sensitive to the more generic experience of injustice and discrimination elicited in the focus-group context, their personal experiences were marked by a sense of inclusion. The sharing of generic stories among Moroccan-Dutch young adults in lower vocational training may have strengthened the notion of the participants' disadvantaged position, but these stories do not necessarily reflect our participants' everyday experiences.

Unlike the participants in lower vocational training, those in higher vocational training were far more likely to discuss the disadvantaged position of Moroccan-Dutch young people in relation to their own personal experience or the experience of someone they felt close to, like a friend or family member.

Both young men and young women at this level often told stories about *discrimination* (30 stories had this evaluation). *Discrimination* refers to the experience of suffering negative consequences based on one's ethnic or religious background. One of the most commonly told stories in both the young men's and young women's groups were that of discrimination on the job market. However, where *discrimination* in stories by young men often referred to their being denied job opportunities on account of stereotypes of their ethnic group, young women referred to their headscarf as a source of discrimination on the job market:

Samira: [. . .] I used to be very positive, especially about my headscarf and all. I didn't expect to be turned down because of my headscarf, but a couple of months ago, I was doing a traineeship in child care and . . . I was practically already hired, I had been working one full day and I only had to send them my diplomas, I would do that the following day. And when I came home they called me to say that the parents' council didn't agree with me wearing a headscarf because it didn't fit in their white school and they asked me to take it off.

This excerpt once again shows the relevance of religion in the lives of our female participants. The evaluation of experiences regarding religion in terms of *discrimination*, however, was only salient in the group of women in higher vocational training. Many of these young women had had experience in applying for jobs and internships at firms with a strong Dutch corporate culture. As veiling is treated as a religious practice related to the Moroccan culture, both by native Dutch people and by focus-group participants, it makes sense that accounts of discrimination in relation to the practice of veiling contributed to the collective narrative of a discriminated against *ethnic* minority.

Also at this level, we found that the contestation about the meaning of these personal episodes of injustice and discrimination increased. Interestingly, while male participants in higher vocational training used personal stories evaluated in terms of *justice* or *positive discrimination* to challenge stories by group members about discrimination in the labor market, female participants at this educational level preferred the use of *individual responsibility* as an evaluation for experiences in the labor market. With this evaluation, female participants did not deny the deprived position of

Moroccan-Dutch young people on the labor market. Instead, they pointed at the personal responsibility Moroccan-Dutch young people have in overcoming this position:

Sara: Yes you are being discriminated against, but you have to be above that you see. You shouldn't say, oh well, a Dutch person is discriminating against me so I'll just do nothing or I'll get benefits or whatever, I just think that's just bullshit [ . . . ].

The use of personal stories to describe a generic experience of disadvantage in the groups in higher vocational training can be attributed to the more ethnically heterogeneous environment these students face. Compared to the ethnically homogenous environment in lower vocational training, young adults in higher vocational training are more likely to encounter native Dutch people and therefore more likely to be personally involved in situations in which their ethnic or religious background is the topic of discussion.

Alternatively, as Buijs and colleagues (2006) suggest, in line with the "integration paradox," better educated individuals, who are better integrated in Dutch society, may be more sensitive to the personal experience of discrimination, since despite their best efforts to be well-educated and well-integrated individuals, they find that they are still disadvantaged. In this case, episodes of discrimination may have come more readily to mind to these participants than to the lower-educated participants.

These explanations may also account for the fact that groups in higher vocational training were less likely than their peers in lower vocational training to evaluate their experiences in terms of *inclusion*. Indeed, in addition to using evaluations of *injustice* and *discrimination*, both young men and young women at this level used *confronting* as an evaluation:

Malik: I had the same problem because I was alone [the only Moroccan] in the class room and there were quite a lot of Wilders [anti-immigration and anti-Islam member of parliament] supporters, but then . . . they came with examples and I asked them to ground their examples.. Well, they couldn't do it, so I asked: who have you heard this from? Yeah from someone, just word of mouth so all the things they said were not relevant. I said, [ . . . ] "listen I'm not going to argue with you because you don't even bring in relevant arguments period" [ . . . ]. Then we stopped the discussion and the teacher obviously agreed with me.

