The interplay between identity construction and opportunity structures: Narratives of Turkish migrant women entrepreneurs in the Netherlands

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between the identity construction processes of migrant women entrepreneurs and the opportunity structures in their wider sociocultural and politico-institutional environments. Drawing on 10 life-story interviews with one-and-a-half- and second-generation Turkish women entrepreneurs in the Netherlands, this study draws upon an intersectional approach. Considering the recent socio-political tensions in the Netherlands regarding the presence of Turkish people, studying the relationship between opportunity structures and identity construction of Turkish women entrepreneurs is important and timely. The findings demonstrate the manner in which opportunity structures influence the creation and enactment of an entrepreneurial identity that intersects with gender, ethnicity and class. Analysing how these migrant women interpret and frame opportunity structures in their entrepreneurial contexts, this article reveals how processes of politicisation, class-consciousness and transnational and cosmopolitan positioning influence these women's entrepreneurial identities and experiences.

Introduction

Existing research in the field of migrant entrepreneurship tends to study migrant entrepreneurs through an individual level of analysis (Aliaga-Isla and Rialp, 2013; Azmat, 2013). Usually, their motivations, performance or the individual driving forces behind entrepreneurship are under scrutiny (Azmat, 2013; Gonzalez and Husted, 2011). However, the broader macro-influences of politics, media or societal norms and practices upon an entrepreneur's identity tend to be neglected

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(Ahl, 2006; Jamali, 2009). Some, such as Kloosterman (2010) or Ram et al. (2013), focus on macro-structures while analysing migrant entrepreneurship, but they lack analysis at the individual, entrepreneurial level. Such studies 'disregard freely chosen strategies of the migrant entrepreneurs themselves' (Jones et al., 2014: 501), as they aim to make international comparisons across countries (Tseng, 2004). In this article, we argue that in order to have a better understanding of migrant women entrepreneurship, the analysis of the interlinked relationship between individual identities and structures is necessary. Both actors and context affect the meaning of entrepreneurship and how it is defined and practised (Welter, 2011).

Extant contextual studies of women's entrepreneurship highlight gendered sociocultural norms upon women's inclusion as entrepreneurs (Bruni et al., 2004; Duberley and Carrigan, 2013; Yousafzai et al., 2019). Also, some intersectional studies observe the impact of religious or ethnic norms (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010; Essers and Benschop, 2007, 2009) or the sociopolitical environment (Essers and Tedmanson, 2014) upon migrant women's entrepreneurial experiences and identifications. Yet, in order to fully understand migrant women's entrepreneurship, more attention is required regarding the relationship between entrepreneurial identities and structures (Lewis, 2013) such as media, discourses on multiculturalism, processes of migration, political discourses in both countries of residence and origin or integration policies. How entrepreneurial identities are constructed, and the manner in which women experience entrepreneurship, is influenced by such issues (Steyaert and Katz, 2004). In this study, we use the term 'opportunity structure' to account for these influences, defining them as 'situational constraints and opportunities' (Johns, 2006) at sociocultural and politico-institutional levels. The relationship between opportunity structures and identity construction processes is more porous than an inner/outer dichotomy would suggest. This means that there is nothing objectively 'out there'. Entrepreneurial identities are relationally constructed with opportunity structures (Diaz Garcia and Welter, 2013), while perception of the relevance of different opportunity structures is mediated by gender, ethnicity and class. For instance, a wealthy migrant woman born in the Netherlands would perceive opportunity structures differently than would a working-class migrant woman.

It is precisely with this focus that we explore the relationship between entrepreneurial identity construction processes and opportunity structures. Building upon previous research on the interdependence of structure and agency (Giddens, 1984; Sarason et al., 2006), we ask the following question: 'how do women entrepreneurs of Turkish origin construct their entrepreneurial identities, while responding to, deploying, and adjusting to the opportunity structures in the Netherlands?' This study is apposite given the recent political developments in the Netherlands regarding the social and economic inclusion of migrants in general and Turkish people in particular (Essers and Tedmanson, 2014). Also, recent nationalistic policies in Turkey have politicised Turkish people and polarised Dutch society leading to negative public opinion regarding Turkish people by the Dutch majority (Hageman, 2017). Drawing on 10 life stories (McKenzie, 2007) of one-and-a-half- and second-generation Turkish women entrepreneurs, we illustrate the manner in which opportunity structures influence entrepreneurial identity construction, leading to a better understanding of this process among migrant women entrepreneurs. Accordingly, analysing the relationship between structures and identities provides a more complete picture of the complex phenomenon of entrepreneurship and particularly, of migrant women's entrepreneurship.

Analysing how various identity categories of inclusion and exclusion (Essers et al., 2010) are constructed regarding various opportunity structures relates to the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1997). Intersectionality inherently expresses the complexity of the interdependent relationship between identity construction and opportunity structures. It helps to generate new conclusions concerning the entrepreneurial identities of ethnic minority women and how they incorporate surrounding structures such as politics, religion, class, society or culture (Holvino, 2010). It enables

us to recognise differences in entrepreneurial identity constructions of a group of entrepreneurs with a similar background as they might interpret and frame opportunity structures differently.

The following sections will first theorise opportunity structures in relation to migrant women entrepreneurship and then relate this to the identity constructions of Turkish women entrepreneurs considering gender, ethnicity and class. Second, we will discuss our research methodology. Third, we will present excerpts of four narratives of Turkish women entrepreneurs to demonstrate their interactions with opportunity structures and the ways opportunity structures influence their identity construction processes while they interpret and frame these opportunity structures. Finally, we will discuss the findings and the contributions to the academic literature, while also providing some recommendations for future studies.

