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Abstract

Combining insights from the sociology of education and from discourse-based work on identities within contexts of organizational change, we aim to tease out how top-down structural changes can be related to micro-discursive identity work. Selecting the case of the Qatari university context – which currently takes up a pivotal position in a nation-wide transformative agenda that targets both society and economy – we engage in an empirical investigation of a corpus of interviews with Qatari junior academics. We draw on ‘positioning analysis’ (Bamberg, 1997) to scrutinize the linguistic specificities of the interviewees’ individual stories and their construction of professional identities. In the analyses, we show an emergent pattern of similar identity work in some of the interviews in our dataset. In particular, these interviewees explicitly draw on their nationality when discussing their career journeys, thus constructing a very specific version of their professional identity. We argue that this can be considered as emblematic of the academic profession as it is being shaped in current-day Qatar, and we claim that this type of analysis can reflexively capture some of the complexities of the dynamic change processes in higher education institutions as well as in organizational contexts in general.

Key words: structural change, master narrative, national identity, professional identity, academic workplace, positioning

1. Introduction

It is widely recognised that the last few decades have radically transformed higher education institutions worldwide. As noted in many regional contexts, the major shifts in the culture (e.g., Davies, 2005) and conditions of academic work (e.g., Winter, 2009) have resulted in a heightened sense of pressure on individual academics to pursue the ‘correct professional identity’ – namely, an

identity that aligns with the institution's general strategy of enhancing or maintaining its 'market position' (Harris, 2005, p. 421-6) within an increasingly global knowledge economy. As a result, there is a plethora of research into 'identities' in academia, which indicates it as 'a 'problem' exercising the minds of many' (Barrow et al., 2022, p. 250). According to Archer (2008), at the heart of such inquiry are questions of 'legitimacy' as individuals and groups within universities compete over interests, recognition, and value (p. 386). For many academics, this entails continuous struggles over the meanings and boundaries of their 'professional (academic) identity' as it is 'shaped and reinforced in and by... [the dynamic university] communities... and the social processes generated within them' (Henkel, 2005, p. 157). While there are extensive insights into the different 'external' and 'internal' factors feeding people's perspectives on what it means to be an academic in the changing university, Pick and colleagues (2017) argue that scholarly work 'has yet to be fully developed into integrated theory' that provides a 'complex, rich, holistic, and situated' conceptualisation and analysis of this 'identity work process' (p. 1175) – namely, of the 'interplay between internal (individual) perspectives, actions, and stories and external (organisational and institutional) influences' (Pick et al., 2017, p. 1174).

Arguably, a possible way into resolving this issue is found in the turn to discourse and narratives. Amongst others, Mclean and Price (2016) note that empirical interest in the discursive realisation of identity has turned to 'narrative' as a critical means to examine identity through the 'negotiation' of 'lived experiences' and 'the institutions within which these [experiences] take place' (p. 45). This recent wave of research gives more attention to the 'individual' and the way in which professional identities in academic contexts are 'socially constructed' either in the tension between 'agency' and institutional 'structures' or in the 'robust' and 'complex' responses that seek to maintain a 'coherent sense of self' within a 'changing' institution (Pick et al., 2017). While successful at outlining the general 'discursive themes' that point to the richness and complexity of people's response to reforms that continue to shape higher education institutions, this wave of research is developed in research traditions that largely ignore the detailed analysis of language use at both macro- and micro- levels. We argue that this is nevertheless important as such analyses may specifically help to uncover the various 'negotiations' and 'interpretations' foregrounding particular identities and experiences during times of change.

By means of this article, we aim to contribute to pursuing Barrow and colleagues' (2022) call, namely, that adopting some of the new theories and analytical frameworks found in other studies – beyond the field of the sociology of education – has the potential of broadening the horizon and gaining a deeper understanding of identities in the dynamic context of the university. In particular, we take theoretical inspiration from discourse-based studies on identities in professional and organisational workplace contexts. From this perspective, empirical work demonstrates that 'change', regardless of its origin and shape, often challenges institutional cohesion and collective identities (Holmgren, 2021). This is because 'change' often entails shifts at the macro-discursive level in which new roles and identities are promoted as more relevant and are thus projected upon people who, in turn, negotiate, at the micro-discursive level, these new forms of identification either to uphold or challenge such changes (Van De Mierop & Schnurr, 2017; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999).

Whilst some scholars point to the opportunities that may arise as a result of such shifts (e.g., Cameron, 2000), many others increasingly emphasise that it often results in identity challenges. For example, professionals may find themselves confronted with having to re-negotiate their knowledge and practices (Iedema & Scheeres, 2003) or aspects of their identities (Holmgreen, 2009), while others may be challenged with having to combine different, and sometimes competing, aspects of old and new norms into their professional identities (Nkateng & Wharton, 2017). In all these studies, a common thread is the exploration of the often creative and strategic ways in which people use language in response to change as a critical means to examine different aspects of identities in complex and dynamic workplace contexts. Bucholtz (1999) has used the concept 'identity as ingenuity' to refer to such explorations that empirically 'locate' particular aspects of identity, such as being a women manager, 'at the intersection between culturally imposed and personal meanings' and as such treat identity as 'the outcome of negotiation, by which speakers contest and give way to the social forces that shape and constitute' their identities (p. 16). In light of these insights, the aim of this article will be to embark on this exploration of identity construction in the workplace context of the reformed national university where 'culturally imposed meanings' are highly debated. Before elaborating on this aim and the particular approach to the data, we first briefly discuss the specific context of the case-study.

2. The Context of This Case-Study

The focus of this empirical investigation is on the very specific workplace context of the Qatari national university where processes of reform are intertwined with nation-wide structural changes that involve the country's social, economic, and political institutions (Tok et al., 2016). As part of this 'transformative agenda' – as it is often called – there are two significant shifts in state-narratives that describe (ref. 'national vision', see General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008) and outline (ref. 'action plan', see General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011) the essence of this change. On the one hand, there is the narrative of change from being a traditional tribal Arabian community, which is implied as closed off and positioned at the periphery of the developed world, transforming into a unified modern Western-like country that is open and involved with regional and international communities. On the other hand, there is the narrative of change from having an exclusively oil-driven economy, to the pursuit of a diversified knowledge-based economy that is linked with global markets, arguably, to sustain development and wealth for generations to come.