Instead of harmonizing their experiences with the collective narrative, young men and women in the higher vocational-training groups tended to reconstruct more agentic positions for themselves when faced with injustice and discrimination in everyday life.

In the academically trained groups, the highest educated groups in our sample, we expected to find similar results. As was the case in the other groups, topics of "school" and "image of Moroccan-Dutch young adults" were common. Stories with the topic of "identity" were also common, where participants recounted an experience regarding their ethnic or religious identity. This suggests that among the most highly educated, identity is not only a dimension of experiences of injustice and discrimination, but it is thematized explicitly as a feature of everyday interaction.

In the academically trained groups, participants shared experiences of *injustice* and *exclusion*. Similar to the groups in higher vocational training, experiences with *injustice* were narrated mostly in the first person. Also similar to the participants in higher vocational training, the participants in this group were sensitive to episodes of this kind, as they might have expected to be protected from them by their educational level. However, the young men's and women's groups at his level used different strategies to cope with stereotypes or unjust behavior. In the male groups, *ingroup difference* was used as an evaluation, signaling difference from lower-educated group members:

Badr: I live in a neighborhood where a lot of boys have a bad education or no education at all and . . . they look up to me a little, when you pass by they say “hey, he’s doing well” [. . .].

Achraf: But it doesn’t matter if you have a low education, as long as you do something.

Badr: It doesn’t matter, but they see it like that you see, they see themselves as bad.

Driss: Inferior.

Suleiman: For them it’s worlds apart, a different world, they don’t get it.

The signaling of distance or difference from lower-educated group members may explain this group’s particular manifestation of agency in relation to stigmatizing public discourse about their ethnic and religious background. In particular, we found members of this group to actively challenge imposed stereotypes, rejecting the possibility that they could be held accountable:

Musa: I mean, I am not responsible for what every Moroccan does, I don’t need to apologize all the time. [. . .] I don’t have to apologize every time a Moroccan does something. If a Moroccan does something and he has a mustache, should all representatives of Mustache wearing males . . . it is funny, but it boils down to that, he doesn’t do something because he is Moroccan, [. . .] it’s got nothing to do with being a Moroccan or not, you see?

Young women in the academically trained groups also distanced themselves from the group as a way to overcome episodes of injustice and discrimination. However, while the male participants in our groups turned away from both their native Dutch peers as well as from lower-educated Moroccan-Dutch peers, in line with our earlier observation that women confronted with moral conflict are more inclined to stress tolerance and to maintain ties with intimate social groups (Gilligan, 1982), young women tended to emphasize their good relations with native Dutch people. This means that at the highest educational level, albeit in different ways, young men and women displayed agency in relation to exclusionary discourses by making their ethnic and religious identity a topic of discussion in a more explicit manner and by redefining their relationships with in- and out-group members.

We have explored how intersections of ethnicity, gender, and educational level affect the experience of Moroccan-Dutch young adults. In our analysis, rather than focusing on the intersection of ethnicity and gender *or* ethnicity and educational level, we examined how our participants’ experiences were shaped by their simultaneous positioning on all three of these axes of the identity matrix. In line with theories of intersectionality, a focus on a single intersection would ignore the fact that people’s experiences are the product of their position on the intersection of multiple identity categories. Our analysis demonstrates that while the Moroccan-Dutch identity is treated as a single identity both in popular discourse and in the discussions in our focus groups, the way it is reconstructed in our participants’ stories is influenced both by participants’ gender and educational level. The different storylines that emerge from these diverging identity positions serve to construct a multiple and sometimes inconsistent collective narrative. They reveal dynamics of negotiation of a stigmatized collective identity.

