

**ENGAGING WITH (DIVERSITY) MANAGEMENT:
AN ANALYSIS OF MINORITY EMPLOYEES' AGENCY**

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses how minority employees engage with (diversity) management to construct their organizational identities and, by so doing, comply with, accommodate and/or resist managerial control. Differently from most studies of diversity as a discourse, which consider diversity discourses as direct forms of control, we approach diversity as an identity-regulating discourse, controlling minority employees indirectly by offering them specific organizational identities. Further, these identity-regulating discourses combine with the specific material structure of the organization, creating a particular mix of direct and indirect control. We analyze four minority employees' identities in two organizations, a technical drawing company and a hospital. We show that minority employees actively engage, as agents, with both types of control, which constrain them but also open up possibilities for resistance, and even forms of (micro-)emancipation. The paper contributes to the reconceptualization of diversity as an identity-regulating discourse and to the further theorization of identity regulation and emancipation.

Keywords: diversity –agency – materiality – resistance – control – emancipation

In evaluating the first decade of diversity research in 1996, Nkomo and Cox concluded that most studies examined the effects of diversity but failed to properly theorize the notion of diversity itself. Following their plea for more theoretically sound approaches, several scholars started studying diversity and diversity management as a discourse. They critically examined how the new discourse of diversity originated (Jones, Pringle & Sheperd, 2000; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998), and how it operates in organizations (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004), professions (Litvin, 2002), and broader institutional settings (Dandeker & Mason, 2001; de Los Reyes, 2000; Martinsson, 2002; Wilson & Iles, 1999). These studies have made a two-fold contribution to the diversity literature. First, they have de-essentialized diversity, by showing that demographic characteristics are not just given, but rather socially constructed. Second, they have countered the rhetoric of diversity as a positive, empowering discourse stressing individuals' different capacities (Thomas & Ely, 1996) by showing how diversity discourses operate as control mechanisms. This control occurs through defining minority employees in specific ways, e.g. their differences are generally constructed as essentialised group characteristics (Litvin, 1997) with negative connotations (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004).

While these discourse studies have led to a critical, theoretically sound re-conceptualization of diversity, they also present two major limitations. First, they focus on the discursive structure of organizations at the expense of the material one. This leads to discourse-centred analyses reducing control to discursive control and largely neglecting more material forms of control. In this study, we attempt to avoid such conflation and aim to stress the mutual relationship between the material structure of organizations and the emergence and operation of organizational discourses of diversity (cf. Fairclough, 1998). We show how minority employees are controlled in multiple ways, by both the material and the discursive structures in which they are embedded (Reed, 2000).

Second, due to their focus on the ways diversity discourses define differences and fix identities, previous studies tend to fall into excessive determinism (Giddens, 1993; Newton, 1998; Reed, 2000), neglecting minority employees' agency. Studies on identity regulation (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) however have well illustrated that, in contemporary organizations, discursive control is mediated through the employee's self and not simply imposed upon it. In this study, we show that minority individuals, as agents, actively comply with, accommodate, and/or resist diversity discourses in constructing their own identity. Accordingly, we approach diversity discourses as an indirect, rather than a direct, form of managerial control.

The overall purpose of this study is therefore to develop a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of how diversity and diversity management control minority employees in organization. It aims to make two main contributions to the (critical) diversity literature. First, it shows that diversity management is a combination of specific discursive and material controls, embedded in particular material and discursive organizational structures. Second, it shows that minority employees are agents who construct specific organizational identities and that such identities comply with, accommodate, and/or resist diversity discourses and other types of managerial control. The study also aims to contribute to the wider critical organization literature. While critical scholars using discourse analysis (Collinson, 2000, 2003; Fairclough, 1998; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001) have dealt with the issues of agency and the material, there is a lack of empirical research that systematically examines the active role of agents within a given material and discursive context. In this study, we provide in-depth accounts of how materiality and discourses intersect at the level of the subject, affecting the way individuals construct their identities.

The qualitative material presented in this study was collected at TechnoLine, a technical drawing company, and Saint Mary, a hospital. Within each organization, we interviewed managers, majority employees, and employees having a minority status in terms of gender, culture or (dis)ability. We analyse this material along three research questions: 1) How is diversity management produced within a particular material and discursive organizational context? 2) How does management control, both directly and indirectly, minority employees? and 3) How do minority employees, as agents, comply with, accommodate, and/or resist managerial control?

The paper is organized in six sections. First, we critically discuss the literature on diversity as a discourse, pointing to its neglect of the material structure and agency. We then theoretically ground our research questions by discussing the concepts of identity regulation, material structure and agency. Third, we describe our qualitative methodology including the data collection and analysis. In the fourth section, we present the specific material and discursive context of the two organizations under study and elaborate on how minority employees are controlled, paying specific attention to diversity management. We then move to in-depth accounts of how four minority employees' engage with managerial control. To conclude, we reflect on our empirical findings in terms of control, compliance/accommodation/resistance and emancipation, and discuss their contribution to the further development of critical diversity research and critical management studies in general.

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO DIVERSITY: DIVERSITY AS DISCOURSE

The first studies dealing with the nature of the diversity in a theoretically informed way focused on the historical shift, in the early 1990s, from discourses of equal opportunities and affirmative action to diversity management (Dandeker & Mason, 2001; Jones et al., 2000; Hagedorn-Rasmussen & Kamp, 2002; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Liff, 1996; Liff & Wajcman, 1996; Maxwell, Blair & McDougall, 2001; McDougall, 1996; Wilson & Iles, 1999). These studies critically analyzed the differences between diversity, an economic discourse of individual talents that serve organizational goals, and equal opportunities/affirmative action, an ethical discourse of collective differences and legal rights.

A second body of critical diversity literature examined how diversity (management) operates as a discourse of control. For instance, Kirby and Harter (2001) critiqued diversity management as a form of managerial domination aiming solely at improving the bottom line. In a similar vein, Litvin (2002) argued that diversity consultants are caught in the cognitive 'iron cage' of the business case of diversity, which neutralizes the emancipatory potential of their interventions. Examining Swedish public discourses of diversity, de los Reyes (2000) and Martinsson (2002) pointed to institutions' essentialisation of differences and neglect of unequal power relations. In her analysis of organizational behaviour textbooks, Litvin (1997) also found that diversity was constructed as specific groups' essences, through drawing from biology. Finally, Zanoni and Janssens (2004) showed how HR managers' constructions of diversity are contingent upon the work processes in the organization and that differences are systematically evaluated in function of productive goals. Informed by a critical post-structuralist tradition, the above studies all regard diversity as a managerial discourse of control operating through specific definitions of difference and policies that deploy such differences to reach institutional goals. While these studies have considerably advanced our understanding of diversity, they have not yet structurally linked diversity discourses with either the underlying material structure of organizations or minority employees' agency.

First, critical diversity studies have analyzed the intertextual linkages between diversity discourses and a variety of other political and/or legal discourses of difference and equality (Dandeker & Mason, 2001; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Liff, 1996; Liff & Wajcman, 1996; Martinsson, 2002), economic discourses of efficiency (Litvin, 2002) and globalization (Jones et al., 2000; Kirby & Harter, 2001), and even a biological discourse of diversity (Litvin, 1997). However, they only exceptionally related diversity discourses to the material structure they are embedded in. The few theoretical (Hagedorn-Rasmussen & Kamp, 2002; de los Reyes, 2000) and empirical studies (Maxwell et al., 2001; Wilson & Iles, 1999) that do so,

present the material structure as introductory, background information rather than actively analyzing their relationship with diversity discourses. This neglect obscures the way material conditions affect diversity discourses and the way these latter, in turn, shape, reproduce or challenge the materiality of organization (cf. Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004).

Second, most critical diversity studies neglect minority employees' agency. They examine the diversity discourses produced by powerful actors such as scholars, managers, legislators, and even religious leaders. To de-construct these diversity discourses, they often analyze secondary, public sources such as books, mission statements, and legislative texts (Dandeker & Mason, 2001; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Litvin, 1997; Martinsson, 2002). The few that do collect primary data largely focus on managers' or professionals' accounts of diversity (management) (Jones et al., 2000; Litvin, 2002; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004), rather than on accounts of the subjects who are defined by diversity discourse and who represent the primary target of diversity management. The conceptual and methodological primacy of authoritative sources for the de-construction of a diversity discourse leads to emphasizing the coherence and pervasiveness of that discourse while obscuring the way minority employees partake, as agents, in its reproduction or contestation (Putnam & Cooren, 2004).

