The Politics of Narrating Everyday Encounters: Negotiating Identity and Belonging Among Berlin's German-Born Turkish *Ausländer*

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This paper is an applied narrative analysis of social encounters and their inherent relationality. The narratives analyzed are those of German-born, Turkish-background Berliners. Although their narratives relate to the specific context of Turkish immigration into Germany, they also shed light on the broader experience of negotiating diasporic identity and belonging, which makes them significant sources for understanding the politics of the Other. The narrative analysis I outline locates the dynamics of discursive messaging within the complexity of human encounters. Narrative is envisaged as one constituent of social interactions within complex processes of othering and the politics of making claims to identity and belonging.

> This is the struggle of the people who don't fit
> and [don't] belong neatly. (Leyla)[1]

As struggle over ethnic and national identities continues to cause unrest throughout the world, diasporic peoples—those who live outside their country of birth or ancestry—offer insights into whether and how such identities can be transcended. These multinational migrants are redefining what means to be a citizen in a Western nation-state today, and forging a new kind of citizenship. German-born Turkish Berliners are a case in point. In a country with exceptionally strong traditions of ethnic and national identity, these Berliners are contesting social exclusion while creating new ways to live as transnational Germans. Centred around narrative, this paper presents an applied methodology for examining what displacement means to Turkish Berliners in the context of their everyday encounters in German society.

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[1] All the names used are pseudonyms.

In the broader research this paper based on (Çalışkan, 2011), I argue that, although these people are named *Ausländer* (foreigners), they are creating a broader, richer form of citizenship. They are forming a modest, practical, and effective form of citizenship through their struggles of everyday living. I explore how these people's ordinary social encounters convey messages about their historical roots, their experiences of displacement and otherness, and the problematic legacy of national or ethnic identity. Through narrative analysis, I seek to understand how they root themselves and how they experience the dynamics of relating or belonging. I examine how their social, cultural, and political experiences pose challenges to both German and Turkish traditions of identity and citizenship.

In this study, the everyday social encounters that shape our cultural worlds are of central interest. Through these encounters, people's complex understandings of social identity and belonging find expression. Such encounters may involve spontaneous interactions, as when a German says to a Turkish Berliner, "Your German is really good," and the Turkish Berliner replies, "So is yours." These kinds of interactions can open ephemeral ruptures in people's perceptions of social reality. Although the encounters are usually spontaneous and their effects fleeting, over time they can form patterns that subtly shift the outlines of social life. I examine the social encounters of Turkish Berliners through the lens of their own narratives.

The analysis shows how their lives are conditioned by social relations far larger than their immediate encounters. The study illuminates how diasporic people are challenging the dominant assumptions of identity and belonging. The narratives draw on certain well-established patterns in which they struggle to negotiate, disrupt, or redefine the dominant meanings of identity and belonging. Their narratives can be purposeful; therefore, narration itself can be a political act.

Background[2]

Since the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, Germany has increasingly become home to an eclectic population of immigrants and displaced people. According to Germany's *Statistisches Bundesamt* (Federal Statistical Office) (Destatis, 2015), by the end of 2014 some 8.2 million people holding only foreign citizenship were registered in the *Ausländerzentralregister* (AZR, the Central Register of Foreigners). This

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[2] This section is updated from a previously published article (Çalışkan, 2014).

total was the greatest number of foreigners registered in Germany since the AZR was established in 1967. The recently earned right to freedom of movement for Romanians, Bulgarians, and Croatians as EU members—along with the recent refugee crises from nations such as Syria and Eritrea—have helped to generate the latest surge in immigration over the last few years ("Number of foreigners," 2015).