As might be expected, given their top-down nature, these narratives of change have a huge impact on institutional life across the spectrum. This is largely because they redefine work and work-related knowledge, skills, and practices at the local level in a way that centralises and links international structures. Importantly, such structural changes have a notable impact on educational institutions, especially higher education, which are now perceived as a major 'tool' guiding this transformative agenda (for a discussion, see Mazawi, 2007). From this perspective then, drastic measures were taken to transform existing educational systems in Qatar amongst other members of the GCC1. With regards to higher education, reforms constituted a two-fold process

of, on the one hand, establishing branch campuses of – mostly – American universities (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011) and, on the other hand, internationalisation of these countries' national universities (e.g., Moini et al., 2009). Undeniably, these drastic measures also stir up criticism and extensive debates regarding, for example, the preference for 'western models,' which arguably 'collide' with existing social and cultural norms (Abu-Shawish et al., 2021), and the increased push for English language in both education and workplace domains. At times, such mounting pressure results in bottom-up changes of certain aspects of these reforms as was the case with language policies that demanded, 12 years into reforms, a shift back to Arabic as the language of instruction in relation to some disciplinarily fields as a way to strengthen its status in education (Mustafawi & Shaaban, 2018).

While there is abundant literature on the topic of higher educational reforms in Qatar and the region, most of this work focuses on state-driven narratives and as such falls within 'the vicious cycle of macro-structural and policy-oriented studies' (Mazawi, 2002, p. 69). Regrettably, the scant amount of work that explores individual narratives to investigate identities of academics following reforms in the GCC largely focuses on experiences of the expatriate majority group (e.g. Romanowski & Nasser, 2015) under the assumption that the native minority group shares those experiences. At the same time, there is a small body of empirical studies that generally acknowledge that the two faculty groups do not constitute a homogenous entity but are rather different in terms of nationality and, most importantly, language. Most of this work specifically explores the professional identity of native minority faculty as Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) (e.g., see Al Muqarshi, 2022). Thus, beyond the issue of foreign language teaching, not much attention is given to the various aspects of identity of the native minority faculty who work across diverse academic disciplines and departments – many of which do not necessarily entail teaching or even working in English. It is thereby clear that, despite some unquestionably valuable insights, the modest literature does not fully capture the implications of these highly debated reform processes for the different faculty groups who work across the various higher education institutions.

Besides the fact that it is highly under-researched, we argue that the complex and dynamic context of the reformed national university offers an intriguing perspective for an empirical investigation of professional (academic) identities during times of large-scale, on-going, and debated change. To take the case of the Qatari context, it is evident that today, more than two decades into these reforms, the national university's role is inextricably linked to two political demands: On the one hand, there is the demand to develop Qatar's modern society; and, on the other hand, there is the demand to develop Qatar's knowledge-based economy. Arguably, these demands result in a highly delicate situation in which the goal for the university to reach 'international standards' is in constant tension with its 'local embedding' (see Mazawi, 2003). More specifically, due to reforms of 2004 that set-in-motion a number of internationalisation processes, the national university now especially values employees with qualifications from internationally recognised institutions. This preference is foregrounded in the assumption that such qualifications are important for establishing a workforce that is not only familiar with international norms and practices (see Lising, 2017), but also able to compete in relation to the emerging and increasingly global knowledge-economy.

Interestingly, this seems to have led to a significant increase in numbers of expatriate faculty against a notable decrease in numbers of national faculty. According to the university's last reports, expatriate faculty constitutes about 74% of the academic population and tends to have hierarchically higher academic positions – despite the less long-term career opportunities that tend to be offered to this group (see Ahmed, 2018).

Undoubtedly, there is a heightened level of criticism at the local level of the Qatari community regarding the position of national faculty as a minority group (see Al-Khulaifi & Van De Mieroop, 2022a; Al-Kobaisi, 2011), which the university has set out to address through 'nationalisation processes' similar to those found across the GCC's public, semi-public, and private institutions (for a discussion, see Randeree, 2012). A crucial catalyst within these nationalisation processes is the 'Qatarization' scheme, which is a form of recruitment and apprenticeship system that aims at integrating Qatari nationals – men and women – into the academic workplace through a tenure track employment *conditioned* by the pursuit of a fully-sponsored postgraduate degree(s) abroad at international universities. Thus, while it gives value to Qatari national identity as a means of encouraging involvement of this native minority group by securing their position in the academic workplace, this scheme strongly promotes 'foreign' knowledge as a highly valued good and a condition to be accepted as full-members of the academic community. This is strongly emphasised by its reliance on other international institutions for the training of new recruits (Mazawi, 2003), who often face limitations in terms of role and practice prior to obtaining a foreign doctorate degree. Due to these competing values, we argue that the Qatarization scheme can be considered as emblematic for the ambivalent balancing act of the inherently conflicting roles that these reform processes entail for the national university.

In this article, we focus on the group of Qatari junior academics. We argue that theirs is a tangible case to explore 'identity as ingenuity', not least because of their position as the target of the national university's ambivalent Qatarization scheme but also because of their position as responding to 'culturally imposed meanings' that remain open to debate. Specifically, we aim to investigate how the changes and constraints at the macro-discursive level described above are reflected in the micro-discursive identity work of this group, specifically in terms of how they perceive and construct their professional identities when telling stories of their individual careers.

3. Theoretical Framework

Informed by the scholarly observations above, this article sets out to scrutinise how early-career Qatari academics discursively construct their professional identities – defined here as 'portraying oneself' as a particular kind of 'expert in a particular domain', which is often closely related to professional role(s) and identity features such as being competent and knowledgeable (Zayts & Schnurr, 2017, p. 81). To obtain this goal, we adopt a social constructionist perspective that views identity as a 'relational constitutive process' (Wetherell & Mohanty, 2010, p. 17), largely '*constructed* in and through discourse' (Bamberg et al., 2011, p. 177 - italics in original), and 'enacted in concrete social encounters and... practices' (De Fina, 2011). Thus, by contrast to how they are viewed in the field of the sociology of education, 'identities' are conceptualised

here, ‘not [as] sets of characteristics that can be ascribed to individuals or manifestations of individual essences,’ but rather, as *emerging* ‘through semiotic processes in which people construct images of themselves and others’ (De Fina 2015, p. 351), which thus makes identities multi-faceted and subject to constant negotiation and revision.

When applying this conceptualisation to the study of identity in interviews, we follow a data-driven approach that incorporates a number of critical considerations. As research has shown, interviewees are often aware of the reasons behind their selection for an interview (e.g. Van De Mieroop et al., 2017), which by default make relevant certain aspects of their identities in the context of such interactions (e.g. Van De Mieroop, 2011), and as such ‘bring to their stories a level of personal and political understanding’ (Andrews, 2004) that allows them to ‘position’ (Bamberg, 1997) themselves not only in relation to the unfolding interaction with the interviewer but also, in relation to ‘culturally available narratives’ (Antaki, 1994) – whether they are called ‘dominant discourses’, ‘master narratives’, or ‘state-driven-narratives’ as is the case here. The research interview then provides a reflexive space in which participants can mobilize, confront, expand, rework, and complicate (Riessman, 2004) such culturally available narratives of the macro-social context, while engaging in the local interactional context with the interviewer. Importantly, this entails a considerable level of reflection on personal past experiences (Linde, 2009) for the interviewees who typically resort to ‘narrative performances’ (Slembrouck, 2015) to discursively construct their identities. As such constructions often convey some sort of a ‘moral value’ (see Van De Mieroop, 2011), which relates to ‘expectations’ about the on-going interaction and possible consequences that call for particular recipient designs (De Fina, 2009), they may or may not attune to the ‘interviewer’s agenda’ (cf. Schoofs & Van De Mieroop, 2021).