Critical diversity studies' neglect of agency is particularly problematic because, in contemporary organizations, managerial discourses often control in an indirect way through identity regulation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Their success is therefore contingent upon employees' active identification with them. Considering agency is therefore key to understanding the processes through which diversity discourses control minority employees, while also opening up opportunities for them to resist managerial control and even (micro-)emancipate themselves.

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AS INDIRECT AND DIRECT CONTROL

The main purpose of this study is to understand how diversity management consists of indirect and direct control mechanisms and how minority employees, as agents, actively comply with, accommodate or resist that control. To theoretically ground our research questions, we turn to the contemporary critical management literature addressing power, control and resistance (e.g. Jermier, Knights & Nord, 1994) and discuss the concepts of identity regulation, material structure and agency.

Discourse, Identity Regulation and Indirect Control

A number of critical scholars have argued that the exercise of power through traditional methods of direct control (i.e. bureaucratic control) is inadequate for contemporary organizing as it is 'too overtly oppressive, too alienating and too inflexible' (Du Gay & Salaman, 1992, p. 621). Post-Fordist production calls for new, more effective forms of control (Thompson & Ackroyd, 1995) able to mobilize workers' discretionary commitment to the organization, rather than their mere compliance with its rules (Du Gay & Salaman, 1992). Typically, new forms of control are pervasively exerted through managerial discourses that attempt to constitute less antagonistic workers' subjectivities in line with managerial objectives (Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994; Reed, 2001). Forms of indirect control rely on the Foucauldian idea that power is not 'the property of individuals or groups' but rather 'a condition of social relations' (Knights & McCabe, 1999, p. 199). Power is subtle and diffused, permeating subjectivity and one's sense of identity. It is not imposed *upon* the self; rather, it operates *through* the self. Alvesson and Willmott (2002, p. 620) theorize this type of control in organizations as a process of 'identity regulation' whereby 'control is accomplished through the self-positioning of employees within managerially inspired discourses about work and organization with which they become more or less identified and committed.' Incorporating managerial discourses into narratives of self-identity may occur through several processes, pursued purposefully or just be a by-product of particular activities. It involves participation in organizational practices 'which are known or understood to provide the individual with a sense of security and belonging' (Knights & Willmott, 1989, p. 550; Collinson, 2003). For instance, identity is influenced by espoused values and stories that orient identity in a specific direction of who one should be, social events that regulate where one belongs, education programmes that present self-images of people, or status distinctions that express who is superior, equal or subordinate (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). In times of increasing job insecurity, these feelings of security and belonging through identity regulation have become particularly critical to the employment relationship, as organizational identification can no longer be taken for granted (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

However, as identity (re-)formation is a fluid, unstable and reflexive process, the regulatory process remains precarious. On the one hand, it can be argued that the instability of identity renders employees more vulnerable to the appeal of organizational identifications (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). On the other hand, organizational members may have difficulties in choosing between different available discourses (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), or they may resist managerially designed

identities (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Prasad & Prasad, 2000). In any case, the concept of identity regulation assumes that employees are not passive consumers but rather actively engage in the construction of their identity in organizations.

In this study, we focus our analysis on how diversity discourses control minority employees *indirectly* by regulating their identities. We argue that such discourses do not control in a deterministic, top-down manner, and show that minority employees continuously engage with diversity discourses to construct themselves in organizations.

Material Structure and Direct Control

While indirect forms of control through discourses gain importance in managing organizations, it should be stressed that managerial discourses never occur in a social vacuum. Discourse always emerges in relation to what ‘is already there, already in place’ (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 86 in Newton, 1998, p. 423), even if we acknowledge that ‘reality’ remains a matter of contestation and debate and nothing exists in a ‘pre- or non-discursive arena’ (Fairclough, 1998; Du Gay, 1996). In our analysis, materiality refers to power relations having a relative ‘*stability*, deriving from repeated patterns in their social construction and reproduction over the medium- to long term’ (Newton, 1998, p. 422-423; stress in original; cf. also Fairclough, 1998: p. 65). These power relations form a ‘material’ dimension of organizations in the sense that they are long-term and relatively undisputed, and, as a consequence, relatively undisputable by an individual. As Bourdieu’s (1990) *doxa*, they represent a (constructed) vision of ‘reality’ so naturalized that it represents the only ‘reality’ for all involved agents. The distinction between discourse and more stabilized patterns remains analytical; however, we argue that it is relevant and useful to understand the complexity of control in contemporary organizations. These relatively stable power relations are in fact ‘significant to the extent that they condition the way in which discourses are *established*’ (Newton, 1998, p. 423; stress in original; see also Fairclough, 1998). In the context of this study, we operationalize the material as those consolidated power relations, those unquestioned ‘facts.’ For instance, we consider minority employees’ lower position in the organizational ranks or their disadvantaged position in the wider labour market to be material. By doing so, we temporarily make abstraction of the discourses constituting that position. They are a fact in as far as all actors agree that minority employees hold less (higher) jobs than other employees, although they might disagree on the why’s and how’s. Typically, employers might draw from discourses such as lack of skills, schooling, and right attitude, while minority employees might see these positions as a result of discrimination.

Furthermore, the material structure is important not only because it affects the way discourses are established, but also because it operates as a *direct* control mechanism. Stabilized constructions of power relations might become embodied into and supported by organizational artefacts, forcing employees to comply with them. Minority employees might be controlled in particular stringent ways. Consider for instance how the Christian calendar structures the organization of work in the West. During the month of Ramadan, organizations maintain their ‘normal’ working hours. To date, this can be considered a ‘fact’ in as far as it is a given, not actively contested way of organizing work. However, such working hours control Muslim employees in Western organizations in specific ways, imposing them to work and rest at times that are in conflict with the exercise of their religion. Analogously, employees with caring responsibilities -typically, women with children- are controlled in direct and specific ways by employers expecting them to work 50 hours a week, imposing late working hours that are incompatible with their duties as carers.

In our approach, the material and discursive dimensions of diversity management are analytically distinct and stand in a dialectical relationship (Fairclough, 1998). In this specific context, the analytical distinction, while not unproblematic, aims at avoiding the risk of first collapsing diversity management into diversity discourses and then having to reify discourses in order to be able to show that the of control minority employees is very ‘material.’

Agency, Compliance, Accommodation and Resistance

While Foucauldian power-knowledge needs subjects for its own reproduction, the active engagement of subjects with discourse entails at best less-than-perfect compliance and at worst less-than-perfect resistance. Agents, in virtue of their own engagement, never reproduce discourse identically nor contest it radically (cf. Butler, 1993). Critics have focused on this latter limitation to argue that within discourse, agents have no space for ‘classical’ forms of resistance and true emancipation, because they do not question more stabilized constructions of power relations. In fact, agency is contingent upon the degree to which they are free and able to reproduce and challenge discourses, which is in principle excluded when power relations are fully stabilized and unquestioned. Other scholars have preferred to focus on the empowering dimension of discourse, allowing agents to achieve forms of micro-emancipation precisely in virtue of the difference they can make in the reproduction and/or challenge of (identity-regulating) discourse (cf. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Ezzamel, Willmott & Worthington, 2001).

In this study, we approach each organization as a constellation of direct and indirect modes of control reflecting both material and discursive structures. The couples material/direct control and discursive/indirect control, while not completely overlapping, can be positioned as the poles of a continuum going from stability to instability. This has important implications for the way we operationalize agency and we conduct the analysis of our empirical material. While managerial discourses of diversity represent 'indirect' modes of control in as far as they operate through employees' very identification with them (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), as 'capable' and 'knowledgeable' agents (Giddens, 1993), minority employees are agents only in as far as they are able 'to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events' (Giddens, 1993). Evidently, in these terms, the question becomes not so much to verify whether minority employees are agents or not, whether they can make a difference or not, whether they resist or not. Rather we need to consider the degree to and the modalities in which these employees exert their agency and to evaluate the degree to and the modalities in which they can resist.