In Germany's past, the right to citizenship was based on *jus sanguinis* (the citizenship of the parents) and not on *jus soli* (the place of birth). Therefore, many foreign-born residents, despite their long residence and work experience, and despite fulfilling their duties such as paying taxes in Germany for many years, are still legally treated as "foreigners." The citizenship laws, however, were changed in 2000, so that the German-born children of foreign-born residents then began to automatically receive German citizenship, subject to certain conditions. Also, residents who had been legally living in Germany for eight years became entitled to apply for citizenship. To get it, they had to demonstrate a good command of the German language; have no criminal record; show economic self-reliance (i.e., they must not be receiving any unemployment or social benefits); and renounce any previous citizenship in another country.

There are several difficulties associated with modern German identity, which are partly due to the particularities of the country's recent history. These difficulties include the legacy of the Nazi regime, the post-war "repatriation" of ethnic Germans from other nations, the Cold War division of Germany into two supposedly hostile states, and the subsequent reunification of these estranged countries. Due to these historical conditions, Germany is itself an example of social and cultural diversity. Many people who are considered to be German actually regard themselves as displaced people. Berlin has a particular place in this history, as the city itself was physically divided into capitalist and communist zones for decades, and then reunited. Berliners have therefore experienced an unsettling of citizenship and nationality, which has made their city a socially complex space, where many cultures meet and sometimes collide. Therefore, Berlin is "a vibrant sociological site for observing the dynamics of belonging and citizenship within the context of a changing Germany" (Çalışkan, 2014, p. 3).

Turkish people began to migrate to Germany during the 1960s, coming as guest workers. As their numbers increased, by the 1970s they had become a permanent part of Germany. Turks became the country's largest minority group—almost three million out of a total minority

population of 9.9 million (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2014). However, despite their over 50-year history in Germany, Turkish-German people are still defined as ethnically, socially, and (until recently) legally "others." The common term for such others is *Ausländer* (meaning "foreigner"). The term may seem to indicate homogeneity for these others. But as Mandel (1989) and Pécoud (2002) have shown, the Turkish population constitutes both the biggest and the most diverse migrant community—politically, religiously, and culturally.

This kind of diversity within Germany and its Turkish community has raised a fascinating series of challenges and opportunities regarding the future of German identity and citizenship. As I (Çalışkan, 2014) have argued elsewhere,

> traditional understandings of Germanness, of Germany, and of its nationhood are encountering claims for recognition, both from its Ausländer and from other challenges arising from Germany's own history. Germans increasingly question rigid definitions of nationality, and many of them object to defensive reactions against ethnic diversity. (p. 4)

The participants in my Berlin research project were young Turkish-background adults who were born and grew up in Germany. Particularly because of their German birth and upbringing, combined with their "foreign" cultural lives, these people were especially prone to challenging traditional assumptions about Germanness. These line-crossing people were living proof that political life now transcends the limits of citizenship in a nation. For these people, social belonging is something greater than conformity with a particular cultural or national standard. These are transcultural people, and they illustrate the growing need for a new vocabulary to describe political subjectivity.

German-Born Turkish Ausländer[3]

I refer to the participants in my study as *German-born Turkish Ausländer*. I emphasize *German-born*, because the fact that they were born in Germany is vital in understanding the challenges they bring to German identity. The term *Germans* traditionally describes individuals or groups who are regarded as "ethnic" Germans. In the official statistics, the category of *German* represents people without an immigrant

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[3] This section is updated from a previously published article (Çalışkan, 2014).

background, or people with two parents of German ancestry. This word, however, does not represent all people who view themselves as German; nor does it include people with a German forebear who came to Germany after 1945, including the *Aussiedler* (ethnic Germans migrating to Germany) and the *Spätaussiedler* (later-repatriated immigrants with German roots), or the descendants of such people (*Demographics*).

The participants in my study often referred to themselves with the Turkish word *Yabancı*, even though they were born in Germany. *Yabancı* has the same basic meaning in Turkish as *Ausländer* in German— "foreigner, from outside"—but it also means "stranger." Because my interviews were conducted in Turkish, and because this was the term the participants used in their everyday lives, the participants referred to both themselves and to people of other immigrant groups as *Yabancı*. They rarely used *Ausländer*. Yet in this article, I use *Ausländer*, and not *Yabancı*, because the participants' Ausländer-ness is prior to their self-definition as *Yabancı*. The term *Ausländer* represents how German society defines them. In modern Germany, this word is an important marker of social identity, which shapes and conditions most aspects of people's lives.