## Discussion

With Moroccan-Dutch youths facing stigmatization based on both their ethnic and religious background, it is essential that we understand the consequences of stigmatization for the way in which these youths interpret their experiences and their position in relation to native Dutch people. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that Moroccan-Dutch youth constitute a highly diverse group and that the intersection of multiple identities has consequences for the way young people (re)construct their identities.

We have shown that in the conversations in our focus groups, young men and young women at all educational levels were involved in co-constructing new meanings of their identity as Moroccan-Dutch Muslims. We focused on the stories they shared that were cast as representative of their experiences as group members. We analyzed stories by focusing on their topics and the evaluation they were meant to convey. We found that, judging from their stories, young women and young men in all our groups discussed the image of Moroccan-Dutch as a disadvantaged minority.

Yet we found young men and women responded to different elements of the stigmatizing public discourse about Moroccan-Dutch young adults. While young men focused on the public discourses that attacked their ethnic background, young women focused more on discourses centered on their religious background. Both discourses were perceived as unjust, discriminatory, and exclusionary.

Exclusionist public discourses seemed to occasion more tension in the male groups. This was especially true for the higher educated groups where our participants may have expected that their educational level would protect them from episodes of injustice and discrimination. Young women participants, by contrast, seemed reluctant to narrate their personal experiences in terms of injustice and exclusion and preferred inclusion as an evaluation of their experiences. Although we assumed that variation in experience would be at the heart of this variation in storytelling, in line with Gilligan (1982), we have also advanced the alternative explanation that the young women in our groups *valorized* inclusive experiences more than men and were more likely to emphasize that aspect of their experience.

In addition to revealing differences between male and female story topics and evaluations, our analysis showed that the incorporation of exclusionary discourses in everyday experiences varied across gender *and* educational levels. While both male and female students at all educational levels described the experience of a negative group image, we found that when educational levels increased, participants tended to be more specific about their personal experiences of deprivation. We showed that men and women in higher vocational training opposed (different) aspects of negative discourses directly in their interactions with native Dutch people. Young men and women in academic-level training tended to resist negative discourses either by rejecting their disadvantaged position or by emphasizing inclusion in Dutch networks of friends and fellow students.

This study thus provides important insights into the construction of a Moroccan-Dutch identity based on participants' position at the intersection of multiple identity categories. However, it can be argued that studying the intersection of these three axes is insufficient to explain the variety of narrated experiences of Moroccan-Dutch young people. One of the main claims of intersectionality theory is that intersections may be endless and work in complex ways to construct unique experiences and identities. Although we support this position, we aimed at exploring patterns at some of these intersections. We found some important patterns, but our study may have overlooked variance in experience based on additional intersections.

Additionally, the approach to analyzing stories in this study may have underemphasized important aspects of the (focus group) context in the production of narratives and selves. Narrative researchers have argued that rather than analyzing stories as accounts of the self, stories should be understood as "performances" in relation to different audiences. The larger question then becomes just what people are *doing* with their stories. Important insights can be gained from a more microlevel approach in which both macrolevel discourses *and* microlevel performances are studied as part of the reconstruction and negotiation of collective identities.

Finally, our findings are based on a small number of groups. Given our interest in previously unexplored microdynamics of identity construction, this made sense. The in-depth nature of our analyses allows us to show how respondents positioned differently on an identity matrix make

meaning of their social positions. Yet we would need to conduct more focus groups to establish the representativeness of our findings.

In sum, exclusionary discourses about Moroccan-Dutch young adults' ethnic and religious background have important consequences for the ways these young people interpret their everyday experiences. It is important, however, to recognize that these consequences play out differently in the lives and conversations of our participants at the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and educational level. Moroccan-Dutch young adults accept, reject, and act in relation to imposed stereotypes in patterned but different ways. These dynamics would be obscured if we had treated Moroccan-Dutch young adults as a single group or if we had considered intersections of ethnicity and gender and ethnicity and educational level separately.

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