While researchers of identities in academic context may consider some of these issues ‘reflexively’ (cf. Pick et al., 2017), our approach goes a step further by tackling such issues as they emerge in talk-in-interaction. This requires a consideration of interview narratives², not as objects but rather, as performances through which the interviewees negotiate a sense of self vis-à-vis the highly debated and culturally imposed discourses. In particular, we pursue this investigation by drawing on an interactional sociolinguistic framework that brings together macro-discursive and micro-discursive analytical elements for the study of ‘identities in narratives’ (Bamberg et al., 2007) about the workplace (see e.g., Miglbauer, 2017; Holmgreen, 2021). This approach presents a ‘middle ground’ between macro-discursive approaches (e.g., Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA) that conceptualise identity as determined by large social processes and as such tend to give little attention to the local negotiation of meaning; and, micro-discursive approaches (i.e. Conversation Analysis or CA) that promote the study of interaction independently of larger social processes (De Fina, 2013). The particular analytical framework that we draw on here, namely, ‘positioning analysis’ (Bamberg, 1997), ties these two levels together. This is because it is conceptualised as a three-level ‘construction process’ of identities in narratives (Bamberg, 1997) revolving around the following analytical questions: (i) how are the characters of the story positioned vis-à-vis one another as protagonists and antagonists within the reported events, or, in other words, within the ‘storyworld’ that is created by means of the storytelling activity (level 1); (ii) how does the narrator position herself

within the interactional context of the story (level 2); and (iii) how does the narrator position a sense of (professional) identity in relation to ‘dominant discourses’ or ‘master narratives’ (level 3) (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, p. 391, Bamberg, 1997). These questions provide a way to closely scrutinise, on the one hand, how narratives emerge in interaction, and, on the other hand, how narrators may discursively negotiate and ‘claim’ a ‘professional identity’ in relation to larger societal processes.

While all these levels are discernible in a theoretical sense, they are in fact intertwined and interlinked in real-life storytelling. They are thus not analysed separately, but holistically. Our particular aim is to contribute to providing empirical evidence of how one can tap into the link between the micro and the macro levels of discourse, which are related to one another at positioning level 3. This level has not received much attention thus far (though see e.g. De Fina, 2013; Georgakopoulou, 2013), and we thus hope to contribute to the development of positioning analysis in this sense. This focus thus allows us to draw links between, on the one hand, the ‘linguistic practices’ associated with emerging ‘identity work’ – which we define, following Antaki and Widdicombe (1998), as the discursive or linguistic strategies that the interviewees draw on in the construction of their stories particularly to ascribe, suggest, and claim particular identities for themselves during the interview interaction – and, on the other hand, the ‘institutional practices’ that underpin or inform such practices. As Georgakopoulou (2013) has argued, this can be done by teasing out ‘iterativity’ or emergent patterns across a dataset, in the ways stories are told and how interviewees construct their identities. Thereby, our emphasis goes beyond ‘single events’ to types of events and their ‘conventional associations’ that grant a way to analytically tap into the ‘social processes’ that make such identities recognisable (cf. Georgakopoulou, 2013). We believe that this approach is ideally suited, not in the least because it is compatible with the social constructionist understanding adopted in this paper (for a discussion see De Fina, 2013), but also, and importantly, because it offers an empirical way to tap into the complexities of macro-social changes by zooming in on their implications for the identities of the people who are directly involved in these reform processes. Fundamentally, it helps to achieve this aim in a way that, on the one hand, does justice to the locally negotiated nature of identities in narrative performances, but that, on the other hand, also moves beyond the purely idiosyncratic, to tease out which identities some of the interviewees in the dataset regularly invoke. As we will demonstrate in the upcoming sections, such empirical insights are particularly important to uncover the specific negotiation and interpretation processes that foreground the emergence of particular identities in contexts of on-going and debated change.

4. Data and Analytical Procedures

We draw on a corpus of 12 semi-structured interviews with female³ Qatari junior academics who work at a reformed national university in Qatar. At the time of these interviews, most of the interviewees have obtained one international qualification (a master’s degree) through the university’s Qatarization scheme as discussed above. Most of the interviewees chose to speak predominantly in Qatari Arabic or standard Arabic and individual interviews on average lasted for about 1 hour. Ethical approval was obtained

prior to data collection, which was conducted in 2015 by the first author of this paper. Finally, the interviewees' names and personal information were anonymised and their stories were transcribed using simplified Jeffersonian transcription conventions (Jefferson, 2004) which were slightly adapted to be applied to Arabic⁴.

Importantly, as the interviewer is also a member of this 'female native junior academics' in-group, the topic of the interview, namely, 'becoming a female Qatari academic member', is inevitably a 'shared territory of experience' (Norrick, 2020). Therefore, the opening question of interviews was framed as a request for each interviewee to 'tell her own story', i.e., of how she reached her current junior academic position. As such, the interviews centered around the interviewees' personal journeys into the academic workplace and as such explored various aspects of their work-life experiences including how and why they joined the university as well as their past and on-going effort to advance their academic career. Importantly, since the interviewees were aware of the fact that they were chosen on the basis of their identity as 'female Qatari junior academics,' it is possible that this has implicitly shaped the way in which they represented their past experiences as implicit responses to the interviewer's anticipated evaluation of them (cf. Van de Mierop, 2011). Yet, given the intersectional nature of the identity categories of this group (for example, in terms of gender, nationality, and age), which of the various identity aspects to highlight during the interview remained a choice to the interviewees. As mentioned earlier, this is because identity negotiations are very dynamic and as such interviewees can reject, just as they can accept, the 'identities' that are projected on them during any interaction, including that of the research interview. Finally, because all these interviews were conducted by one interviewer, this provided a comparative ground from which we could tease out emergent patterns of narratives and identities as conveyed by this very specific workplace community.

When analysing these 12 interviews for emergent patterns we noticed that a 'pioneer identity' was invoked regularly in many personal stories. In half of these interviews (6 out of 12), particular phrases such as '*in qatar, there is nobody in this specialisation*', '*i'm the only qatari to study in denmark*', and '*i'm the first scholar from qatar to study in germany*' occurred. After teasing out all of these instances, it became apparent that this pattern emerged as one that explicitly invoked 'nationality' in stories that discuss the interviewees' on-going journey of 'becoming an academic'. Although nationality is regularly invoked as linked to various aspects of their professional relations with both colleagues and students, in these invocations nationality is presented as a crucial identity feature that is specifically linked to the development of the interviewees' career as outlined by the Qatarization scheme. Additionally, while some interviewees briefly expressed such statements, others elaborated more extensively on this identity through their stories.