These group designations, even when they serve an argument for social justice to minorities, can be ambiguous, homogenizing, exclusionary, or over-inclusive. Using such designations can seem to reinforce the very social divisions that a writer wants to question. However, I have decided to use these designations because they play significant roles in the dominant discourses of political and social life. These labels of identity are widely used in everyday life, in the media, and in literature. To examine the complex problems and opportunities embodied in these labels, and to deal with the difficulties involved in undoing their problematic associations, we need to name the labels under discussion.

Methods for Shifting the Power Balance
and Letting the Narratives Flow

Using a "snowball" method, I spoke with some 100 Turkish Berliners. Of these, I focused on the 47 (36 women) who were born and raised in Germany. My meetings combined features of structured and unstructured interviews (Bloom, 1998; Maxwell, 1996).

Getting unprompted narratives is central for narrative analysis, but it requires a shift in the power balance between interviewer and

interviewee. Empowering the participant to provide spontaneous narratives requires a number of steps before and during the interview. Prior to any recorded interview, I had a face-to-face meeting with each participant. Explaining the research in everyday language started during that initial meeting, when the participants received a one-page written explanation. This explanation informed them that the aim of the project was to learn about the challenges they faced and their experiences related to being born in Germany, but having parents or grandparents from Turkey. The statement said that I hoped to understand how this affected their sense of identity and experience of life in Berlin. If they agreed to meet for an interview, we made an appointment, with the understanding that they could decline to continue at any time. Being able to leave this first meeting without making a commitment gave the participants time to make a decision about participating and to think about the experiences they wanted to share. This first step had an impact on the interviewer-interviewee relation.

The initial meetings affected the quality of the later interviews, and made their content richer in narrative. These meetings provided clear references for how the later interviews should start. Each interview opened with a reference to some aspect of the initial meeting. When the participants initiated this opening reference, they generally reported their thoughts since our first meeting about what the research might mean for them. If I initiated the opening, it involved an observation concerning some statement they made during the first meeting. For example, here is how I started my interview with Aygen:

> Gül: Do you remember the first day that I met with you and your friends? I said my research was about Turkish-German Berliners. My calling you all "Turkish-German Berliners" clearly made you upset. Would you like to start with that and why you became upset?
> Aygen: Because I am not German; I am Turkish. I am not German just because I was born and raised here … I find people defining themselves as "Turkish-German" simply wrong.

Aygen went on to explain what it means for her to be Turkish and belong in Germany. She told me stories showing how her clear distinctions between Turkish and German were drawn from many aspects of her life. She shared her own experiences of what it means to be a *Yabancı* or a "non-German German" in Berlin.

Starting from the hints the participants gave, I thought about their first reactions and how these connected to my research. It also meant that their initial claims directed me to what they thought of the research, which allowed me to start from their experiences. Mishler (1986) emphasizes that interviewees often provide spontaneous narratives about their experiences, so long as the style of questioning does not suppress their stories: "When the interview situation is opened up in this way, when the balance of power is shifted, respondents are likely to tell 'stories' … Interviewing practices that empower respondents also produce narrative accounts" (pp. 118–119).

Of course, getting unprompted narratives can be difficult; we need ways of effectively encouraging respondents to provide detailed accounts. Asking them to talk about specific occasions rather than about their experiences in general may prove productive. Using everyday words—not sociological terms—is also a good idea. Chase (1995) pointed out that we can draw narratives from our research subjects when we ask simple questions related to their life experiences. My approach was to raise questions that responded to the initial meetings.