Contextualisation of opportunity structures in the Netherlands

In the migrant entrepreneurship literature, migrant business is considered as an outcome of the interaction between ethnic resources (i.e. social capital) and opportunity structures, with the two linked by entrepreneurial strategies (Ram et al., 2017: 35). Opportunity structures entail market conditions that enable or hamper migrant entrepreneurship. Relating to such opportunity structures, entrepreneurial resources – including human, financial and social capital – form the potential for entrepreneurial activity within a region (Kloosterman, 2010). These resources are also influenced by national institutions, laws, rules and regulations such as requirements for a diploma or certain language qualifications (Kloosterman, 2010).

This definition of opportunity structure as 'market conditions enabling or hampering migrant entrepreneurship' is so broad that nearly everything can be subsumed under this label (Rath, 2000). The opportunity structures featured in the migrant entrepreneurship literature include local consumer markets and the regulatory environment (Kloosterman, 2010); 'blockages' or 'barriers' to particular markets on a financial or knowledge basis (Volery, 2007); educational and labour market discrimination (Jones et al., 2014) and racial exclusion and disadvantages associated with migrant status such as poor language skills or human capital depreciation (Zhou, 2004). In this article, the term opportunity structure pertains to the total context of sociocultural and politico-institutional practices (Hooghe, 2005; Koopmans and Statham, 2000), discourses, norms, rules and regulations (Nicolini, 2012) within which Turkish migrant women entrepreneurs operate. We distinguish four opportunity structures: (1) government policies relating to migration and ethnic business development; (2) societal and political discourses about Turkish (Muslim) migrant women; (3) sociocultural ethnic norms and practices governing ethnic and business relations and (4) the recent political context of Turkey with its nationalistic policies and political sanctions against terrorist groups. We now expand upon why we focus on these four opportunity structures exploring them further within our empirical analysis.

In the Netherlands, government policies regulating labour and business markets through standards, requirements or taxes influence all firms. While there is no financial support provided by the government specifically to migrant women entrepreneurs, migration policies, drawing upon integration and emancipation objectives, have an impact on such women through direct state intervention. As such, there are regulations as fines imposed on migrants who fail to integrate after five years, dedicated welfare regimes and housing policies (Vasta, 2007). The Blok Report Netherlands (2004) reveals that Dutch policy changed towards migrants moving from state protection to self-sufficiency and responsibility, waiving positive discrimination. However, negative discrimination continues, especially through societal and political discourses regarding (Muslim) Turkish migrant women, which signify them as cultural and religious 'others' (Ghorashi, 2010; Verduijn and Essers, 2013). The religious identity of these women, particularly those who wear a

headscarf, makes them the target of migrant–hostile statements from Dutch politicians (Siebers, 2010). These women, mostly from working-class families, migrated to the Netherlands as guest workers in the 1960s and are generally considered lower status citizens (Vasta, 2007). Societal discourse still depicts the second generation of these original migrants as lower class, and their entrepreneurship does not offer social mobility (Beckers and Blumberg, 2013). Although a majority of their ventures remain gender-specific businesses, such as beauty salons, fashion shops or retail businesses focusing on ethnic niches (Essers and Benschop, 2007), one-and-a-half- and second-generation Turkish women increasingly operate in more diverse sectors such as business services, accounting, consulting or marketing (Baycan, 2013). This generation demonstrates higher levels of integration through education, language, cultural skills and social contact with the host population. By using these skills and establishing more diverse businesses, they try to ascend the social ladder and hence enhance their class position.

Turkish migrant women, as entrepreneurs, also have to deal with ethnic community norms and practices (Essers and Benschop, 2007). Women can be expected to accept patriarchal norms regarding the traditional division of tasks and often, while managing their firms, they also take responsibility for child care and household labour. This social control mechanism acts more powerfully on women than men, by defining what is considered gender-appropriate behaviour according to the ethnic and religious norms and practices of Turkish Muslim woman (Essers and Benschop, 2007). In addition, the recent nationalistic policies of the ruling political party in Turkey, Justice and Development Party (JDP) – the foundation of 'Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities' – and the influence of the current President of Turkey, Erdogan, with his political statements (Aydin, 2016; Hageman, 2017) influences the Turkish diaspora in the Netherlands. For example, the political friction between Turkey and the Netherlands sparked the so-called 'Rotterdam Events'[1] in 2017, which politicised Turkish people in the Netherlands and polarised Dutch society with negative opinions about Turkish migrants (Hageman, 2017).

The interplay between opportunity structures and the identity construction process

After elaborating upon opportunity structures, we now theorise how they relate to identity construction in the field of migrant women's entrepreneurship. Identities are discursive social constructions, as are opportunity structures. Migrant women who self-identify as entrepreneurs are likely to relate to the mainstream entrepreneurship discourse (Anderson and Warren, 2011), which builds upon Western male archetype (Essers and Benschop, 2007). Yet, such women also construct an identity related to place. By this, we mean that 'being an entrepreneur' emerges from a shared understanding historically shaped by national or regional institutional discourses, the communities to which people belong and other relevant groups in that region/country (Gill, 2017). The answer to the question of 'Who am I?' in relation to religion, politics, society, media, culture, gender, ethnicity and class in the entrepreneurship context is crafted in relation to various opportunity structures in a region or nation in a dynamic and relational manner (Diaz Garcia and Welter, 2013; Stead, 2017; Welter, 2011).

Within the context of these various opportunity structures in a particular place, each migrant woman entrepreneur draws from the entrepreneurship discourse differently. These women adapt to the sociocultural opportunity structures of mainstream society while also conforming to specific ethnic sociocultural opportunity structures. In addition, they prioritise, or balance, politico-institutional opportunity structures of their countries of origin and those of their residence into their entrepreneurship; as such, they may either reject or adhere to gendered and ethnic norms. While rejecting femininity, they might embrace their ethnicity or vice versa (Essers and Benschop, 2007).