We argue that, while this might be considered a limited sample in many ways, the very fact that it emerges repeatedly in a context where culturally imposed meanings remain debated and challenged makes it nonetheless an interesting pattern. In this paper, we tease out these 'pioneer identity' claims by treating these as the outcome of negotiations and meaning-making processes, by which the interviewees either contest or give way to the macro-social processes that target and shape their identities as Qatari junior academics. In order to meet the goal of tapping into positioning level 3 as discussed above, we

provide a close examination of different stories by two interviewees who developed this identity work explicitly and elaborately. We first provide some details about these interviewees' backgrounds to ensure a good understanding of the excerpts presented below:

- (1) Khulood joined the university after obtaining a master's degree from the same department she studied at. At the time of the interview, she has been working for some time and was planning to pursue a doctoral degree abroad.
- (2) Maha has been working at the university for about 3 years at the time of the interview. She obtained her master's degree abroad.

5. Analyses

For the presentation of the analyses, we use three subsections that reflect the fragments' baseline discussions of landmark moments and career phases in which 'nationality' is invoked as a crucial aspect in the discursive construction of the interviewees' professional identity. In other words, the structure and organisation of this section into career phases is based on the way these narratives are constructed by the interviewees themselves and on how the interviewees' professional identities are consecutively enacted during individual interviews. Yet, as the analyses of positioning level 3 will demonstrate, the micro-discursive details of these interviewees' identity work also reflexively point at the larger macro-social context and its social forces that shape these specific stories and, in a way, the emergent pattern of the 'pioneer identity' claims that we could detect in some of the interviews in our dataset.

5.1 Phase 1: 'Nationality' as an Institutional 'Need'

In this section, we consider the first phase of the Qatari junior academics' career; namely, being recruited as employees by the national university. This phase consists of a recruitment process that takes the form of a (series of) 'gatekeeping encounter(s)' (Roberts, 2019) with university officials. After having successfully tackled this hurdle, Qatari junior employees can then begin their academic career by pursuing international degrees abroad, while being paid as part of the university's Qatarization employment scheme.

Here, we examine a story in which the interviewee explicitly invokes Qatari nationality to highlight it as a relevant feature in the selection process of a prospective employee. Shortly before the following fragment, the interviewee briefly discusses her growing interest to work at the same department she was studying at. She then explains that she approached the department head about this matter, whose name is anonymised to '*dr salwa al-rumaihi*' in line 250.

Excerpt 1

I: Interviewer; KH: Khulood

249 KH فلما- انا ناقشت كان على ايام اه بدايه اه
so when- i defended it was during the days of uh the beginning of uh

- 250 دكتوراه سلوى الرميحي توه اه ماسك القسم
dr salwa al-rumaihi just uh held the department
- 251 I ::أم:
em::
- 252 KH فانا قلت لها فرحبت بالفكره
so=i told her and she=welcomed the idea
- 253 يعني خصوصاً كادر قطري والقسم يعني
like especially a qatari cadre and the department like
- 254 هه الجامعه بشكل عام بحاجه لكوادر قطريه يعني خصوصاً
•hhh the=university[^] in general is in need of qatari cadre like especially
- 255 اه باعتبارها الجامعه الوطنيه والمفروض تستقطب القطريين المتميزين
ah considering that it's the national university and by obligation recruits the=talented qataris
- 256 I صح
right
- 257 KH فاه لما ناقشت وقدمت (.) رجبوا بالفكره و:: يعني تم توظيفي
so[^] when i=defended and submitted (.) they=welcomed the idea and:: like my=hiring was=complete

At the start of the fragment, Khulood sets up the storyworld by explaining that around the time of her master thesis' defence (line 249) a new department head was appointed (line 250), thus introducing the story's antagonist. Khulood then continues by explaining that she decided to speak to the new head regarding her interest to become a junior academic (line 252). The antagonist is then presented as receiving this news with enthusiasm (line 252).

Interestingly, as signalled by the discourse marker 'يعني' (line 253 – 'like'), which marks a continuation of this topic (Owens & Rockwood, 2008), the story's focus shifts to elaborate on this positive reaction. Importantly, rather than accounting for this reaction based on the protagonist's professional skills for example, it is linked 'especially' (line 253) to nationality (cf. the prosodic emphasis on 'qatari', line 253). Surprisingly, she shifts to a third person perspective to implicitly describe herself as a member of the 'qatari cadre' (line 253). In this way, Khulood's position as the protagonist of the story is now extended to include possible other native in-group members, namely, Qatari job applicants. As such, she suggests that members of the Qatari in-group, herself included, have a privileged position as job applicants in this academic workplace.

Indeed, as evident in the reformulation to the prosodically emphasized 'university[^]' (line 254), Khulood argues that not only her department (line 0253) but also the university is 'in need of a qatari cadre' (line 254). This 'need' is immediately explicated as Khulood states that given its status as a 'national' institution (line 255), there is the prescribed duty ('by obligation', line 255) for the university to employ natives (line 255). As underscored by emphasis on the noun phrase, it is interesting that only at the end of this argument that Khulood limits this native in-group, which the university should target, on the basis of 'talent'. Hence, this can be read as some sort of a mitigation of the general norm of 'nationality as a crucial selection criterion'.

Subsequently, the above is met by the interviewer's explicit agreement (line 256), after which Khulood concludes her story by a short chronicle of the ensuing course of events. In this chronicle, the department head's positive reaction is repeated, but this time with an implicit pronominal shift to the third-person plural 'they' (line 257 – cf. line 252), which suggests that the initial positive reaction that she received is now presented as shared by others involved in this recruitment process. Finally, she concludes with the evidential positive outcome of this process through emphasis on the verbal phrase (line 257), which underscores the matter as a concluded and fixed fact. Overall, this chronicle highlights the self-evident nature of her passing of what would normally be an important gatekeeping hurdle, thus once more suggesting that the Qatari nationality in particular, besides the general category of talent, was a decisive factor that significantly facilitated her entrance into the academic world.

Thus, the analysis highlights how nationality is made relevant in the gatekeeping process towards getting a job at the national university. Rather than immediately capitalizing on skill and expertise as crucial features for a future scholar – which tends to be expected in job application processes – the interviewee explicitly invokes Qatari nationality and argues for its relevance in the selection of prospective employees. In particular, the interviewee implicitly draws on culturally available narratives that emphasise the local embedding of the university and its prescribed '*obligation*' to '*especially*' recruit '*talented*' nationals. So, overall, the importance of nationality for the selection and recruitment process is conveyed as culturally shared knowledge.