When we met for the first interview, I reiterated that I did not have a set of questions; instead, I wanted to hear their stories about what it was like growing up in Germany. Although I avoided imposing a rigid structure, I did have a list of themes prepared. When necessary, I broached these themes by asking open-ended questions. As Mishler (1986) and Riessman (1990, 1993) recommend, I let them provide spontaneous narratives about their experiences.

Many aspects of my investigation became clear through the flow of the narratives. For dealing with broad, challenging questions that would be difficult to ask out of context, I trusted the momentum and the length of the interviews. Often I did not even need to *ask* the questions; the narratives addressing my broad research questions simply emerged as the interviews progressed.

During the flow of conversation, and generally toward the end of each interview, I asked what they felt was most important to consider in my research. The participants would outline what they had already narrated, and assign meanings to the events described. For example, Güler said she thought the most important aspect to emphasize was "the incredible heterogeneity of thoughts, societies, and personalities among [German-born Turkish Ausländer]."

When people are asked what is important, they generally focus on what is important from their own perspective. They express their vision concerning what is right, wrong, desirable, or offensive in the light of their own experience. My participants used such expressions as a means of challenging the politics of othering. These evaluations emerged naturally during the flow of the narrative interview.

If the researcher allows the respondents to set the agenda, then listens to rather than directs their stories, an issue arises concerning the appropriate length for the interview. Several authors have suggested that ninety minutes is the optimum length (Hermanowicz, 2002; Seidman, 1998); if more than two hours is needed, conducting a second or even a third interview is a viable solution. Moreover, the interview's time limits need to be made clear from the start.

I told participants that the interview could last about ninety minutes, but it might go for two hours, and we could meet more than once if needed. This gave participants a sense of control over how much detail to provide and when to stop. I conducted at least two interviews with each person, and in almost all cases this was sufficient. After each meeting, I recorded the field notes, listened to the recordings, and took analytical notes. I made an initial analysis and identified issues to be further explored in the next meeting.

Having more than one interview gives participants time to reflect. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) note that it takes time to gain a respondent's confidence; conducting more than one interview helps to build that trust. The researcher's willingness to come back for a second discussion also helps the participants feel that talking about their experience is important.

This way of conducting interviews involves a belief that narrating lived experience is a political practice. When carefully crafted, this approach allows a shift in power dynamics, which is an important part of such political practice.

The Politics of Narrating Personal Experience: Revealing Intersubjective Meanings

I interviewed Aynur and Yıldız together. In our second meeting, Yıldız explained:

> Since we met, and you told me about this research, I asked a powerful question to myself: … Where will I be buried? Berlin or

> Turkey? I said, "Neither here nor there; I should be buried elsewhere … in another country, that I have no relation or connection with whatsoever." I was born here, and I go to Turkey only for holidays … If you ask me where I would like to live, I would prefer here … Yet even though I do not know there well, I have an incredible yearning for Turkey … You accept both places … Going back and forth between two countries, I combine with the being buried issue … You are neither from here nor from there, you had better go somewhere else, where you do not have any connections, and be from there.

This opening narrative encapsulated what it meant for Yıldız to be a diasporic citizen; it determined the focus of discussions to come. She spoke about her need for something to hold on to: "You aren't fully accepted and don't belong to any place; you aren't at home anywhere." When I asked if having a home was important, Yıldız replied,

> Having a home wouldn't be bad, of course! I can compare it with religion … It is like clinging. You need to hold on to something. *Vatan* [homeland] is like that too. If they ask you where your vatan is, you can answer. But I can't.

Aynur disagreed with Yıldız: "No, I can say I'm Turkish." Yıldız responded: "But I can't insult the place I was born. I have such a dilemma." The problem Yıldız had with defining herself as Turkish involved excluding the experience of her life in Germany. She resolved her dilemma by thinking about going to a third country:

> This is maybe why I want to go to another country. There, at least, they will not see me as *Alamancı*, or as I am considered a foreigner in the place I was born. In that third country, I will be a foreigner, and it will be my choice.