METHODOLOGY

The Cases

In this study, we analyze empirical material collected at TechnoLine, a technical drawing company, and Saint Mary, a hospital. These two case studies were selected out of a total of five conducted during the period 2001-2002 as part of a qualitative, in-depth research project on diversity management in Flemish organizations commissioned by the Flemish government in Belgium. The five original organizations were known for their diverse workforce and their active diversity management. Following the logic of contrasting cases for theory generation (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1991; Yin, 1989), we selected the two organizations under analysis because of their distinct material and discursive organizational context. The two organizations employ various minority group employees, in jobs at different levels of the hierarchy requiring various types of skills, with different types of contact with clients, and within more or less hierarchical organizational structures.

Data Collection

Within each organization, we conducted open-ended interviews with minority and majority employees at different hierarchical levels, the HR manager, and line managers.

TABLE I: INTERVIEWS IN THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS

Interviews	Gender	Ethnicity	(Dis)Ability	Function
Saint Mary's Hospital				
Interview 1 (twice)	Female	Belgium		HR manager
Interview 2	Male	Syria/Belgium		Gynaecologist
Interview 3	Female	Belgium		Head of cleaning
Interview 4	Male	Belgium		Trainer for health assistants
Interview 5	Female	Belgium		Coach for low-educated employees
Interview 6	Female	Belgium		Head of nursing
Interview 7	Female	Belgium	Psychiatric patient	Cleaning staff
Interview 8	Male	Belgium		Nursing staff
Interview 9	Female	Morocco		Administrative staff
Interview 10	Female	Belgium		Midwife
Interview 11	Female	Morocco		Midwife
Interview 12	Male	Belgium		Ombudsperson
Interview 13	Female	Belgium		Head of nursing
Interview 14	Male	Hong Kong		Cook
TechnoLine				
Interview 1	Male	Belgium		Manager
Interview 2	Female	Belgium		Drawer
Interview 3	Female	Belgium		Drawer
Interview 4	Male	Belgium	Disabled	Drawer
Interview 5	Male	Belgium	Disabled	Drawer
Interview 6	Male	Belgium		Drawer
Interview 7	Male	Belgium	Disabled	Drawer
Interview 8	Male	Turkey	Disabled	Drawer
Interview 9	Female	Belgium		Management staff
Interview 10	Female	Belgium		Manager

In order to gain a picture as broad as possible of diversity and diversity practices in the organization, we selected respondents with different socio-demographic characteristics and jobs (see Table I below). Complementary information was collected through internal documents on the composition of the workforce, turnover and absenteeism.

The interviews took place at the work place, were conducted in Dutch, lasted one to two hours, and were tape-recorded and fully transcribed. They were guided by a questionnaire of wide-ranging, open questions including topics such as the organization of work (What is your job? How is the work organized?); the organizational culture (How would you describe this company's culture? How are the relations between employee and manager? How are the relations among colleagues?); the employment of minority employees (Why does the company hire minority employees? What jobs do they do?); the practices of managing diverse employees (What is your HRM policy? What type of diversity related activities do you implement? How would you describe the relations among majority and minority employees?);

and personal reactions and feelings towards the management and diversity practices (What is your experience of working in this company? What do you like here?).

Data Analysis

For each case study, each co-author coded all interview texts in terms of the material and discursive structure of the organization of work (nature of service, organizational structure, HR policies and practices, managerial discourses) and its diversity management (reasons for hiring minority employees, vision on diversity, and diversity management practices). After having reconstructed each case, we selected two interviews with minority employees in each organization. As in the selection of the two cases, the four accounts were not chosen for their representativeness. Rather, we selected organizational identities that appropriated the diversity management and managerial control in a complex and distinct manner. Each interview was analyzed in two phases. In the first phase, we identified the discursive and material structure our interviewees referred to and how such structure controlled them. In the second, we carried out a more in-depth interpretation, reconstructing the interviewee's identity and analyzing to what degree such identity complies with, accommodates and/or resists various form of control both within the organization and beyond.

MANAGERIAL CONTROL AND DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

In this section, we introduce the two organizations under study and discuss their main modes of managerial control. We address our first two research questions on how diversity management is produced within each material and discursive context, and how management controls, both directly and indirectly, minority employees. For each organization, we first present the material and discursive context and how it controls employees in general. We then discuss the organization's reasons for hiring minority employees, its vision on diversity and diversity management.

TechnoLine

Our first case is TechnoLine, a technical drawing company started in 1991. TechnoLine designs machines and industrial installations and offers technical services such as CAD consultancy for product development. Most employees are technical drawers mainly working on projects at clients' sites, sometimes for several months. Clients and clients' projects therefore largely shape the material structure of the organization. Clients control TechnoLine drawers directly and their expectations in terms of outputs, quality standards, timing,

flexibility, and mobility determine the evaluation standards for drawers as well as the content and timing of their training activities. Clients also take part in employees' performance evaluations, the main ground on which salary increases are negotiated between the employee and his/her manager. TechnoLine however also attempts to control its employees indirectly, at distance, by offering them an identity as technically skilled, motivated, entrepreneurial, client-satisfying professionals. Such identity-regulatory discourse complements direct control by appealing to employees' individual sense of responsibility as empowered professionals to perform and satisfy customers.

The company started to hire 'minority' technical drawers to cope with a deficit of qualified personnel in the late 1990s. They were formerly unemployed people that had received re-qualifying training by a public employment agency. Some of them were from socio-demographic groups that have historically been underrepresented in qualified technical professions, such as women, the lower educated, the physically disabled, and people with a non-Belgian cultural background.

In line with the material and discursive structure of TechnoLine delineated above, minority employees are constructed as individuals with professional skills and are expected to perform as all other personnel members. The company does not have an autonomous diversity management, but rather manages minority employees through its general, meritocratic (HR) management. An employee's gender, formal schooling, (dis)ability and/or cultural background are in principle considered irrelevant. The company does have a policy of addressing specific requests or problems on an individual, ad-hoc basis, and always in collaboration with the clients involved. For instance, part-time work, requested by some female drawers, is agreed upon on a project basis and is renegotiated with the new client whenever the drawer is employed on another project. Or a physically disabled drawer's mobility problems are discussed with the client, leading to flexible work arrangements allowing disabled drawers to sometimes work at the drawing office rather than at the client's site. This policy is however not cast as diversity policy and is in principle applicable to any employee. In sum, TechnoLine minority employees are directly controlled by clients and indirectly through a managerial discourse of meritocracy and customer satisfaction offering them an identity as empowered professionals.

Saint Mary's Hospital

Our second case study is a medium-sized hospital located in a central urban area. Next to Flemish patients, the hospital has long been serving the local Jewish community and

increasingly the growing Turkish and North African ones. Work at the hospital is organized hierarchically, following a strict division of labour reflecting rigid professional distinctions based on formal education. Direct control is exerted in a variety of ways: through bureaucratic rules (i.e. required qualifications, working schedules, procedures, quality standards, etc.), technology (i.e. the time clock) as well as superiors' and patients' surveillance. These multiple forms of direct control are complemented –and to some extent 'softened'– by a managerial discourse of openness towards both employees and patients, drawing from the Catholic origins of the hospital. Employees are offered an identity of carers within a small hospital structure, having a family atmosphere, being open and flexible towards the social needs of employees, and serving all patients in a socially and culturally sensitive way.

Saint Mary recently started to hire mostly young women with Turkish and Moroccan background to cope with a structural shortage of nursing and paramedic staff and with the increasing cultural diversity among patients. At the time of the study, a few nurses and midwives, one (male) doctor, some administrative staff members, and several logistical assistants with different cultural backgrounds were working at the hospital.

The hospital perspective on diversity revolves around minority employees' specific skills, ensuring that minority patients receive culturally appropriate medical care. Minority employees are expected to provide a specific contribution deriving from the cultural and linguistic background they share with patients. This is reflected in an approach to diversity management centred on cultural groups cutting across the distinction between employees and patients. Diversity initiatives include translation by minority employees between patients and doctors when necessary, the availability of a wide selection of food for patients, and the fact that patients with similar cultural backgrounds are, if possible, placed in the same room. Also, a multicultural work group organizes activities including information sessions about rituals of birth and death in different cultures, intercultural communication trainings, visits to the Jewish and Turkish neighbourhoods, and a multicultural calendar with all religious holidays. An anti-discrimination clause is in the hospital's by-laws and appointed an intercultural ombudsperson who handles 'intercultural' conflicts.