5.2 Phase 2: 'Nationality' as a Crucial Resource for Professional Advancement

In this part we consider the second phase in these junior academics' career journey, which requires pursuing a postgraduate degree abroad at an internationally recognised university. At this stage, there is another set of gatekeeping encounters to be overcome. Here we examine a longer excerpt in which nationality is presented as a resource that the interviewee explicitly uses to promote herself. This longer excerpt is divided into two fragments: in the first fragment (excerpt 2a), Maha demonstrates how she used her nationality in face-to-face interactions with the international, mostly western, university staff abroad; and, in the second fragment (excerpt 2b), she demonstrates how she 'even' used it in her written postgraduate application to this university. We start with excerpt 2a:

I: Interviewer; M: Maha

- 1269 M يوم قدمت
when *i=applied*
- 1270 (3.0)
- 1271 قال اه هناك في الجامعات الي برع
in the ah there at the universities abroad
- 1272 ههـ "او هـ:: يعني انتي تبين تستوين professor في الجامعه وهالشكل ؟"
•hhh >'oh°:: like you want to be a **professor** at° the university
and=such°?<

- 1273 >ههـ <قلت لهم "أي" فكان هم يستانسون>
•hhh >i=told=them 'yes' so it was like they get=happy<
- 1274 (.)
- 1275 عارفه؟
you=know?
- 1276 I ::امم
em::
- 1277 M ههـ ان يعني ان من دولة^ا عربيه (.) اسلاميه (.) خليجيه (.) انه (.) سامحين بهالفكر
•hhh that's like that from an arab country[^] (.) muslim (.) khaliji (.)
that (.) they're=allowing this=thought
- 1278 (.)
- 1279 <فاهمه؟ ان وحده بتراجع اتدرس يعني>
>you=understand ? that someone will=return to=teach like so <
- 1280 (.)
- 1281 I ::ايه
yes::

Maha begins by setting the scene and indicates both time (line 1269) and place (line 1271) of the storyworld. Then she vividly enacts a constructed dialogue (Tannen, 1989) between herself and a vague group of story antagonists, namely, those she met at the international university she joined, and for whom the use of a lower speaking volume functions as an enquoting device (Goffman, 1981). In this reported speech, the elongation of 'oh::' (line 1272), a change-of-state token (Heritage, 1984), immediately indexes surprise on the part of the story antagonists. Then, as underlined by the reported question (line 1272), Maha's identity is being evaluated in light of her professional aspirations and the surprise hints at the antagonists' perceptions of an incompatibility of some sort.

Subsequently, she continues to demonstrate that upon affirming her professional aspirations (line 1273), this surprised reaction changes to admiration as per emphasis on the verb (line 1273). After a meta-knowledge check (Schiffrin, 1987) in line 1275, Maha elaborates by a further specification in which she makes her country of origin relevant through various identity labels. First, an orientation to nationality is made relevant by means of the pitch rise and emphasis on the noun phrase 'arab country' (line 1277), which is subsequently and emphatically (cf. the many pauses) described as 'muslim' and 'khaliji's' (line 1277). Through this description then, she implicitly makes relevant religious and cultural characteristics thereby suggesting an orientation to western conceptions regarding countries with these characteristics.

This is further explicated in the Qatari Arabic formulation of the concluding clause attributed to another vague group of antagonists, namely 'they' (conveyed through the particle in the verb, line 1277). As agents who can 'allow' something, these antagonists are presented as being 'in charge' thereby suggesting the Qatari government or community. Further, the object of the verb (line 1277) makes it more explicit that the reason the western antagonist group

'get=happy' (line 1273) is because their preconceived notions about countries like Qatar are now proven to be wrong. In other words, Maha is presented as the token of 'this=thought', thus as an example of a positive and progressive protagonist that refutes the general conservative perception of the 'arab country' hinted at earlier.

Importantly, Maha does not resist the antagonist group's evaluations and perceptions, rather she uses them to implicitly ascribe such positive features to herself. Furthermore, Maha quickly adds a clarification (line 1279) and, through the pronominal shift to the third-person feminine singular⁶ in the Arabic formulation, she now also makes gender relevant to implicitly point at the gender-related nature of these western perceptions⁷. By using a generic reference ('someone', line 1279), she also extends the scope of her story by clarifying that she is referring to these western conceptions *in general*, rather than in relation to herself personally.

Immediately following this fragment, a second related story emerges that further demonstrates Maha's awareness of such western conceptions and the opportunities they entail for her career advancement.

Excerpt 2b

I: Interviewer; M: Maha

- 1282 M ههـ \$المهم سافرت ورجعت^ (.) فاه:: \$ (.)
•hhh \$importantly i=travelled and i=came=back^ (.) so^:: \$ (.)
- 1283 <حتى قيل لا اسافر ترى كنت كاتبه في ال اه امم>
>even before i=travelled by the way i=have wrote in the ahh emm<
- 1284 (.)
- 1285 ((تسك)) في شسمه اه ال:: اه (.)
((tsek)) in what=is=it=called ahh the:: ahh (.)
- 1286 (.) >personal^ statement ال <في ال
*>in the **personal**^ **statement** < (.)*
- 1287 I [او كيه°]
[ok°]
- 1288 M [ان انا] ابي اكون اول اقطريه (.)
[that I] want to be the first qatari (.)
- 1289 (2.0)
- 1290 M متخصصه في العدالة والجريمة
specialised in criminal justice
- 1291 I أمم::
em:::
- 1292 M حسيت انه <ابكتب^ جذيه> (.)
i=felt that >i=want=to=write^ like=that< (.)
- 1293 هاي الشي (بيخليهم-) بيخليهم \$ياخذوني يعني غصب\$ (.)
this thing (will=make-) will=make=them \$take=me like by=force\$ (.)
- 1294 I أي::
yes::
- 1295 (.)

- 1296 M >\$غصب طيب كل واحد بيقول اه\$<
 •hhh >\$by=force or desire everyone would say ah\$<
- 1297 كل واحد يبي يقول "انا الي:: اب القطريه ذيج^:: هه متخرجه مني"\$ (.)
 \$everyone wants to say "i=am the:: eh the=qatari her^:: •hhh has
 graduated from=me"\$ (.)
- 1298 >\$اول^ اقطريه انا ههه في العدالة والجريمة\$>
 >\$the=first^ qatari i=am hehhe in criminal justice\$<
- 1299 \$متخرجه من عندي من الجامعه"\$
 \$'has graduated from here from the university'\$
- 1300 I \$صح\$
 \$right°\$

The fragment begins with the discourse marker 'المهم' (line 1282 – 'importantly'), which presents the forthcoming story as an important elaboration on the main point that is being established (Alshamari, 2015). After a search⁸ for the right word in line 1285, Maha sets the context of this story as revolving around the content of her written statement for an international university (cf. the codeswitch to English in line 1286). Then Maha continues by emphasising her determination to draw on her nationality in the construction of her professional identity (line 1288) and she does so by limiting the scope of her claim of being a 'pioneer Qatari' in relation to her specialisation.