Within the Dutch context, this identity construction process, oscillating between traditional versus autonomous affiliation, intersects within opportunity structures.

We study intersections of gender, ethnicity and class as simultaneous processes of identity. As historically formed complex social constructions, gender is a cultural interpretation relating to masculinity and femininity and related practices within a system of gender relations (Connell and Connell, 2005), ethnicity is an ideological construct emphasising belongingness to a specific group (Anthias, 2001), and class is a construction of social relations around hierarchical status (Acker, 2000). In the entrepreneurship discourse, gender and ethnicity are discussed as the most common areas of inclusion or exclusion (Bruni et al., 2004; Ogbor, 2000), while class is largely disregarded. However, we consider class relevant since entrepreneurs in different social classes perceive and interpret opportunity structures differently and construct their entrepreneurial identities respectively.

The relevance and significance of opportunity structures are determined through the interrelatedness of these social categories. In other words, Turkish women entrepreneurs construct their entrepreneurial identities intersectionally on the basis of gender, ethnicity and class (Crenshaw, 1997) while responding, deploying and adjusting to various opportunity structures, which are also realised and understood through the constructions of these social categories. As Holvino (2010) argues, social categories intersecting with the private world of home and family, and the public world of business and work, lie at the intersection of sociocultural and politico-institutional opportunity structures. Together, they form our notion of intersectionality informing the interplay between identity construction and opportunity structures for Turkish women entrepreneurs in the Netherlands.

This study focuses on one-and-a-half- and second-generation Turkish migrant women. Second-generation migrants consist of migrant children born in the Netherlands from at least one migrant parent or those children migrated with their parents before the age of six (Van Ours and Veenman, 2002). The one-and-a-half generation includes young people who migrated with their families and continued their education in the destination country (Ip and Hsu, 2006). The generations to which these women belong are disclosed not for comparison reasons, but to present the ways they perceive opportunity structures in contrast to first-generation migrants. As such, through their greater proficiency with the Dutch language and culture, they are more engaged with discussions about migrants in media and politics and therefore become more aware of prevailing societal and political discourses. In addition, the influence of ethnic community norms and practices has lessened as these women entrepreneurs have been integrated within the Dutch education system, learned the language, had more contact with the host population and national culture and were less concerned regarding the erosion of religious and cultural influence arising from this integration.

The next section presents the methodology and frames the data collection and analysis methods, after which the analysis is presented.

Methodology

We explore the manner in which women entrepreneurs perceive, interpret and frame various opportunity structures and construct their entrepreneurial identities accordingly. The nature of the study requires an interpretative research strategy; thus, we conducted 10 in-depth life-story interviews (McKenzie, 2007) with Turkish women entrepreneurs operating in the Netherlands. These life stories were then followed with more specific questions to receive detailed information about certain theoretical concepts. The life-story approach supports reflection on past experiences, in which memories of pain or joy are transmitted into the constructions of current identities. For instance, having migrated as the daughter of a political refugee or a guest worker influences identity construction in relation to ethnicity and sociocultural influences (Ghorashi, 2008). Accordingly, social

categories as well as the opportunity structures are historically formed. Thus, the historical dimension of this research and the processual nature of identity construction require using life stories (Ghorashi, 2008: 119).

The 10 life stories were collected in four different Dutch cities: Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht (Figure 1 in Appendix 1), those cities with the densest Turkish migrant populations in the Netherlands (Kloosterman, 2004). The interviewees were selected through the snowball sampling method (Patton, 2002). The first author, a female Turkish researcher, conducted the interviews drawing upon her connections with Turkish business networks. Rather than asking the first respondents to identify further cases, the entrepreneur's social networks were explored through the social media channel 'LinkedIn' given its professional positioning. The middle-class orientation of LinkedIn helped us reach women entrepreneurs of Turkish origin seeking social mobility through their business and entrepreneurial identity constructions. Thus, the selection bias through the use of LinkedIn as a selection tool facilitated examining the manner in which class is constructed in the entrepreneurship context and intersects with gender and ethnicity in relation to opportunity structures such as the societal and political discourses attributing a lower social class to Turkish migrant women. We also scanned major LinkedIn networking groups such as the 'Global Entrepreneurship Network', the 'Turkish Business Network' and the 'Network of Women Entrepreneurs and Businesswomen' to create an initial list of 40 Turkish female entrepreneurs.

In our selection process, we wanted our interviewees to be practising, experienced entrepreneurs and familiar with prevailing opportunity structures. Thus, we had the following criteria: the women needed to be actively involved in the day-to-day business operations for a minimum of five years in the Netherlands, be exposed to the Dutch education system, have Turkish ancestry and have lived at least half of their lives in the Netherlands. We selected 10 women entrepreneurs fulfilling these criteria in order to undertake an exploratory study. Our sample included women with diverse religious backgrounds: Sunni-Muslims, a Christian and a Kurdish-Alevi woman (Figure 1 in Appendix 1). All of the interviews, with the exception of one undertaken in English, were conducted in Turkish, recorded digitally and transcribed literally.

We concede that the identities of the interviewer, being a veiled Turkish female researcher, who is also the first author and the lead in interpreting the transcripts, might have influenced the narrative construction of these women. For example, given the fact that the interviewees and the interviewer were of the same sex and ethnicity may have eased the atmosphere and facilitated understanding between the two parties; but it may have also politicised the interviewer–interviewee relationship given the political implications of the headscarf. Yet, regarding the issues of power dynamics and ethics, having detailed discussions with the second author, a female researcher of Dutch origin experienced in the field of migrant women entrepreneurship, helped to increase reflexive consideration of the research process.