Within the material and discursive context of the hospital, minority employees are controlled directly and indirectly. Like majority employees, they are controlled directly through the material organization of work allowing for superiors' and patients' surveillance. Also, like majority employees, they are controlled indirectly through the regulation of their professional identity as open, flexible carers. However, differently from majority employees,

the discourse of cultural diversity also offers them a professional identity as ‘cultural experts’ for patients belonging to their same cultural group.

Conclusion

In our two organizations, minority employees are controlled in very different ways due to distinct material and discursive organizational structures and diversity approaches. TechnoLine heavily relies on clients to control employees directly while regulating their identity as empowered professionals. These complementary modes of control are similar for majority and minority employees as they are all considered individuals with professional skills for whom no special diversity management is put in place. In contrast, Saint Mary controls majority and minority employees in partially different ways. In addition to a variety of direct controls and the identity regulation of ‘open’ carers, minority employees are controlled by a well-developed and autonomous diversity management. This diversity management stresses cultural group differences, providing minority employees with an identity of ‘cultural experts’ who contribute to culturally appropriate care for patients belonging to their same cultural group.

These two cases clearly indicate that minority employees are controlled by a mix of direct and indirect control, which constrains them in particular ways (cf. Zanoni & Janssens, forthcoming). However, as we illustrate in the next section, such control is never absolute. Because identity regulation relies on minority employees’ engagement with managerial discourses to control, it does not only constrain them but also creates possibilities to construct more resistant identities.

MINORITY EMPLOYEES ENGAGING WITH MANAGERIAL CONTROL

We now turn to our last research question: how do minority employees, as agents, comply with, accommodate and/or resist managerial control? In order to maximize the space for interviewees’ own voice, we report extensive excerpts of the four interviews in the left column of the tables below. While translating and editing the excerpts, we tried to maintain the original meaning within the context of the whole interview. In the right column of the tables, next to each excerpt, we report our first-line interpretation indicating the material and discursive structure of the organization and the wider environment and discussing how the minority employee as an agent acts upon these conditions. After each table, we present our second-line interpretation, which looks at each interview as a whole. Here we focus on the

interviewee's organizational identity and the degree to and the way in which such identity complies with, accommodates and/or resists managerial control.

Ahmed, Consultant at TechnoLine

Interview Excerpts	Interpretation
<p>When I was 17, I dropped out of school, a difficult period... my father wanted me to study but I was young and had had enough... some teachers have extreme ideas... as only [Moroccan] migrant in the class... they tell you: I'm going to flunk you this year... that doesn't motivate... you focus on your culture, even though it might not be the only issue... still, Belgium is not so ideal for a migrant...</p>	<p><i>The interview starts with a self-reflective account of Ahmed's personal story, fitting into the material 'reality' of migrants being lower educated, racism by school teachers, and Belgium in general as an inhospitable country for migrants. Ahmed does take some responsibility for dropping out of school but at the same time provides extenuating circumstances.</i></p>
<p>I first worked as a welder but then I got asthma and eczema and had to stop... I stayed on sick leave benefits till I started at GOCI [public training agency for unemployed people with disability]... I passed the psychological tests and did a CAD training... I did not even know what a computer was!... I was motivated and finished fast... I had to do a one-year internship in a company, but I stopped after three months, the company did not suit me.... I am ambitious, I fight hard, I've learned that with time...</p>	<p><i>Ahmed has to quit his first (manual) job due to an allergy. He stresses his initiative to look for alternatives via the public training agency GOCI, the positive results of the psychological test, and his renewed motivation to complete the training. He also stresses his active role in looking for a suitable company offering opportunities. He defines himself as ambitious and as a fighter.</i></p>
<p>I went back to GOCI but they didn't appreciate it, they thought that I was just after the money...Wendy [the director] told me that I was a 'moneywolf,' trying to sell myself to the higher bidder. She said that they do not sell people, they place them, and that we should be happy that we can be back on the labour market...</p>	<p><i>His attitude clashes with the placement assistance discourse of the public training agency, in which there is no place for the personal ambitions of the disabled.</i></p>
<p>In the end, I could sell myself to a technical consulting... It turned out well... I started as a drawer but could proof myself... I stayed there a year and a half... then I worked at Siemens for two years. They asked me to stay but I refused, I had heard that the company was not going well... Then I went to Philips...</p>	<p><i>Ahmed casts himself as an ambitious person in charge of his career. He stresses his success in big, well-known companies, his capacity to sell himself and to strategically improve his professional position. He quits companies that do not give opportunities or are in difficulties.</i></p>
<p>At TechnoLine I started at the bottom of the ladder... but here they look at what you can do, your potential through your</p>	<p><i>Ahmed elaborates on the meritocratic HRM discourse of TechnoLine, a source of opportunities. He stresses his</i></p>

studies, your work experience... I brought in a **big partner**, the number one selling software on our market... You have to know how to prove yourself, **to sell yourself**...and you get **respect**, you become a '**respectable specialist**'... you have a higher **status**...

Jan [the director of one of the branches of the company] **believed in me**... I climbed up the ladder, which **I couldn't do in other companies**. If the **client is satisfied with your work**, you get promoted. It's difficult sometimes, like everywhere... but I am **loyal** to this company because I see chances here... in other companies you need a **degree, that piece of paper**...

I set my conditions: **I'm no 'cheap bird'**, but it can get even better... In the beginning, I told them that they could get **subsidies** for hiring me. I mentioned it **only once, because I want them to value me for my work**, not because I'm cheaper. It would really hurt me.

I do talk about my **background**. During Ramadan, I just switched my days and nights... At the end of the month, I told Jan: **sorry, I had to do it**. And he answered: have you heard me complain? It was **fantastic. Give me my freedom, and I'll be profitable**... but if you tell me do this and do that, I won't do it...

The only thing is **that feeling of... I can do more, climb higher, do sales**... but as a result, I've got **five ulcers, my planning is completely full, even my free time**.

An employer has to **look for his money**. **Unfortunately, this does not happen everywhere**: [as a minority] you have to be either **three times as good** or you are simply **not hired**... this is often the mentality about minorities, women... not here, though... here **if you work the same [as other employees], you get paid the same**. You work better, you get paid more. This is just **economically right**... Jan **does a lot for his people... he will take into account the limitations** of a disabled

achievements and reflects on the impact of an external partner on his professional reputation and status [with clients and within the organization]. He insists on 'respect'. Respect is important in the light of racism towards minorities, because of their minority status as well as their subordinate position. Respect is also a culturally specific trope in Arabic/Islamic cultures.

Ahmed stresses that his boss believed in him. Differently from other companies, promotion at TechnoLine is based on achievements (not on formal education or cultural background). Ahmed repays fairness at TechnoLine with loyalty. He also recognizes the key role of clients in promotion.

Ahmed draws management's attention away from his officially recognized professional impairment and towards his performance. He avoids casting himself as a victim, which would not help his professional success. He stresses that he is not (and does not want to be) cheap(er).

Ahmed is upfront about his culture. He switches days and nights during Ramadan, without asking explicit approval to his boss beforehand. He compensates his lack of compliance with 'normal' working hours with self-imposed discipline, in line with managerial expectations.

The downside of Ahmed's success story is that he has five ulcers and works all the time.

Ahmed elaborates on employers' legitimate interests: chasing profit, making everybody race, and on employers' illegitimate treatment of minorities. These latter have to perform much better than other employees. His strategy is to comply with the employers' interests and resist discrimination: in the past, he left various companies where he felt he would not make a chance at promotion. His professional success is based on his contribution to his employer's (legitimate)

drawer but for the rest he sees us all as *goal of profit-making. He casts his boss* 'racing horses', he expects the same *both as his employer and as benevolent* motivation, work and performance from *towards his employees.* everybody.