In the remainder of the excerpt, as underscored by the pitch rise and the prosodic emphasis, Maha explicitly justifies her adamant position to draw on her nationality as stemming from a 'feeling' (cf. line 1292) that guided her to discursively present herself in this way. She further explains that doing 'this thing' (line 1293) was a necessary step to convince the antagonist group of western gatekeepers (cf. *them*, as implied in the Arabic verbs used in line 1293). At this point, Maha shifts to the jocular frame, which is used throughout the rest of the fragment to mitigate her explicit elaboration that, by drawing on her nationality, she forced the antagonists to accept her (cf. emphasis on the verb 'by=force', line 1293).

Following the interviewer's acknowledgement (line 1294), Maha's claim is explicated through the Qatari proverb 'غصب طيب' (line 1296 – 'by=force or desire'), which is used to emphasise that, regardless of what those in power might feel, there's only one evident outcome to the matter. This argument is generalised by means of the Extreme Case Formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), 'everyone' (line 1296), which she repeats twice (cf. line 1297) to reiterate that anyone in the position of the recipient of her application would ultimately want to have her as an alumna. After a reformulation to 'wants to say' (line 1297), thus attributing volition to the antagonist group, Maha begins to vividly enact these antagonists' enthusiasm by means of hypothetical reported speech (lines 1297-1299).

Then there's another reformulation from the first-person singular to the third-person feminine pronoun (implied in the definite noun 'the=qatari', line 1297), which is emphasized by a deictic form (namely, the elongated 'her^::',

line 1297). Importantly, this reformulation not only makes the story more generic, suggesting that the international university would be proud of having *any* female Qatari alumna, rather than Maha in particular, but it also highlights the importance of gender in this matter, thus pointing at the university's preconceived notions in relation to women from Qatar (see excerpt 2a).

Subsequently, through this enactment, Maha attributes value to her career journey in '*criminal justice*' (line 1298) and claims a 'pioneer' identity (cf. emphasis on '*the=first*'[^], line 1298) for herself as a Qatari woman at an international university (line 1299). This final part is still marked as the reported speech of the western antagonist group, who are presented as if they cannot be anything other than persuaded by Maha's line of reasoning. This is met with the interviewer's explicit agreement in the final line of the fragment.

In sum, the analyses of these two fragments demonstrate the implicit and explicit discursive strategies through which conceptions of the western antagonist group about the interviewee's nationality are used as a resource to construct a 'pioneer Qatari' professional identity. By adopting a discursive position that aligns with these conceptions, rather than addressing the gap of these notions vis-à-vis the Qatari reality, the interviewee makes full use of her nationality and draws on existing preconceived notions in the West about women from the GCC region to overcome the international university's gatekeeping procedures (fragment 2b).

5.3 Phase 3: 'Nationality' as a Strategy for Professional Status

In this final analytical part, we consider quite an advanced phase in this career journey, namely active participation in the academic community. Even at this stage, we find that some of our interviewees draw on their nationality to construct a 'pioneer' professional identity. In this story, Maha discusses her first-time experience as a participant in a local conference. Prior to the fragment, Maha claims she would have been the '*only qatari*' presenter (line 1791 – omitted here for reasons of space), but, as she failed to submit her paper on time, she actually did not present at the conference after all. Yet, Maha maintains this pioneering identity claim by continuing with a hypothetical story about next year's conference, as we see in the following fragment:

Excerpt 3

I: Interviewer; M: Maha

- 1808 M ههـ بس ياالله الحمدالله[^] (.) قلت انشاءالله[^] راح اشارك فيه السنه الجايه
 •hhh but well thank=god[^] (.) i=said inshallah[^] i=will participate
 in=it the=next year
- 1809 \$وما[^]توقع اصلاً ان السنه الجايه بيكون فيه بعد اقطري او اقطريه\$
 \$and i=don't[^]=expect actually that the next year there'll be as=well
 a=qatari=male or a=qatari=female\$

- 1810 I [أمم:]
[em::]
- 1811 M (.) [ههـ] مشاركين فيه
[•hhh] participating in=it (.)
- 1812 <المتحدثين كل ابوهم>
>the=speakers all=of=them<
- 1813 <او المشاركين فيه كل ابوهم أجنب>
>or the=participants all=of=them foreigners<
- 1814 I صح
right
- 1815 (.)
- 1816 M (.) <وفهالتخصص ما في اصلاً حد اقطري> (.)
>and=in=this=specialisation there's=no[^]actually nobody qatari< (.)
- 1817 I [أمم:]
[em::]
- 1818 M (.) [فاهمه] ههـ فا: (.)
[you=understand] •hhh so:: (.)
- 1819 <(يعني) انا: (فكوني-) كوني فهالمجال عندي كذا فرصه ان انا اثبت نفسي>
>(like) i:: (so being-) so being in this=domain i=have a=number
of chances that i=can prove myself<

In line 1808, through the contrastive discourse marker (Schiffrin, 1987) and by invocation of ‘thank=god’ (Ferguson, 1983), Maha pursues a topic transition (cf. Clift & Helani, 2010) that projects a positive outlook for the future. By means of a self-quotation (Golato, 2002), she factually states her decision to take part in the conference the following year (cf. the simple future tense in line 1808), which is nevertheless mitigated by the prosodically emphasised ‘*inshallah*[^]’. Interestingly, rather than focusing on her increased academic skills by that time, she again invokes nationality as a relevant identity feature. Maha shifts to a smile voice (line 1809) as she explicitly argues that she still expects to be able to claim a ‘pioneer’ professional identity soon. This claim is strongly emphasised in Arabic, first, by means of the pitch rise on the negation particle in the verb (line 1809) and, second, by explicit use of the masculine and feminine forms of the label ‘Qatari’ (cf. line 1809). Hence, by eliminating the possibility of another Qatari – man or woman – participating in the next conference, Maha still constructs a pioneer professional identity in terms of her nationality.