We performed a four-stage analysis (Alkhaled and Berglund, 2018) using the interview transcripts as the units of our narrative analysis (McAdams, 2012). First, we read all transcripts with the intention of tracing the influence of the four opportunity structures discussed earlier. We saw the impact of societal and political discourses in the Netherlands on Turkish (Muslim) women in all of the narratives we collected. We traced the influence of government policies regarding the labour and ethnic business market on entrepreneurial practices of Turkish migrant women, but not directly on their identity constructions. Government policies were considered as a general mechanism that exerts power with an excessive amount of regulations and control (Ahl and Nelson, 2015). Ethnic community norms and practices influenced almost all of the women except the Assyrian-Turkish woman, who did not know Turkish or Assyrian language and had no contact with the ethnic community. The nationalistic Turkish politics influenced five of the 10 participants in their identity construction processes.

Second, we re-read all transcripts to find the common themes regarding the interaction of identity construction and opportunity structures (Watzlawik and Born, 2007). We focused on elements of the narratives where the women entrepreneurs discussed the four opportunity structures; those most frequently mentioned were (1) the image of Turkish women in society, media and politics as daughters of guest workers but now, being highly educated bosses/employers/entrepreneurs; (2) their exposure to different languages and cultures and their entrepreneurial and emotional connectedness/ties to Turkey and (3) political developments in Turkey, disputes between the two countries and the tensions on choosing a side in these events. From these narrative excerpts, we deduced that these women were concerned about their social status, strategically positioned themselves in connection to Turkey and highly politicised. On this basis, we derived three themes: politicisation, class-consciousness and transnational and cosmopolitan positioning. The use of the life-story method helped us generate these themes. Having the life stories at hand, we could assess these women's connection with Turkey and political involvement earlier in their lives and could understand their recent transnational positioning with Turkey as a strategic choice and their current politicisation process. Also, we could understand their relationships within Dutch society as Turkish migrant women and interpret their sense of equality leading them to class-consciousness.

Third, we were curious about how these Turkish women entrepreneurs constructed their identities in relation to the opportunity structures in each theme. Although we acknowledge that these themes are interrelated, to explicitly analyse them, we treat them separately. Our aim is not to apply categories to these discussions but to identify the ways the women construct and employ these categories. Thus, we employed a critical approach deploying a discursive analysis (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). We identified how these women perceive societal and political discourses related to migrant women entrepreneurship in the Dutch context. We analysed their perceptions about politics on Turkish (Muslim) women through the discourses emerged from the interviews such as 'Geert Wilders' utterances (the Dutch leader of the anti-immigration and anti-Islamisation party, Party for Freedom), President Erdogan's statements or the discourses on the headscarf or guest workers. The interviewees independently raised these issues regarding the political figures; this conveyed their understanding and interpretation of everyday micro- and macro-oriented forms of opportunity structures and practices within which they are constituted. Then, we analysed the manner in which they discursively constructed their identities (Neergaard and Ulhoi, 2007). This identified alternative discourses such as Kemalism or modernity, transferring images through certain role models such as a political figure, the President of Turkey, or using discursive elements connected with their professions as doctors, architects, lawyers and the entrepreneurship discourse itself with their appeals of social mobility.

Fourth, we selected four stories that we considered most illustrative regarding the influence of opportunity structures on identity construction. Each theme was discussed in detail with two or three narrative excerpts from these four stories. These selected stories provided the richest cases covering the overarching themes found across the 10 life stories. This level of analysis illustrated the nuances of the interaction between opportunity structures and identity construction.

Findings: dealing with diverse opportunity structures

In this section, we draw upon excerpts of life stories related to each theme to disclose how Turkish women entrepreneurs in the Netherlands construct their entrepreneurial identities in relation to various opportunity structures. First, we introduce the four Turkish women entrepreneurs, pseudonyms are used to respect privacy: Gulay (38 years) was born and raised in the Netherlands, owns a company in medical care services with 150 employees, lives in Amsterdam, is married to a Turkish man and has two children. Serenay (47) came to the Netherlands aged six years, is a journalist,

media professional, wine broker and a lecturer; she owns a magazine targeting Mediterranean women with a Muslim background and lives in Rotterdam. She is divorced with a son and has a Turkish boyfriend. Nuray (45) came to the Netherlands aged six years, is a medical doctor and acts as a medical consultant; she is married to a Turkish man, has a daughter and lives in the Hague. Miray (34) was born and raised in the Netherlands, has an interior design business, works with construction companies, is married to a Turkish man and lives in Rotterdam.

Politicisation

Politicisation refers to Turkish women's articulation of a political stance by active or passive involvement in politics or political discussions with a reflection of such in their identity construction processes. Here, we present two narrative excerpts from interviews with Miray and Gulay to exemplify such politicisation process and its influence upon entrepreneurial identification and experience. From her exposure to societal and political discourses, Miray interprets that Dutch people who follow Geert Wilders do not want to work, but blame Muslims for their unemployment, and she sees the Dutch media as pursuing a slander campaign against Turkey. She contends that she wants to be connected with a powerful country and a nation that supports her and makes her feel safe and included; this desire is fulfilled via President Erdogan, with his nationalistic political statements. She believes her identity is of value by reflecting Erdogan's claims of a powerful nation as a reaction to perceived Western inhospitality. As a result, her construction of an entrepreneurial identity is highly politicised:

> I explain to people that [President] Erdogan is defending you. He gives you self-confidence that you have a powerful country behind you. Like he says 'you might live in a foreign country but don't be suppressed'. My friends ask me 'you and him, but you are modern'. I explain them 'my modernity continues, it is different, you cannot compare'. Although I was born here, I love my culture and being Turkish, I don't always declare it but defend it. In the Rotterdam event, of course we were affected, but let Turks live their emotions and they will turn normal in two months and they did. […] In the construction site, they don't look at you as Turkish or Dutch, but woman. Man is man, I have to protect being a woman and superior there.