In his interview with us, Ahmed tells his personal and professional story from school dropout to successful professional. While his personal story remains unique, Ahmed's identity is solidly embedded in a specific material and discursive context both within the organization and beyond. Ahmed is controlled directly by pervasive discrimination towards minorities, his lack of formal education (in larger organizations), employers' interest in profit, the Western calendar and working hours, diversity management through a meritocratic HRM, clients, and long working hours at TechnoLine. At the same time, various discourses attempt to regulate his identity. We have identified the following main discourses in his story: negative discourses about migrants, managerial discourses of employees as self-managed professionals, discourses about clients' primacy, the placement assistance discourse of the public training agency, and the (Moroccan) discourse of respect.

Within this context, Ahmed builds an identity of empowered, performing professional, both complying and resisting control. His identity is completely in line with employers' perspective, casting employees as economic resources and managing them through meritocratic HRM. From his perspective, meritocracy is better than (overt) discrimination because it treats everybody the same: the perfect market is fair, blind for race or disability, one just has to compete. By developing an identity as an empowered, successful professional, Ahmed however also resists. He is able to work in an autonomous way, circumventing the direct control of Western working hours, and he gains 'respect' from his professional and possibly wider environment. Clearly, in his case professional success represents a particularly important source of micro-emancipation (cf. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) not only within the organization but possibly also in the wider societal context.

Ahmed's story is remarkably linear and the identity he builds coherent. This coherence is weakened only in the passage where he acknowledges the high price of his success: no free time and health problems. Further, his attempt to construct himself as an individual in full control is tempered by his expression of gratitude towards his boss, who has given him a chance and the freedom to organize his work as he wishes. His gratitude reveals that, as an agent, he is not in full control and that he partially depends on his superior for his success. Finally, it should be remarked that after setting the stage in the beginning of the interview, Ahmed keeps his story within the professional context, avoiding all references to his personal

life and his position in the Moroccan community and society at large. In this way, he is able to construct himself in positive terms and can avoid elaborating on potential tensions between his professional and personal life spheres.

Robert, Technical Drawer at TechnoLine

Interview	Interpretation
<p>I received my technical training at GOCI... Then they contacted various companies. They always asked me what I thought about it. For me, it needed to be accessible with public transport. GOCI organized an interview here. They give the company your CV, they take care that you get off the street...GOCI has been good to me and I think I got in right on time 'cause the market of technical drawers was getting more difficult. They had arranged everything.</p>	<p><i>In his story, Robert sets GOCI's support to find a job central. His only criterion in the company selection is that it be accessible with public transport. He sees GOCI's task as placement (see interview above) and expresses his gratitude. He mentions the bad evolution of the labour market for technical drawers as a constraint. In Robert's eyes, GOCI's expectations towards companies are too low.</i></p>
<p>But GOCI doesn't ask enough. If you go work they say: 'don't expect too much... it's not well paid.'</p>	
<p>I had been 8 years on sick leave benefits when I started. My first wage was above the benefits, so I didn't discuss too much. The atmosphere is good here and I wanted to work... I'm not a hard negotiator.</p>	<p><i>When he started at TechnoLine, Robert had been unemployed for 8 years. He started at a (too) low salary. He ascribes this to his specific situation as well as his lack of negotiation skills.</i></p>
<p>They don't tell us much. When there is a serious chance that you get a project, they tell you that you have to work for that client with that software... I don't have a problem with that. If they can keep me busy, they don't have to tell me much in advance. That's their problem; it's not my job...</p>	<p><i>Robert casts his job as mere execution, doing what he is told. By defining his work in this way, he refuses to take responsibility for constantly 'keeping busy.'</i></p>
<p>I can't make promotion here. People that want to get higher have to go to clients. It's not for me... I ask to stay at the office. There are clients which I can reach if I ride with a colleague. But if there are stairs there, then I have a problem. Last year I was on sick leave for two months. I had gone too often to a client's... My leg got seriously inflamed. I want to avoid being on sick leave for so long again... I liked being out of the office, but if this is the price, it's better I don't do it. I do go smoke a cigarette when my leg begins to</p>	<p><i>Robert elaborates on the material constrains as a disabled employee. He cannot make promotion in TechnoLine because he has no contacts with clients. He recounts a long period of sick leave due to an inflammation of his leg resulting from going to a client's site. To stretch his hurting leg, he goes to smoke a cigarette. Robert stresses that he is not so much interested in promotion but rather in receiving a fair salary.</i></p>

hurt, 'cause I'm afraid it gets bad. **I don't want to stay home. I get nuts. If they just paid me right, promotion wouldn't be an issue at all.**

The boss thinks that **I'm too slow**, not only me... they want to **squeeze you like a lemon**. Once they threw in my face that if you work eight hours, you have to sit in front of your computer eight hours... I've been looking... I heard about a law that if you work on the computer, you get five minutes break every one or two hours... 'cause it's not healthy. I want to **catch them** with something that doesn't have to do with me personally, a **general rule. If it's a law, they have to allow it. This is how I am...**

Actually **they should get me a special chair**. They know they can ask for one [subsidized] but **they don't want to do the paperwork**. I've told them that, if they don't even take the time for that, they'd better take **I go smoke a cigarette more...**

I do think that my boss makes loss on me. Otherwise, he would put me on any project, on what pays best.... But he has to keep me here at the office. It's more work for him and it's not easy for the client, either, 'cause he can't see me...

The employer gets 40% of the total cost back. I can't always sit, I have to stretch my leg every now and then. But... **I'm never 40% of my work time off the computer... I do smoke but there are other smokers, not disabled, and for them they don't get any subsidy. We [the disabled] are considered less...**

Colleagues don't look down on me, except when it's about wages. Those who have a bachelor in engineering... but **the atmosphere is very good here**.

They can fire me if they want... in principle I can't get here on my own... I'm trying to get a [subsidized] taxi to take me here from closest bus stop. **An adapted car doesn't interest me, I live in town and they break everything...** But I would like to come on my own, **instead of bothering colleagues...**

I'm looking for work elsewhere... you do

The company expects him (and others) to work very fast and contests Robert's breaks. He sees this as exploitation, and refers to his rights as an employee to resist. To do so, he wants to rely on regulation applying to all employees rather than to his particular situation as a disabled person.

He wants to 'catch' his employer on its illegal behaviour and defines himself as a person that stands up for his rights.

Robert resents that the company doesn't do much to adapt his work station to his needs. He reacts by taking more breaks to stretch his leg and smoke a cigarette.

Robert acknowledges that his employer makes a loss on him. Due to his disability, he cannot be assigned to the best paying projects. Also, clients cannot supervise his work directly.

State subsidies however compensate for the employers' loss. Robert believes subsidies are higher than the cost of his disability to the employer.

He compares himself to other smokers and concludes that the company treats him differently because he is disabled.

Robert is not looked down upon by colleagues for his disability. The atmosphere is good.

Robert elaborates on the difficulties to reach the company's site autonomously, without having to rely on colleagues. However, he does not consider getting an adapted car. He is rather trying to get a taxi to take him back and forth.

In his search for another job, Robert

see that they are **prejudiced against disabled people**. They are enthusiastic about your CV. I always mention that I walk on crutches... when I tell them that it's permanent, 80% falls out. **It's bad, but I can't do anything about it. I'm looking for a job in a production company**. In consulting you always have to go to clients'. **I don't contact companies that are in old houses...** they are on different floors en there is no lift.

encounters ideological and material constrains: employers' prejudices and architectural barriers. He attempts to exclude companies that are located in inaccessible sites, or requiring contact with clients. However, this strategy seriously reduces his potential employers. In order for him to find work, these latter have to be open to disabled people and to have vacant positions.

In this interview, Robert builds an identity as a disabled employee who wants to work and strives for independence from others but also, in more antagonistic terms, as a subordinate with limited responsibilities. We learn that he is controlled directly by employers' profit-making, a meritocratic (HRM) management that puts him in competition with non-disabled drawers, clients' expectations in terms of mobility and flexibility, and even his lack of formal education (with respect to other drawers in the organization). However, he is also specifically controlled as a physically disabled person by the office infrastructure, the location of the clients' sites and other numerous architectonic barriers, limiting his mobility. At the same time, various discourses attempt to regulate his identity: managerial discourses of employees as productive, self-managed professionals, discourses about clients' primacy, and the placement assistance discourse of the public training agency tempering disabled workers' expectations.