Then Maha formulates several explicit arguments in support of this pioneer identity claim. First, through the repetition of the Extreme Case Formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), ‘all=of=them’ (lines 1812 and 1813) and the prosodic emphasis on ‘*foreigners*’ (line 1813), she marks herself as a unique participant in terms of nationality in the context of this conference. Following the interviewer’s explicit agreement (line 1814) and a short pause, Maha invokes a second context, namely, her professional domain (line 1816), in which this is the case. The formulation of line 1816, namely the pitch rise and the prosodic emphases, indicates that Maha remains adamant in her construction of a

continuous pioneer professional identity in terms of her Qatari nationality. This is met by the interviewer's immediate acknowledgement (line 1817), which overlaps with Maha's understanding check (line 1818). After a few reformulations (line 1819), Maha concludes the story in the form of a prosodically emphasized claim that there are several opportunities (line 1819) for her in this professional domain to substantiate her pioneer identity claim.

The analysis of this final excerpt demonstrates the interviewee's unwavering determination to draw on her nationality to construct a pioneer Qatari professional identity that makes her stand out vis-à-vis her peers. In particular, she emphasises the peculiarity of her position as a Qatari native minority, which, in combination with her unique – locally unavailable – specialisation, grants her abundant professional opportunities.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to scrutinise the identity work of a very specific workplace community, whereby attention was paid to iterative or emergent patterns of how some of our interviewees talk into being their professional identities and how these constructions, in turn, discursively reflect the ambivalence of their position as the target of top-down macro-social structural changes that are highly debated and thus dynamic. We delved into this with the aim to broaden the horizon of existing research on professional identities in academic contexts as well as of discourse analytical research on contexts of organizational change, by considering the specific discursive details of the ways in which the interviewees in our dataset carefully negotiated their professional identities in their career journey stories. To this end, we pursued an investigation of 'identity as ingenuity' (Bucholtz, 1999) and employed the interactional sociolinguistic approach of 'positioning analysis' (Bamberg, 1997) in which we particularly focused on positioning level 3 with the aim of linking micro- and macro- discursive analytical levels. After teasing out our corpus for stories in which the interviewees' professional identities are topicalised, we found that half of our interviewees negotiate their positions as junior academics by drawing on their nationality to carve out a legitimate and acceptable identity for themselves as members of their academic workplace. By zooming in on the stories told in two interviews in which this nationality aspect was discussed most extensively, we found that even though it constitutes only one aspect of their identities as junior academics, Qatari nationality is explicitly (by use of the label '*qatari*', excerpts 1, 2b, and 3) and implicitly (by highlighting the country's characteristics, excerpt 2a) invoked as a crucial identity feature of these protagonist's professional identity in various phases of their academic career journeys.

On the one hand, in stories about the early phases of the academic career, this entails the construction of a discursive position that orients to perceptions of their local community (for example, regarding their moral right for access and opportunity as in excerpt 1) or to more global perceptions. The latter is emblematically shown in excerpts 2a and 2b in which the interviewee adopts a discursive position that orients to western perceptions, which – despite suggestions of incompatibility between nationality and professional aspects of

identity – she draws on to construct a positive image for herself as a ‘pioneer Qatari’ and an aspiring academic. Importantly, in these three stories that discuss early phases of the academic career, we observed shifts from narratives of personal experience to more generic narratives (cf. Van De Mierop 2021). This often took the form of the interviewees adopting more generic pronominal forms that set up a worldview in which being Qatari (women) is framed as an important identity feature. This is vividly enacted by means of the often-generalised positive responses they receive in important gatekeeping encounters that control access to work (excerpt 1) and study (excerpts 2a and 2b). Such generalised positive responses by the antagonists regarding the relevance of the protagonists’ nationality (and gender, cf. excerpt 2) in the various institutional contexts, whether locally (e.g. excerpt 1) or globally (e.g. excerpt 2a), project these experiences as generally shared by the social group of which these interviewees are members. Moreover, it is significant that in these stories there are few explicit claims about specific professional skills, with the exception of excerpt 1 in which the feature of ‘*talented*’ is attributed to the group of Qatari nationals almost in passing. In a way, it is surprising that, rather than capitalizing on their knowledge and skills to construct a professional identity in the gatekeeping situations that these stories describe (as would be expected, cf. Kerekes, 2007), the interviewees explicitly invoke their nationality as a crucial factor for advancing their careers.

On the other hand, as they move into more advanced phases in their career, the formulations are more consistently oriented to the first-person singular perspective. This is clear in excerpt 3, in which the interviewee discursively carves out a more distinctive identity by combining the peculiarity of her position as a Qatari native minority with more unique aspects relevant to her professional identity, such as being specialised in a particular domain that is not locally available. In this case, the interviewee talks into being a ‘pioneer Qatari’ identity as a member of the academic community who can take up a professional role, such as presenting at academic conferences (excerpt 3), albeit hypothetically. Remarkably, even in this case of personal experience, the interviewee’s claim to a privileged identity is linked to her nationality; rather than, for instance an evolving professional identity, i.e. her advancement in relation to the specific academic domain of which she is a member. So once more, the aspect of knowledge or academic skills is backgrounded in favour of the interviewee’s nationality. As hinted at above, this backgrounding of knowledge and competence is quite striking, as these features are often described as typically related to the construction of professional identities (see e.g. Zayts and Schnurr, 2017).

Since nationality appears as an emergent theme in half of our interviews and it is explicitly elaborated on in the self-initiated narratives across different phases of the interviewees’ academic career journey that we discuss here, we argue that these stories are not isolated examples. Rather, and in line with our goal to particularly explore positioning level 3, we believe that these stories can be ‘assembled’ as concrete examples that together form a ‘collective storyline’ (Hammack, 2011) in which nationality is highlighted as an inherent part of this interviewee group’s professional identity as an academic. We believe we may have thus tapped into an iterative pattern of identity work (Georgakopoulou, 2013), more specifically in this highly specific community of female Qatari junior academics. As De Fina (2013) argues, having teased out the similarities in identity work in these stories ‘allows for a discussion of the wider

implications of these stories and of how Discourses and ideologies' – in this case about Qatarization – 'are relevant to a full interpretation of positioning' by some of the storytellers in our dataset (p. 54).

In particular, we argue that, by teasing out the micro-discursive identity work, the emergent pattern observed in some of the narratives found in our data can perhaps be considered as emblematic of the characteristics of the academic profession as it takes shape in current-day Qatar, especially in relation to the Qatarization employment scheme. This scheme intricately links the process of becoming a 'Qatari academic' with a process of socialising into an increasingly complex workplace structure through a career journey that combines competing values of internationalisation and nationalisation. While the emphasis on nationality entails an advantageous position for the native Qatari group – of which our interviewees were part – the emphasis on 'foreign', rather than 'local', knowledge and qualifications entails an especially ambivalent position for these native employees. There is therefore an inherent tension in this employment scheme that Qatari junior academics need to confront (see Mazawi, 2003) and that is visible in the emergent identity work that could be uncovered in some of the interviews in our dataset, in which nationality – rather than knowledge and competence as is typically the case in relation to professional identity work (see e.g. Zayts and Schnurr, 2017) – is prioritized.