Miray supports Erdogan, not only as the political leader of Turkey but also as the leader of Turks all over the world. Thus, she consciously chooses parts of Erdogan's political discourse to strengthen her entrepreneurial identity; this intersects with her ethnicity and class emphasising 'being powerful and not suppressed' as an ethnic minority entrepreneur living in a foreign country. However, she purposefully disregards gender-related aspects of his discourse that do not support her identity as a Turkish woman entrepreneur in the Netherlands. So, she differentiates being modern and a follower of Erdogan in response to the perception of her Dutch friends about the incompatibility of modernity and his political discourse. Miray's accounts of gender are more apparent in her narration relating to her entrepreneurial identity within the construction industry rather than in politics. This industry is traditionally male-dominated; she felt a need to carefully protect and balance her conflicting roles as a woman and being in a superior position to male workers, regardless of their ethnicity. However, modernity is a gendered political discourse (Gole, 2002), given that Muslim women who chose to wear a headscarf are often seen as less modern in both countries. Also, such interactions with the opposite sex in public spheres can be seen as a sign of modernity. Thus, Miray faces contradictions in this political discourse regarding gender; yet, she resolves this by constructing gender and politics separately. Similarly, she tries to decrease the influence of tensions she experiences given the recent political friction between the two countries by underplaying what has happened. She defines her business as a

bridge between her Turkish and Dutch clients, which might be badly affected if political relations between the two countries grow worse.

In the next excerpt, we draw on Gulay's interview. Besides the influence of the political discourse in the Netherlands, Gulay refers to the influences of recent terrorist events (as formally described by the Turkish government) related to diverse Muslim communities such as the community previously known as the 'Gulen movement':[2]

> We don't have any relations with Turkish politics. We are affected by Dutch politics, because of the direct regulations in the medical industry. […] It might influence our credibility in doing business with municipalities or insurance companies, because I am a veiled woman and Turkish. I make jokes about my headscarf or tunic; then Dutch people feel more comfortable and talk. No one tells from my emails that I am Turkish, but in the receptions they check if I can speak Dutch or if I can fluently […] Of course, we experienced the impact of the political battle between [President] Erdogan and Gulen. Our patients asked which political stream we were following or even if we were terrorists. We are not working with that religious community. I tried to end the rumours in the last months. There are people in my company with different political views. I don't share mine but stay neutral. I do this consciously, because you are either one of them, or you are bad.

Gulay acknowledges that politics definitely influences her entrepreneurial activity since she is operating in the health industry reliant on state funds and regulations. Interestingly, she says that Dutch politics influences her business more so than Turkish politics. However, as she works mostly with Turkish, rather than Dutch clients, in the context of recent fierce debates within both Turkish and Dutch communities regarding politics in Turkey, she has had to defend herself and her company against questions of partisanship. She reassured her clients that she and her business partner were not supporters of Gulen and she stays politically neutral, although both her clients and her employees are highly politicised.

The headscarf is a gendered and political artefact both in the Netherlands and Turkey (Kavakci-Islam, 2010). With the headscarf, Gulay as a Turkish Muslim migrant woman might seem to have a political stance. Yet, from her experience, she believes being involved in politics is detrimental for her enterprise. As a response to the societal and political discourses in both countries, she tries to detach herself and her company from politics by making jokes about her appearance as a veiled woman and keeping her political views hidden. She tries to construct an apolitical entrepreneurial identity, although she is highly politicised by others in her environment. By making jokes about her headscarf, she normalises the headscarf and disassociates it from political attributions but also from social discourses on Turkish Muslim women with respect to class. The headscarf in the Dutch context has an image of a socially lower status (Roggeband and Verloo, 2007). Gulay wants to communicate with the Dutch people in an open way without being perceived as a veiled migrant woman with lower educational, social and economic status attributions. This process of class-consciousness is discussed in detail in the following section with various narrative excerpts.

Class-consciousness

Class-consciousness refers to the Turkish women's awareness of their social status and reactions to ascribed and desired levels of social status. In this study, Turkish women entrepreneurs consciously oppose their ascribed lower social status as associated with their ethnic identity in Dutch society and seem to construct an enhanced social status through their entrepreneurship (Rath and Kloosterman, 2000). Three interview excerpts from Serenay, Miray and Nuray demonstrate the class-consciousness of Turkish women entrepreneurs with respect to religion, politics, ethnicity and gender.

Serenay constructs her multiple identities while interpreting the societal and political discourses on Muslims as stereotypically universalising Turkish people as all being Muslims and all practicing Islam in the same way:

> Dutch people always think stereotypical. They say that Turkish women are like this or behave like that. But no, some don't drink alcohol, but some do. My father is a Kemalist teacher sent by the Turkish government and he drinks 'Turkish raki' with his friends. I want them to get rid of stereotypical thinking. This is how my work provides a different image for Turkish women, for women with an Islamic background. If they see people like me with a different profile, Dutch people will come closer and say 'we are not different at all!' […] There is a saying that you have to meet on common grounds. I think of wine, or journalism. Wine can be an ambassador; then you can enter their world. I did the same thing with my magazine.

We can see how Serenay is concerned with Dutch people 'pigeonholing' Turkish people based on their perceptions about religion. As a Turkish migrant woman, due to the cultural and religious responsibilities imposed upon women, she feels more constrained by this stereotyping, aiming to reduce it through her entrepreneurship. With her wine brokerage, she constructs an entrepreneurial identity challenging the stereotype of Turkish (Muslim) women (Essers and Benschop, 2007) who do not drink alcohol and through her magazine she also presents alternative images of Turkish women. In her narrative, she uses the words 'Islamic background' instead of 'Muslim' as to distance herself from being seen as a stereotypical, Muslim Turkish woman.