Within this context, Robert gives a carefully balanced, nuanced representation of his own agency. On the one side, he profiles himself as an agent, wanting to work, needing autonomy, and fighting for his rights. On the other, he also points to the major limits of his capacity to make a difference in his life. His complex, and sometimes contradictory, story entails a mix of resistance and compliance. First, Robert does not buy into TechnoLine's meritocratic HRM discourse to build an identity of empowered professional. His physical disability prevents him from performing as other employees, while, within management's meritocratic discourse, he is precisely expected to do so. In addition, Robert has limited contact with clients and can therefore not use clients' satisfaction to negotiate adapted working conditions that accommodate his personal needs.

Second, within the material and discursive work context of TechnoLine, Robert's disability is constructed as lack of motivation and as a personal shortcoming. Management thinks Robert does not perform properly, while Robert resents management for paying him below legal standards and profiting from the state subsidies for his employment. As a result,

Robert builds an antagonistic identity around the legal discourse of employees' rights and employers' duties, further resisting managerial control.

Robert's stance towards GOCI, the public training agency, is more nuanced. While expressing his gratitude for the agency's assistance, he also blames it for failing to ask proper work and compensation for the disabled. He refuses to set his expectations below what he considers to be fair.

Finally, in Robert's story, he appears to be compliant with the identity regulating discourses we have identified only in as far as work remains central in his life. In fact, in spite of all difficulties, he reports that he took the initiative to re-school himself, that he absolutely wants to work and to avoid staying on sick leave for long again, and that he is looking for other (better paid) work. This is in line with Western societies' growing expectations that everybody be productive, including the disabled. In spite of all, employment *tout court* might represent for Robert one of the few available sources of self-esteem and possibly micro-emancipation in society.

Saida, Midwife at Saint Mary's Hospital

Interview	Interpretation
<p>I've been working here for three years, first as a nurse and now as a midwife. After my studies I couldn't find a job as a midwife, so I worked as a nurse... there are too many midwives on the market.</p>	<p><i>Saida started to work at the hospital as a nurse, in a somewhat 'lower' position. This reflects the material condition that nurses are scarce while midwives are too numerous on the labour market.</i></p>
<p>I had sent an application letter for a job here a couple of times. They wrote back that my name was in their database. After two years I heard that many young people had been hired, so I called. I came here and asked why I had not been contacted. So I could go for an interview and they hired me.</p>	<p><i>Saida stresses that she got the job because she took initiative. She contacted the hospital and asked why she had not been invited for an interview. The fact that other people had been hired spurred her to take action.</i></p>
<p>I'm the only one with a different cultural background. That has never been a problem. People know me from my internship. On the contrary, they said: a Moroccan, so you can translate... They were positive... I feel very much at home here in comparison to other hospitals. I never got a racist remark from colleagues or patients. I also try not to focus on it... to let it go... I didn't during my internship and you end up thinking always about yourself, instead of working... I have to</p>	<p><i>Saida considers the atmosphere at the hospital to be good. She believes that the fact that people already knew her and her language skills were important to be accepted. She feels more at home in this hospital than in others.</i> <i>Saida states that she never received racist remarks. She stresses the importance of focusing on work instead of on racism. By stressing the importance of her own attitude, she puts herself 'in control.'</i></p>

put it aside.

Midwifery is a woman's job. We don't have to wash men... In our religion women can wash men only when it's really necessary, like in war... I chose to become a midwife **because of my own interest...**

Parents are more open now and let their children choose... Midwifery is valued... for instance, if you are in a shop and they hear you are a midwife, they treat you with **more respect.** It's 'cause **the Prophets' mother was a midwife.**

Most [Moroccan] women come here 'cause they say it's **a good hospital.** Even if they don't speak Dutch... and their husband is not with them. They have the feeling that **the staff wants to help them.**

I find that in this hospital they have a **natural vision over pregnancy and giving birth.** It's **less technical** than in other hospitals. Perhaps because of the **mentality of the midwives,** and **the gynaecologists go along** with it. It's an atmosphere... We **let people free** to deal with labour as they wish, we don't push anything.

The midwife stays next to you during labour, while the gynaecologist arrives **only** when the baby is about to come. We [midwives] assist the woman during labour. With a **male midwife** it would be more difficult, because **you build a certain intimacy** with the woman... It could be a problem for migrant women.

My parents never put me under pressure to wear a scarf... like praying. After graduation **I started reading** and it came naturally. You **ask yourself** who you are, an identity, and **everybody says: 'I am Muslim,' but what does it mean?**

I've had **mixed feelings** about it [the prohibition for personnel to wear the headscarf in the hospital]. In our religion, it is often said that **you have to keep your home situation and your work apart.** So, I've had to accept it. **I would like to wear the scarf all the time,** 'cause you feel a **'double person'...** but **I've finally accepted it, I don't have a problem with it.** Islam doesn't say that you have to be

Saida elaborates on how her job is valued in her community as a woman's job. She casts it however as her own choice, stressing the fact that migrant parents increasingly let their children choose their studies.

Saida also mentions the respect that she gets in her (Moroccan) community because of her profession.

Saida deploys her membership in the Moroccan community to speak from Moroccan women's perspective. She positively judges hospital staff work and attitude.

Saida shares the hospital's 'natural' vision on birth giving. In her eyes, this vision originated in midwives' mentality, and was then followed by gynaecologists. This subverts the traditional hierarchical relations between the former and the latter. Such vision increases (minority) women's freedom to give birth as they wish

Saida stresses the prominent role of midwives in assisting birth. She relies on the experience of Moroccan women to construct midwifery not only in professional but also in gendered terms. She takes on Moroccan patients' perspective to resist the discourse of midwifery as a gender-neutral profession.

Saida presents wearing the scarf as her own choice rather than as an imposition from her parents. It is the result of her own search for her (Muslim) identity.

The hospital forbids his personnel to wear a scarf at work. Saida complies with the prohibition, although she would like to wear the headscarf all the time. She further justifies her compliance in religious terms by referring to a moderate interpretation of the Islam, to solve the conflict between religious and professional conduct norms.

extreme, **extremism** is wrong... in every religion. You have to go with the times and the situation.

I think that they would take Ramadan into account [when scheduling her work] if I asked. But they don't have to... eating and then going back to work when your colleagues eat an hour later, **it's just not feasible**.

[About the hospital's diversity policy] It's not like in The Netherlands. There it's much more intense, they evaluate a lot, also **together with migrant personnel**. **All decisions are taken by migrant staff...** I think **you have to involve the migrant staff in everything**.

Nobody ever asked why I wear my headscarf [insinuating that she shouldn't]... On the contrary, they are interested. If **they don't understand**, they should have somebody to ask to. They know I'm open about it. **There are no stupid questions**.

I have friendly neighbours that say: '**sorry, but we vote VB** [extreme right party]. **We don't have anything against you...**'... I have relatives that haven't been here for long... I go with them to temporary work agencies, but... they say: '**Sorry, we have employers that don't want Moroccans.**'... I never had problems myself.

According to Saida, Ramadan should not affect her work at the hospital. She works regular work schedules and attempts to deal with the conflicting demands on her in ways that do not affect work or her colleagues.

Saida uses a comparison with diversity policies in Dutch hospitals to claim a bigger role for migrant staff in diversity management. By so doing, she embraces the hospital's identity of minority staff as 'cultural experts' and claims power on the basis of that expertise.

Conversely, Saida portrays the majority as lacking knowledge on migrants and casts herself as having that knowledge, as a member of the migrant community and a 'cultural expert' at the hospital.

Saida reports widespread racism in her larger environment, but stresses that she has not experienced it herself.

In her interview with us, Saida constructs an identity as a Moroccan midwife. This identity is embedded in a context of multiple direct controls: the difficult labour market for midwives and migrants, the hospital hiring practices, the hospital working schedules, its policy forbidding the headscarf, racism during her internship, and pervasive racism and discrimination in society at large. Her interview is however even richer in references to identity-regulating discourses: the hospital's discourse of 'open,' 'natural' and 'caring' health care, the hospital's diversity discourse of 'caring for one's own community,' the professional discourse of patient-oriented (female) midwives that opposes them to more technically oriented (male) doctors, the Moroccan community defining midwifery as an appropriate job for a woman, the Moroccan community expecting Moroccan women to wear the scarf, and Belgian society constructing Moroccans in negative terms.