By so strongly foregrounding their national identity as Qataris, these interviewees thus discursively highlight the nationalisation-aspect of the Qatarization employment scheme, rather than the internationalisation-aspect. While it is clear that one of the goals of this scheme is to have more Qataris become part of an international academic community in which nationality is generally considered as a footnote rather than an integral part of an academic's professional identity, this is not the case for some of the interviewees in our dataset who seem to align with the university's general strategy of enhancing its role and position as a national institution. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is no emphasis on their similarity in relation to other academics within their professional domain, rather, these interviewees capitalise on how they are different – in terms of nationality – from other academics, both within Qatar (excerpts 1 and 3) and internationally (excerpts 2a and 2b). In this way, they thus refrain from positioning themselves as members of a larger professional in-group based on academic domains.

Yet, it is critical to recall that our interviewees are juniors in their respective academic Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998). Hence, they are still in the process of moving from the periphery – marked by a lack of a foreign doctoral qualifications – closer to the centre – where foreign qualifications equate elite membership. Thus, a relatively low status in this learning process may be one of the reasons for this emphasis on the nationality aspect of these interviewees' identity, since it lends prestige and uniqueness as pioneering academics to their professional identities. Another reason could be an attempt to establish relevance and legitimacy by orienting to the state-narratives of change; namely, the move away from a 'traditional' conceptualisation of national identity towards a more 'modern' one, in which Qataris increasingly take their place in the rising knowledge economy, as discussed above.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasise that this emergent pattern is to be understood as the micro-discursive product of specific moments in time that orient to very dynamic and quickly evolving macro-discursive processes of

change. In spite of this specificity, we argue that it is nonetheless important to capture such snapshots and to trace their development to see whether such an emerging ‘collective storyline’ or ‘master-narrative’ persists and in what ways. Not only in relation to the future when these junior academics have moved to the centre of the Qatari academic community but also, at present, as these junior academics’ identity work may already have an impact on society and effectuate social change. Because of this, we believe it will remain interesting to observe whether, and if so, how, these macro-structural change processes will evolve within the national university on the basis of, self-evidently among others, the input of people like our interviewees who are amongst the first generations to be affected by them. This is because, through their stories, people may ‘not only challenge the dominant discourses of more powerful groups, but they may also become empowered, and quite literally find a voice, in their struggle for (professional) recognition’ (Van De Mierop & Schnurr, 2017, p. 451). Because these micro-level perceptions may function as catalysts for further macro-social changes, we believe it is important that line of empirical investigation as proposed here, are important to continue, in the form of longitudinal studies for example.

Finally, we argue that this investigation of the way these stories are told and identities are performed offers a unique insight into one visible outcome of the tension inherent within the Qatarization scheme that makes national identity ‘a field of political contestation’ (Viramontes, 2019) and a resource for the construction of professional identity, which is a topic that has not received much attention in the GCC. In relation to scholarly work on identities in the academic workplace, we hope that this contribution has demonstrated the value of examining the intricacies of the micro-discursive identity work: first, to uncover the complex interplay of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ factors (Pick et al., 2017) that shape what it means to be an academic at the locally negotiated level; and second, to move beyond individual cases by attempting to uncover emergent patterns, even in contexts of organizational change. As the discussion of the analyses demonstrates, the latter is especially important given that it helps to establish links between emerging ‘linguistic practices’ and the (new) ‘institutional practices’ that underpin or inform them. We argue that this type of analysis can thus reflexively capture some of the complexities of the dynamic changes that are impacting higher education institutions in Qatar and far beyond, as well as of change processes in organizational contexts in general.

Notes

1. Acronym for Gulf Co-Operation Council (GCC): namely, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Bahrain.
2. The conceptualisation and treatment of ‘narratives’ described here draws on discourse-based studies on identities in professional and organisational contexts and is thereby different from approaches found in scholarly work on identities in academia. While the latter treats narratives as the expression of self or identities, the former emphasises that narratives are complex ‘social practices’, ‘acts’ or ‘performances’ that are thus open to empirical scrutiny.
3. We specifically focus on women rather than Qatari men as part of a larger project that also aims to explore the issue of gender identity in relation to this changing academic workplace. Interestingly, while the intersection of gender is in many

ways relevant, we find that it is often not explicitly invoked in the interviewees' self-initiated stories, it is thus not foregrounded in a similar way to national identity. Based on observations from this and other case studies that draw on this particular dataset, we theorise that this might be largely due to the status of the group of Qatari nationals as a native minority at both institutional and societal levels that implicitly leads the interviewees to emphasise their collective Qatari identity, beyond the issue of gender.

4. Given the particularity of the Arabic script it was challenging to use the same transcript conventions: for example, we used هـ instead of •hhh to mark inbreath (see appendix for more details). Also, as the interviews are provided in both original Arabic language *and* English translation, we ask the reader to bear in mind a) the different reading directions between the two languages, which can sometimes be challenging to read, for example, overlaps, and b) the mixing of the two languages, which we have indicated in bold in the English translated text.
5. This noun is a general reference to Gulf, or GCC, countries. In this case, it is an implicit reference to Qatar.
6. This is evident in the marker هـ /h/ that appears in the noun 'وحدہ', 'someone', and the marker ت /t/ that appears in the verbs 'بترجع', 'will=return', and 'اتدرس', 'to=teach'.
7. While gender is an interesting intersectional aspect of identity, it is merely hinted at here by the interviewee. Therefore, and in line with the analytical aim of relating the micro- discursive level to the macro- discursive level, an extensive discussion of the topic of gender is beyond the scope of this article. Nonetheless, we refer the reader to another publication that explores this topic based on a number of explicit self-initiated stories that we have found in this dataset (Al-Khulaifi & Van De Mieroop, 2022b).
8. This is evident in, among others, the turn-initial delay (cf. lines 1282 to 1285), the click sound 'tsek' (line 1285), which is 'one way... of not producing talk when talk was due' (Ogden, 2020, p .66), and the idiomatic phrase (Rieschild, 2011) 'ششمه' (line 1285 – 'what=is=it=called').

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Appendix

Transcription conventions (adapted from Jefferson, 2004)

Element equivalence	Arabic	Meaning
(.)		Micro-pause
(2.0)		Timed pause
[]		The talk in-between overlaps
> <		The talk in-between is quicker
< >		The talk in-between is slower
()		The talk in-between is the transcriber's best guess at an unclear utterance
(())		Indicates vocalisations and paralinguistic features
=		The talk constitutes one word in the Arabic text
Word		Indicates speaker use of English in the Arabic text
<u>Word</u>		Indicates speaker emphasis
Word-		Indicates speaker cut-off
•hhh	ههـ	In-breath
Hehhe	ههه	Laughter
\$		Smile voice
°		Lower voice
↑	^	Rising intonation