Serenay states that she is different from the Dutch people because of her physical appearance and cultural experience with a Turkish background. In societal discourse, her being different implicitly refers to a lower social status. Thus, she constructs an entrepreneurial identity on being not different from the majority Dutch population, which contradicts her experiences. She opposes this ascribed lower status intersecting with her ethnicity and gender by differentiating herself from the general Turkish migrants with a different migration history and positioning herself as a role model ('if they show people like me') through her entrepreneurship. Following the Kemalist discourse by stating her father was a Kemalist teacher (people who follow the doctrines of Ataturk, the founder of Turkish Republic) sent by the Turkish government, she presents herself as self-reliant and constructs her entrepreneurial identity accordingly. She acts on this by referring to embracing differences, understanding people from different cultures and worldviews and meeting on common grounds. This understanding of 'common ground' with wine brokerage and a woman's magazine is based on gaining acceptance from people with non-Islamic and non-Mediterranean backgrounds. As such, she engages with a process of Westernisation (Ogbor, 2000) to gain social acceptance, since she has been 'ethnicised' and 'othered' through stereotyping constructing an entrepreneurial identity intersecting with gender, religion, ethnicity and class, which is much closer to the image of a 'Dutch/Western woman' (Essers and Tedmanson, 2014).

The next excerpt demonstrates the class-consciousness of Miray who believes that Turkish people contribute to the Dutch economy with their entrepreneurial initiatives; yet, they are still seen as lower status citizens. For Miray, this is not only related to the manner in which Dutch people treat migrants, but also self-perception of migrants in this category. Therefore, she reinforces her status in society by employing a political narrative:

> You work, work and still find yourself at the same position. Very bad! But I believe that when you work hard, you will succeed somehow. But the Dutch are jealous, because our fathers came as workers, now we are employers! People who work for me, they are Dutch. We [Turkish people] don't need to be suppressed by the Dutch. I say that [President] Erdogan is right, because he is talking on the same level. 'You are not more than me!' We can agree or disagree. This doesn't mean that I have to be suppressed.

Miray does not base her identity upon being lower class as she is well educated, owns her own business and occupies a middle-class position in economic terms. However, her emphasis on the desire to not be subordinated reveals her concern regarding class status. Entrepreneurship brings her upwards socioeconomic mobility (Rath and Kloosterman, 2000), as those with migrant worker origins become employers. Through entrepreneurship, she elevates her status in Dutch society from being the daughter of a guest worker to a Turkish women entrepreneur employing Dutch employees. Yet, Miray still justifies her elevation in political terms; she idealises President Erdogan because he satisfies a need to challenge the Dutch discourse that ascribes lower status to Turkish migrants.

We move on to Nuray's interview to illustrate that she is also highly conscious about class. For her, class is related to Islam and Muslims being disrespected by societal and political discourses on (Turkish) Muslim migrants and sociocultural and religious practices of the Turkish ethnic community. Turkish community practices are criticised as misrepresenting Islam; she blames Western media and politicians for using Muslims and Turkey for their political agendas. Moreover, she values recent nationalistic policies and political figures in Turkey as modest and humane. In reaction to these political and sociocultural opportunity structures, she constructs an entrepreneurial identity based on being respected, by having ethical principles and working professionally and modestly:

> Everyone knows my quality! When we make contracts, they don't have any trouble. My clients always tell me 'write all the hours you worked for us, we know you even work in your own time, you are honest'. They always respect me […] Sometimes I cannot perform my religious duties, but I help people a lot. If I wore a headscarf, I wouldn't have performed my job that well, people might not tell everything to me. […] I don't like this thing, even my relatives call me Mrs. Doctor, no I don't come as a doctor here. I just earn my money with it.

For Nuray, respect is related to class. In her interpretation, she is respected as a Turkish Muslim woman in every social setting: at the 'gymnasium' (or as she calls it, the 'school of elites'), at the medical school, in hospitals or in her own company. Gaining power from her entrepreneurial identity as a 'company doctor', Nuray gains an enhanced social status. Thus, her entrepreneurial identity as a 'powerful and respectful' Muslim women entrepreneur is constructed through professionalism and ethics; hence, she does not wear a headscarf, although she believes in the religious obligation to be veiled. Reflecting on this issue, she might have explained why she does not wear a headscarf to the interviewer, who was veiled, in order to justify that not wearing a headscarf is a pragmatic choice to benefit her entrepreneurship rather than a religious expression. If she were to wear a headscarf as a woman entrepreneur, she might not escape the denigrated image of Muslim women. However, somewhat controversially, while she wants to occupy a higher social class, she criticises elitist behaviours and refuses to use her title as a company doctor in her daily life stating that she only uses her title to earn her living.

Transnational and cosmopolitan positioning

Transnational and cosmopolitan positioning indicates exploitation of transnational and cosmopolitan resources and business networks and sociocultural attachment to Turkey. Becoming highly politicised and class-conscious, the Turkish migrant women in our study either position themselves transnationally or more broadly, in a cosmopolitan way illustrated with narrative excerpts from Nuray and Serenay. As one-and-a-half- and second-generation migrants, their higher levels of education, language skills and ability to exploit transnational resources help them build transnational connections in economic terms or emotionally by a sense of belonging.

For example, Nuray says,

> There was pressure on women among the Turkish community, maybe there still is. I don't have much connection now. I simply don't follow the culture. Till I was 6, I received my real Turkish culture in Turkey before I came here. I never give that up. […] I often go to Turkey. Why don't I? It needs me. […] Regardless of their race or religion, I examine lots of women. Their problems are the same; the biology is the same. The important thing is to understand each other. I gossip with Indians, Chinese or Surinamese about the Dutch. They don't recognise that I am Turkish. Some consider me Arab, Persian, Indian or Russian. But yes, being a woman has many advantages; I understand womanhood, and being a mother, pregnancy problems, motherhood, hormones.