Within this context, Saida builds an all-round identity balancing professional elements and her cultural background. Her story is a mix of compliance and resistance but she mainly constructs herself as an individual who makes conscious personal and professional choices and is capable of solving problems. She complies with direct control she cannot challenge, such as working schedules and the prohibition to wear the headscarf. She attempts to disregard the widespread racism in society (by her neighbours), against which she could do little. However, she does push for a job at the hospital, when she has the feeling that she is not being fairly treated, she claims more decision power on the basis of her cultural expertise, and she defends midwifery as a 'natural' profession, in line with her cultural background and against doctors' technical view of health care. In each situation, she attempts to evaluate her position and to make the best use of the power she has. She talks about racism as something very close to her but also as not having affected her personally. In other words, she acknowledges racism in general, avoiding however to cast herself as a victim.

At the discursive level, when engaging with the identity-regulating discourses, Saida is at the same time compliant and resistant. She totally goes along with the hospital's discourse of a 'natural,' culturally-appropriate, patient-centred approach to care. Her compliance is however empowering as, through this discourse, she can construct a positive identity based on her competences as a midwife, as a woman, and as a Moroccan. At the same time, Saida clearly resists by turning discourses to her own advantage, openly challenging disadvantageous power relations. For instance, starting from the fact that the hospital hires minority employees to better serve its diverse patients, she claims a central role for minority employees in defining the hospital diversity policy. She supports her claim by comparing the hospital's diversity management with diversity management in Dutch hospitals, aware that comparison with The Netherlands is an effective argument in Flanders. Or by stressing that many Moroccan parents currently give their children the freedom to study what they wish, she attempts to counter Belgian society's perception that Moroccan parents being too directive towards their children, especially girls.

Saida's accent on her capacity to deal with problems gives the interview an overwhelming positive sphere. Even in cases of tensions and conflict, she attempts to resolve them by challenging established discourses. For instance, Saida minimizes the conflict between her compliance with hospital norms (not wearing the scarf at work) and Islamic religious prescriptions through constructing a moderate, accommodating Islam that counters Westerners' current perception. The ways in which she complies and resists lead to the

construction of a positive image for her community, more in line with Western family and gender values, and support her identity of being fully in control of her professional career.

Aisha, Administrative Clerk at Saint Mary's Hospital

Interview	Interpretation
<p>I work at the invoicing unit. I correct invoices that we get back from the public health insurance... I correct them and send them back. I work full time and I've been here for three years now... I like my job. I started half time in the patient transport unit. After my studies for office work I didn't have a job and needed money... but I wanted to work full time. They [invoicing unit] were looking for somebody temporary.... I took the job. And then my boss made a permanent job of it, I asked to stay and was hired.</p>	<p><i>Aisha describes her work and says that she likes it.</i></p>
<p>I had an interview with him. He had seen me work and he asked me how things were going. For my first job I had to pass some tests. For the second only the interview... Our boss is very open, he's not the typical boss. I like him... If there are problems, he talks with us....</p>	<p><i>Aisha tells how she started to work part time in a lower position, for which she was overqualified, because she needed money. She took first a temporary job and asked to stay when the job was made permanent.</i></p>
<p>The cleaning staff is generally not so friendly. I don't know if it's towards all migrants or only me. When I got transferred, I had a problem with them, when I passed... I spoke to the head of cleaning. She said that I was completely in my right and that she would talk to them: 'You're a migrant girl working in the administration, and they resent that you might feel superior to them.' While it's actually not like that. I don't have to justify myself, do I have to go around with a board 'I have a degree, this is my place, I deserve this place?' Sometimes I think that... they found it strange that I got that job. It didn't use to be like that, a migrant girl in the administration. Perhaps it's because it had never happened before... I think that in the beginning [as a migrant] you have to demonstrate more...</p>	<p><i>Aisha describes the informal selection procedure, after having worked in patient transport and as a temporary in the same position at the invoicing unit. She describes her boss as open.</i></p>
<p>We often talk about differences, holidays... during Ramadan, my colleagues avoid talking about food</p>	<p><i>Aisha tells the initial hostility of the cleaning staff. She took the initiative and went to their boss to sort things out. She also stresses that she deserves her job because of her qualifications, and that she should not have to defend herself. She does mention extenuating circumstances: in the past migrants did not work in qualified positions as a possible cause of the problems.</i></p>
	<p><i>Aisha talks about exchanges over religion with colleagues. People take into consideration that she's fasting during</i></p>

when I'm around... they don't have to, but I appreciate it. My boss also knows that **I'm not at my best... I don't give him any problems** but still...

[about translating] If the doctor wants detailed information about where it hurts, how the woman feels or people want to be reassured before an operation... **it can last a while... sometimes an hour. But I don't have deadlines in my work, so it's OK.** And they ask me to do it. It's nice, a break, something completely different. But... if they get angry, or if they don't agree with what I say... I try to make the translation softer... You can't translate literally... like, 'you don't know anything or you're a bad doctor...'. I try to... **use a bit of tact.**

You have to take off the headscarf when you enter the hospital, for hygienic reasons. **I understand that, it's so difficult to get work if you refuse...**

Practically impossible because **most companies, when you apply, ask it...**

I don't think it's right, specific needs or so... **I expect to be like everybody else.**

In some factories, when they have to do over hours on Friday afternoon, they [Muslim workers] can leave. But... **we don't have to pray at specific times...**

You have to pray five times a day, but if you work, it's perfectly possible to do all the praying in the evening.

There is an **anti-discrimination clause in the hospital bylaws.** You can be fired right away for discrimination or racist comments. It's **important that people know that it's not tolerated...** I really think they would take action.

I went to a school to talk about myself and my work here... how I got it. Then they can ask questions, if it's nice, if I feel that I'm treated differently, if there are vacancies... They will soon have to look for a job. They ask to what they have to pay attention. I think **they ask themselves if they'll get a job, as migrants.** The **recruiter has to be open, he has to trust you.** Most times migrants **are not invited** [for an interview], they see the name... if

Ramadan. She tries however to avoid that her work be affected by Ramadan.

Aisha tells that she occasionally has to interrupt her work to translate. This is manageable because she does not have specific deadlines and translating is expected from her.

She also mentions how she deals with difficult translation situations and alludes to the way she has to mediate, in culturally appropriate ways, between patients and doctors.

Aisha mentions that it is practically impossible to find a job where you are allowed to wear the headscarf. (She herself does not wear it).

Aisha stresses the fact that she expects equal treatment. She constructs the Islam as a flexible religion and is personally not in favour of making exceptions for Muslim workers.

The anti-discrimination clause in hospital bylaws is an important signal to everybody that racism will not be tolerated. Aisha is confident that the hospital would take action.

Aisha goes to talk about her work to migrant students in schools. They ask themselves if they will get a job, and how they have to behave..

She mentions widespread discrimination and the importance of trust and openness in hiring practices.

you are, you have a chance.

I think that young people are more optimistic... They **do hire more migrants... it gives hope...** *She compares first and second generation of migrants and expresses her optimism.*

Throughout the interview, Aisha constructs an identity as an educated, competent employee, happy about her work and expecting fair treatment. She mentions a number of direct control mechanisms: her need for money, the difficulty to find a full-time job in line with her qualifications, the hostility of the cleaning staff, widespread discrimination in hiring practices (although not explicitly towards her), the hospital's expectation that she interrupt her work to translate for patients, the hospital calendar and working schedule conflicting with Ramadan, patients' behaviour towards doctors making her translation work difficult, and the prohibition to wear the headscarf in the hospital and most Belgian companies (which however does not affect her personally, as she does not wear the headscarf). From her interview, we learn that, at the discursive level, she is indirectly controlled by the hospital discourse on minority employees as individuals with specific, culture-related competences, who can be deployed to better serve minority patients, and by the wider Belgian society constructing Moroccans in negative terms.