This discussion began with Yıldız's reflections on our initial meeting, and the story she spun was deeply relevant to her sense of identity and belonging.

The exchange between Aynur and Yıldız expressed a relation between their lived experience, their sense of themselves as individuals, and their communal experiences as Turkish people who were born and raised in Germany. Narrating their experiences was a process of thinking

with stories on all these levels. Their narratives were located in a bigger picture in which their perceptions of identity and belonging involved particular ideas about themselves as "other" people.

As Riessman (1993) explains, one of the primary ways that individuals make sense of experience is to cast it in narrative form. Even so, narratives do not provide straightforward, transparent descriptions of life (Elliott, 2005). Rather, they give meaning to events. To provide the details of life experience in a story form, individuals are forced to reflect on their experiences, select the most important aspects, and order them into a coherent whole. This "making sense" process qualifies storying as a meaning-making activity. Shifting the responsibility to the interviewee allows the researcher to better understand participants' perspectives. This approach made it possible for me to collect concise narratives like those of Yıldız and Aynur, and to explore what they reveal about the participants' social surroundings.

Taylor (1971/1994) argues that the social sciences should concern themselves not simply with individuals' lives, but with the social aspects of human experience. Social aspects are not reducible to the subjective experiences of each individual. Social practices have "intersubjective meanings":

> The actors may have beliefs and attitudes which may be rightly thought of as their individual beliefs and attitudes, even if others share them … They bring these with them into negotiations, and strive to satisfy them. But what they do not bring into the negotiations is the set of ideas and norms constitutive of negotiations themselves. These must be the common property of the society before there can be any question of anyone entering into negotiation or not. Hence they are not subjective meanings, the property of one or some individuals, but rather *intersubjective* meanings which are constitutive of the social matrix in which individuals find themselves and act. (p. 95; emphasis added)

Many narratives, including those of Aynur and Yıldız, seem to present contradictions within themselves and with each other. They wanted to be treated as Germans; they felt it was inappropriate for people to ask them where they were "from," because they were born in Germany. At the same time, they made a point of claiming that their heritage was Turkish. Some resented being called "Turkish-German." This seeming contradiction reflected what it meant for them to be part of a diaspora.

These seemingly subjective contradictions involved a range of intersubjective meanings that were particular to the experience of German-born, Turkish-background Ausländer. Many participants explained that neither their relationship to Germany nor to Turkey had come through their own choices. They were thrown into these spaces but could belong to neither. According to Selin, the utopian place for a third identity would be a new metropolitan city:

> Sometimes I wish there were a big city just for Turks who live in Germany … a separate place just for us … I'm neither a Turk who lives in Turkey, nor a German who lives in Germany. I'm a Turk who lives in Germany. We have our own life and we are different.

The idea of a utopian third space emerged independently in the narratives of many participants. It arose from wishing to escape the feeling of being a foreigner, to find a place where they could build their lives as they wanted. This third space emerged from a critique of both German and Turkish communities.

Their in-betweenness allowed the participants the possibility of creative restructuring, by drawing selectively from the opposing categories of Turkish and German identities. These people drew on the "real" material world to construct a "creative recombination" of realities (Soja, 1996, pp. 5–6). In the third space of in-betweenness, things that seemed to be oppositional categories could work together to generate different kinds of knowledge, alternative discourses, other forms of being and belonging.

Indeed, for diasporic people, multiple belongings produce a continuously emerging third space of hybridity. This is the "self-renewal process" of negotiating from a borderland. Therefore, the third space can be a source of power in everyday life. As Bhabha (1994) argued, the notion of a third space presents a challenge to dominant conceptions of the "unity and fixity" of culture or language (p. 37). If society's meanings and symbols have no fixed sense—if its signs can be appropriated or resignified—then the dominant discourse is open to divergent, independently valid interpretations. A refusal to be treated as an outsider challenges the ascribed identities of both insiders and outsiders.