Nuray differentiates Turkish culture in the Turkish community in the Netherlands and that of Turkey; she distances herself from the community culture as to distance herself from certain ethnic community practices and sociocultural and religious constraints imposed upon women. The six years of her childhood spent in Turkey was deemed to be the time she assimilated her 'real' Turkish culture. In response to her understanding of being part of the Turkish community, Nuray does not construct a Turkish ethnicity in the Dutch context. Instead, she constructs her ethnicity as a foreigner in her entrepreneurship; being a foreigner, woman and entrepreneur simultaneously helps her to understand patient problems better and brings her entrepreneurial success. Nuray can empathise with them in their relationships with the Dutch or in their problems with womanhood or motherhood; she cannot identify with the Turkish community yet, she wants to maintain her Turkish identity. Therefore, she constructs a transnational entrepreneurial identity (Vertovec, 2001), which is more of a strategic choice. While she has emotional connections with Turkey, she wants to be seen as part of it, rather than having transnational business links since she is working as a medical doctor and consults companies in the Netherlands. In the next excerpt, we draw upon Serenay's interview, where she constructs a more cosmopolitan entrepreneurial identity:

> Our world experience is different than the Dutch. Consider someone like me. You're living here; your Dutch is perfect; you know the Dutch culture well. But you are different. You have Turkish parents, you came from the Turkish culture; you go to Turkey on holiday. […] My magazine is unique. None of the magazines speak to these women. I have a huge media network. I write for many magazines, since I am an exclusive person. I am a cosmopolitan, I live here, I have lived in US, I can live in Turkey, now I am going to Sweden maybe, I will live there.

Ascribing to two cultures might be deemed problematic as contradictions might emerge positioning individuals between cultural norms (Arends-Toth and van de Vijver, 2003). However, Serenay constructs her identities intersectionally in a pragmatic way. In her media company, she targets Mediterranean women with a Muslim background recognising the need of these women to advance their lives. In addition, as a wine lover she sees an opportunity in the scarcity of Turkish wines in overseas markets and becomes a Turkish wine broker. Serenay is multi-lingual and travels frequently; she uses these resources and exploits her cosmopolitan networks. From her perspective, Turkish (Muslim) women in the Netherlands have a lower status; her interpretation is that she cannot be identified as Dutch given her background and physical appearance. Thus, in response, she excludes herself from these cultures with which she cannot fully identify. Through her entrepreneurial activity, she constructs a cosmopolitan identity (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002), which offers more scope for social mobility and entrepreneurial success.

Discussion

In this article, we studied the manner in which politico-institutional and sociocultural opportunity structures interrelate with entrepreneurial identity construction processes (Steyaert and Katz, 2004) and how entrepreneurial identity is constructed intersectionally through gender, ethnicity and class in relation to these opportunity structures (Sarason et al., 2006; Stead, 2017). We believe that studying opportunity structures has demonstrated explicitly the impact that context has upon entrepreneurial identity construction. Different interpretations and framings of opportunity structures among a group of entrepreneurs with a similar background result in diverse intersections of entrepreneurship, religion, politics, gender, ethnicity and class. For instance, Serenay and Nuray denounce their ethnic identities (Essers and Benschop, 2007) and construct transnational and cosmopolitan identities by excluding themselves from their communities, whereas Miray constructs a highly political identity by focussing upon being Turkish in the Dutch context.

We have seen that the women in this study construct their entrepreneurial identities strategically and purposefully in negotiation with particular perceptions regarding gender, ethnicity and class and by careful consideration of the opportunity structures. To be able to operate and succeed as entrepreneurs, they enter into complex identity work, in which they use their agency to construct an entrepreneurial identity that works for them within these particular opportunity structures. Because of these opportunity structures, they make very clear choices about how they present their identities in their entrepreneurship. However, they also find themselves in complex situations when they need to move between their identities (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2010). For instance, Miray purposefully distances her gender identity from her political identity and constructs it through modernity, which is also a gendered political artefact. She finds it difficult to move between her gender and political identity, which she tries to construct separately. In response, she adheres to her ethnicity when constructing her political identity and resists to masculine connotations of the industry when constructing her gender identity (Essers and Benschop, 2007).

Researching women entrepreneurs at the intersection of migration, gender and identity also yields novel insights concerning opportunity recognition. We have observed less feminised, ethnicised and working-class-related businesses and more diverse companies with more mainstream clientele and middle-class connotations such as medical or legal consultants, interior designers, media communicators or wine brokers. However, these entrepreneurs still either exploit their ethnic networks or operate in ethnic niches, such as the medical firm with an ethnic clientele or a magazine for Mediterranean women with a Muslim background. The construction and enactment of these firms show how such businesses can be used for upwards social mobility in relation to gender and ethnicity (Villares-Varela, 2018; Villares-Varela and Essers, 2018). We have shown how these non-normative businesses are used by those women in this study to counter the negative stereotypical lower status image of Turkish women in Dutch society as being non-modern or non-emancipated and to act as role models. Hence, these businesses have become socio politically oriented activities (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013) disrupting the political discussions about migrant women in popular media and the socio political context.

The results of this study lead us to suggest that these three processes of identity construction apply more to middle-class, one-and-a-half- and second-generation women entrepreneurs than first-generation lower-class women entrepreneurs. The former are educated in Dutch schools with their Dutch peers; for most, Dutch is their first language. They consider themselves as middle-class citizens given their higher educational and socioeconomic credentials contradicting the image of Turkish (Muslim) women in the Dutch discourse (Essers and Benschop, 2007, 2009). This leads these women to be more concerned about their class positions and hence more aware of and participatory within political discussions in both countries.