Within this context, she casts herself as an individual who obtained her current job by showing she can do it and in virtue of her education. As Saida, Aisha complies or resists direct forms of control depending on her power in each specific situation. For instance, because as an individual she cannot change the labour market, she is forced to initially take a part-time job for which she is overqualified. She, however, stresses her own capacity to later get a job that corresponds to her qualification. Or, when the cleaning staff does not respect her, she addresses the head of cleaning to intervene, again pointing to her qualification.

Aisha also gladly consents to translate for minority patients, complying with the hospital expectations. However, these additional tasks, derived from her 'minority employees status' do not seem central in her work identity. She rather builds her identity by reference to her competences and the principles of fairness and non-discrimination. She stresses her cultural specificity less than Saida and complies with general rules in terms of working calendar and schedules, explicitly refusing to claim specific rights based on difference. However, she expects in return to be treated fairly and as an equal. In her story, she expresses confidence that this will be the case. She mentions that Belgians' negative attitudes towards migrants might be an effect of the past (rather than just condemning them), acknowledges the openness and support of (majority) superiors such as her boss and the head of cleaning, trusts that the

hospital would take action against discrimination and racism, stresses the need of interpersonal trust (rather than solely denouncing racism), and points to the positive evolution of the position of migrants (rather than seeing only discrimination). Also, when she talks about the activities she is called to do as a Moroccan employee, such as translating for patients and speaking to minority students in schools, she does not elaborate on problems in solely cultural terms, but rather nuances her interpretations.

Throughout the interview, Aisha constructs herself as a determined person but who considers various possible explanations and points of views when judging a situation. The balance she creates between herself as an agent and the material and discursive context in which she is embedded is expressed in less problematic terms than in Saida's story. She builds her identity on the general notions of competency and qualifications rather than on her own specificity, either professional or cultural/religious.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, we have shown that diversity management in organizations is a combination of specific discursive and material controls, embedded in a particular material and discursive organizational context. Minority employees are always controlled directly *and* indirectly, in organization-specific ways. Through the analysis of individual interviews with minority employees within each organization, we have also shown that the way such controls constrain and enable an employee are unique. Each individual, as an agent, is subject to a unique mix of controls, makes sense of organizational controls in his or her own way, and deploys different strategies to comply with, accommodate or resist them.

The stories of Ahmed and Robert, both minority employees at TechnoLine clearly show that the same types of control can affect individuals in very different ways. For Ahmed, the company's modes of control opens possibilities as it focuses on performance and not on formal education, which Ahmed experienced in other companies as most constraining. He complies with the meritocratic discursive control because it allows him to build a positive professional identity, creating opportunities for micro-emancipation in terms of working hours and resisting the negative migrant discourse within the broader Belgian context. On the contrary, because Robert's disability heavily constrains his work, he cannot profit from a meritocratic HRM which does not open up many possibilities for him. Unable to create opportunities for micro-emancipation, Robert develops a much more resistant identity. Ahmed's and Robert's two different ways of engaging with control reflect the tension between diversity management through meritocracy (which treats everybody the same) versus

an equal opportunities approach (in which specific initiatives are taken to address particular needs of minority employees), a key debate in the diversity literature.

At Saint Mary's hospital, Saida's and Aisha's experiences are also unique because of their different personal backgrounds. They see themselves in clearly different ways within the hospital and Belgian society at large. While Saida has developed a strong professional identity as a Moroccan-Muslim midwife, Aisha has constructed an identity that is much less focused on her specific profession as a clerk and her cultural/religious background. Their different ways to comply, accommodate and resist are in line with their different identities. Saida appropriates both the hospital's diversity discourse and the midwives' professional identity to construct herself, while Aisha refers in more general terms to her formal education to legitimate the fact that she got her job, appropriating the hospital hierarchical division of labour where each job requires a certain type of education. Saida claims more power in virtue of her difference, Aisha claims equality and respect in virtue of her sameness. These two different identities and related strategies reflect the tension between sameness and difference that is central not only in minority employees' identities but also in the very concept of diversity (cf. Liff & Wajcman, 1996).

Besides the above contributions to diversity research, the study also contributes to the critical management literature. At the empirical level, we present four in-depth accounts of how the material and the discursive intersect at the subject's level in the process of identity regulation/construction. From the interpretation of these accounts, we draw two theoretical insights concerning (i) the reasons why identity-regulating discourses might be appealing to employees and (ii) the need to further qualify the notion of (micro-)emancipation.

On the first issue, our findings indicate that individuals do not necessarily espouse identity-regulating discourses solely because they offer a sense of belonging or security, as postulated by the critical management literature (Collinson, 2003; Knights and Willmott, 1989; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). The four identities we analyzed, while unique, do not appear to be particularly 'secure' as they present a number of major, clearly unsolved tensions. These tensions become visible in this study because we analyzed individual narratives in depth. We could clearly see how our interviewees, as agents, drew from a variety of (even conflicting) identity-regulatory discourses present in the organization and in other societal contexts to develop their identities. Tensions and ambiguity are not necessarily solved, as subjects construct their identities following a narrative and rhetorical logic rather than a strict one (Billig, 1988). We rather found that minority employees are not so much building secure identities but rather attempting to build *positive* ones. While this might be a

universal need, we believe that this might be particularly difficult for minority employees, considering they have to fit in a context in which their cultural, religious, disability, gender, age etc. differences become particularly relevant and meaningful, often in negative ways.

On the second point, the analysis of our empirical material suggests the need to qualify (micro-)emancipation in terms of the context of reference and its 'price' for the individual. As to the context of reference, our interviews indicate that minority employees are subjects to direct and indirect controls originating both inside and outside the organization (in school, their cultural/religious community, the city or region, their families, and their neighbourhood). What might appear as a form of compliance in one of these contexts, can represent a form of (micro-)emancipation in another. This is clearly the case of Ahmed, who fully complies with the organization's meritocratic discourse and becomes an 'empowered' professional, emancipating himself from his stigmatized position as an uneducated school drop-out, and an unemployed migrant. At the same time, we need to consider the price the individual is paying for his or her emancipation within such contexts. Again, Ahmed's busy career and professional success might bear with them a high cost. Consider, for instance, the lack of free time he mentions and the possible negative consequences on his relations with family, the Moroccan community, and/or other contexts. But perhaps, his lack of free time represents a form of micro-emancipation from his family, which in his view controls him too much. In sum, within a fully agentic, individual-centred perspective, there is no room for emancipation in absolute terms, but rather for a sort of micro-emancipation, where the prefix 'micro' stands for the subjective and context-bound nature of emancipation.

Considering multiple reference contexts for the conceptualization of emancipation has also its methodological implications. To fully understand the agent's perspective, further research might adopt a methodology that includes the wider context in the analysis. For instance, data on the labour market, on discrimination of specific demographic groups, discourses on migrant and the disabled in the media, etc. could be used to further develop our analysis. In a thoroughly agentic perspective, interviewees' own references to non-organizational contexts can be used as a criterion for selecting relevant data and discourses for the analysis. However, other options remain available. For instance, whenever another societal context seems to play a major role in an interviewee's professional identity, the researcher might consider re-designing the research to fully account for that societal context and, for instance, taking additional interviews with key people in that context (such as family members, close friends, state agency personnel, etc.). In sum, as agents, in constructing their identity, make links across their different spheres of life, taking a fully agentic perspective

might lead to abandoning the organization as the a-priori focal setting of our analysis in favour of a more comprehensive analysis centred on the individual.

To conclude, our study also presents some major limitations. First, our methodology has allowed us to take only ‘snapshots’ of minority employees’ identities. We could not look at how that identity evolves in time, nor do we intend to claim that it will remain fixed. Second, we have mainly focused on professional identities developed in organizational contexts. As mentioned above, this might be a plausible choice for organizational scholars, but might not do full justice to our interviewees, for whom other identities might be more important. We do not intend to claim that the identity we reconstructed in our analysis is their only or main identity. We do believe that our interview material constitutes a representation of the professional identity they had developed at the time of the study within their professional environment. As interviewees we participated in the construction of that representation; however, we still believe that those stories say something important about whom our respondents feel and think they are at work, something that plausibly goes beyond our own identities and the interview situation at large.

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