When diasporic people negotiate their in-betweenness, they reveal how they experience the same situations differently, according to their differing contexts. They see how each locality affects perceptions of where they are from. People in a third place ask their questions

differently. The Berliners in my study articulated their Germanness while questioning their Turkishness. When they looked at their Germanness, they felt discomfort concerning the land of their birth. The third location became the mental space where they questioned the exclusivity of Turkishness and Germanness, and articulated their own sense of incorporating both identities.

These participants constructed the meaning of their narratives from the intersubjective encounters they experienced in everyday life. Their sense of meaning and identity emerged not from abstract concepts, but from concrete interactions with others. Such everyday interactions were the shared experiences that composed the common life of their society. In turn, their narratives were constructions of intersubjective meanings, fashioned from the raw material of their encounters within a social matrix. To examine more closely how this process works, I found it useful to ask what actually happens during these encounters.

Everyday Encounters—Narrated Experience

İrem described an encounter with Therese, her friend and neighbour:

> One day, I was watching a Turkish movie when Therese came. She asked, "Why do you watch Turkish TV? Watch German." I said, "Right now I don't feel like watching German TV." She didn't understand. I said, "Now I feel like watching Turkish TV. And don't you forget that this belongs to me, like the tea you drink and the food you eat with us." "I love it," she said. I said, "I do too! But I love this too. You can like this too!" She said, "But I don't speak Turkish." "If you want to watch with me, I can help you understand. But you have to understand that this belongs to us. However much we seem like a new German generation to you, we are still different maybe, compared to you. I might want to talk to my mom in Turkish. I wouldn't call her *mutti* ['mom' in German]. I call her *anne* ['mom' in Turkish]."

Melda related an encounter with a stranger: "Once a German woman said, 'Your German is very good!' She was surprised and complimented me. She must have thought I would be grateful for the compliment. I responded back, 'So is yours.' She looked puzzled. Then I said, 'Of course, this is my language'" (Çalışkan, 2014, p. 5).

Such social encounters happen all the time for Turkish Germans. And of course all people in general find that their social worlds are woven from the threads of particular encounters with a wide range of other people. Some of these encounters involve people we deal with every day, while others happen with complete strangers. Such encounters may be brief and casual, or they may involve lengthy dialogues, ongoing arguments, or even hostile confrontations. These interactions may happen during everyday activities of commuting, shopping, and working, or in situations outside the normal boundaries of our routines. And when these social encounters are informed by assumptions concerning gender, race, or ethnicity (such as the supposedly binary difference between Turkish and German) the interaction tends to expose the subject positions of the participants. These ordinary social encounters, therefore, reveal the politics of difference.

A social encounter is a drama that conveys direct or indirect messages about the actors. These messages involve valuing or ranking various elements of culture, such as food or language. Putting these elements in relation to one another gives an outline of how people evaluate each other. The evaluation can be done indirectly—as when İrem was told that she should watch German television. Or it may happen more directly, as when Melda was informed that her German was surprisingly good. Such messages express dominant discourses that exist before, during, and after a particular encounter (Çalışkan, 2014, p. 6). Over time, such encounters form patterns of discourse. Through many such social interactions, these patterns of discourse produce a meaning structure that is larger than any single expression.

During social encounters, various pre-existing social rules, routines, or traditions become devices for people to maintain their identities and to establish their ways of belonging in a society. Consciously or not, "dominant subjects seek to maximize their symbolic and material advantages" (Çalışkan, 2014, p. 5). Therefore, social encounters are political arenas that involve cultural and institutional processes. As these everyday exchanges reflect social rank and identity, they are commonly expressions of inequality or the struggle for recognition. Taking a social constructivist view, we can see that although assertions about "outsiders" and their places in society may appear to be natural and permanent, these assertions are actually generated socially and historically. Precisely because assertions of rank and value are discursively constructed, they are open to contesting. Therefore wherever a norm is protected, it can also be challenged. In their various social

encounters, people who are deemed to be "outsiders" can assert their own truth. Their assertions can "rupture" the prevailing systems of rules and routines. In this way, the everyday encounters of my participants became "sites of tension" between dominant (German) and other (Ausländer) subjects (Çalışkan, 2014, pp.5–6).