Limitations

We believe that opportunity structures and identity construction are two social phenomena interdependent in a dynamic and recursive manner (Lewis, 2013; Welter, 2011). There are some limitations to our work; due to the scope of this study and the requirement of a longitudinal approach, we could not examine the change in the opportunity structures. Future longitudinal studies might explore the influence of identities on the opportunity structures and provide insights on the possibility and level of change in social structures and on the influence of this change on the reconstruction of identities. The use of LinkedIn helped us study class with respect to the opportunity structures, but it also limited our sample with middle-class women entrepreneurs. Regarding what our study has brought into discussion with respect to class, a comparative study between classes in various generations would be an interesting contribution to the field of entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

The contribution of this study to the entrepreneurship literature is three-fold. First, we demonstrate how politics, both in the country of residence and country of origin, influences identity constructions. Together with the socio political discourse in the Netherlands, Turkey's nationalistic policies have politicised Turkish people in the Netherlands. The Turkish diaspora closely follows political issues in both countries and discusses politics and ethnicity within their daily lives. Given the ease of travel, or communication channels like social media (Zhou, 2004), the political circumstances in Turkey become more visible and so, influence the entrepreneurial identity construction processes of the women with respect to (discourses on) gender, ethnicity and class. Political disputes between the two countries, as well as domestic politics in both countries, influenced the women's entrepreneurial identity constructions, either in a highly political or apolitical manner forcing them to distance their gender identity from politics.

Second, our research illustrates an under-researched issue in entrepreneurship studies, that of class. The women in our study are concerned about the image of Turkish women regarding their social status and acceptance in Dutch society. Being one-and-a-half- or second-generation, they are well educated, multi-lingual and financially independent. In response to the societal and political discourses on Turkish (Muslim) women, they distanced themselves from the Turkish community in the Netherlands rejecting perceptions of being a 'typical' Turkish migrant with a different migration history or by not engaging in ethnic cultural practices. It is widely viewed that social exclusion strengthens group cohesion and in-group ethnic bonding, networking and access to group resources (Robertson and Grant, 2016); however, the women in our study valued their connection with Turkey using discourses of modernity and Kemalism in Turkey to elevate their class positions in the Netherlands. As such, they presumed there are more liberated modern women in Turkey than in the Turkish community in the Netherlands (Essers and Tedmanson, 2014) with whom they identified.

Third, this study contributes to the entrepreneurship literature on the transnational and cosmopolitan positioning of migrant women entrepreneurs (Vertovec, 2001; Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). Transnational entrepreneurship, as an emergent field (Drori et al., 2009), studies transnational entrepreneurs with a business-related link between their country of origin and residence. In this article, we studied transnationalism with entrepreneurial identity construction (Vertovec, 2001). Also influenced by the processes of politicisation and class-consciousness, the women in this study utilise their skills, bicultural literacy and transnational network to expand their middle-class status (Zhou and Tseng, 2001). The women exploit transnational resources, which might be either unobserved or unavailable to other entrepreneurs operating in a single location. While they do not exploit transnational resources in their entrepreneurship, they still position

themselves transnationally or in a cosmopolitan way by their sense of belonging and emotional connectedness with Turkey. Such transnational and cosmopolitan positioning also involves retaining their ethnic identity and non-assimilation stance (Drori et al., 2009). This does not mean that they have a sojourner orientation to their residential country, but that they have an increasingly stronger connection to the country of origin.

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Notes

1. In 2017, the Dutch government refused to allow Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs to organise speeches in the Netherlands regarding the Turkish constitutional referendum and escorted Turkey's Minister of Family Affairs out of the Netherlands leading to street demonstrations in Rotterdam.
2. A transnational organisation inspired by the religious teachings of Fethullah Gulen, active in education and interfaith dialogue along with investments in media and finance, recently classified as a terrorist organisation by Turkish government.

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Appendix I

#	Name	Types of business	Years in business	Place of business	Age / Reason for migration	Age / Ethnicity	Marital Status
1	Sonay	Cultural Social Formation Consultant, Project Manager, Trainer	8	Amsterdam	19 years / Marriage	43/ Turkish	Divorced, two adult children, remarried to a Dutch husband
2	Gulay	Founding manager of elderly, disabled, substance abuse, foster care and maternity care services	8	Amsterdam	Born in NL / Migration of father as a guest worker	38/ Turkish	Married with two children
3	Nuray	Business doctor, care agent for coaching and counselling	9	The Hague	Six years / Migration of father as a guest worker	45/ Turkish	Married with one child
4	Feray	Legal counsellor	15	The Hague	Four years / Migration of father as a guest worker	46/ Turkish	Single, no children
5	Nilay	Coach, counsellor and trainer in personal development	15	Amsterdam	Six years / Migration of father as a guest worker	46/ Turkish	Divorced, one adult child
6	Serenay	International journalist, PR expert, media professional, and wine broker	14	Rotterdam	Six years / Migration of father as a teacher employed by Turkish government	47/ Turkish	Divorced, one adult child
7	Asilay	Founder of a nursery school, founding manager of tourism and accountancy services	12	Utrecht	Born in NL / Migration of father as a guest worker	33/ Turkish	Married with five children
8	Miray	Interior designer	9	Rotterdam	Born in NL / Migration of father as a guest worker	34/ Turkish	Married, no children
9	Canay	Organiser and manager of intercultural communication, participation and integration events, and talent courses for children with ethnic backgrounds	17	Rotterdam	15 years / Migration of father as a guest worker	53/ Turkish / Kurdish - Alevi	Married with two adult children
10	Ilkay	Children's theatre organiser, script writer	9	Amsterdam	Four years / Migration of father as a refugee	47/ Turkish / Assyrian	Divorced, one child, In a relation, one children

Figure 1. Demographics of the interviewees.