Narratives are truth claims that can challenge the existing categories of culture. These claims are important regardless of whether they are accepted by others, because how people use their claims affects their lives. Both the ways they construct their claims in the midst of encounters and the ways they narrate the encounters later are significant. In their narratives, İrem and Melda articulated a sense of being and belonging—through food, television, and language—and they did so in effective, critical ways. Both women staked claims to particular spaces, expressions, and meanings in relation to being German and belonging in Germany.

By narrating her experience of an encounter with Therese, İrem claimed the value of her connections with Turkish language and culture. She challenged her friend who demanded that she watch German television and thereby become more German. Therese insinuated that watching Turkish television was an obstacle to Germanness. In response, İrem presented herself as a well-integrated Turk. What her neighbour saw as an obstacle, she saw as an asset. İrem put German television and Turkish television on the same level. She also connected Turkish television and Turkish cuisine, which Therese liked. In her narratives, İrem created space for herself as a different kind of German—someone who, for instance, spoke German but called her mother *anne*, not *mutti.*

Although the German woman in Melda's narrative was "pleasantly surprised" that a "Turkish girl" could speak German so well, she probably did not expect Melda to claim possession of the language. By responding, "So is yours," Melda made speaking German well an equal achievement for both women. Melda claimed co-ownership of the language. She turned a presumed binary opposition against the German woman, opened "a space of resistance" to categorization, and reversed "the enactment of Germanness." Melda's claiming of the German language took the other woman aback, and may well have produced ambivalence. In any case, it altered "the hierarchy of power" (Çalışkan, 2014, p. 6). As such, Melda's messaging was clearly a political act.

These kinds of ephemeral negotiations seldom cause immediate or long-term structural change. Nevertheless, İrem's and Melda's responses, and the subsequent narratives they related, opened ephemeral ruptures in

the socio-historical patterns of society. Their claims disrupted the dominant and normally unchallenged discourses concerning who is German, who is Turkish, and what qualities construct them as such. Although their effects were limited, these acts of claim-making required courage, creativity, and a sense of justice.

Because such exchanges suggest the possibility of social transformation, they involve an inherent hope for change. People who engage in these exchanges hope that repeating such ruptures in everyday life can lead to enduring breaks in the patterns by which identity, status, and recognition have been defined. İrem and Melda became claimants during their routines of everyday life. Their unexpected, spontaneous acts had the power to call other people's assumptions into question, often leaving them dumbfounded. Such truth claims may be ephemeral, but they create potentially irreparable ruptures in people's social expectations—and once an expectation is ruptured, it can never return to being unquestioned.

Because our lives are enmeshed in narrative, narrating lived experience is both purposeful and political. As Chase (1995) remarks, one's culture "marks, shapes and/or constrains" one's narratives (p. 20); İrem's and Melda's experiences were shaped by certain understandings of identity, belonging, and difference particular to German society. As they narrated their experiences, they purposefully negotiated the distinctions between ways of being Turkish and German. They disrupted the binary opposition, creating a space where the two identities could flow into each other, where they could be both German *and* Turkish. By disrupting the existing systems of meaning-making, their narratives created new systems.

Many participants were involved with issues of social justice, and I wanted to understand how they became activists in relation to certain social issues, political causes, or interest groups. However, rather than asking direct questions about these topics, I found that many of their narratives implicitly or explicitly addressed these questions. The respondents talked about social issues that were relevant to their experiences. I encouraged them to reflect on these experiences, which led to discussions of their political activities. The participants told stories about the particular situations that drew them into politics. Many of them spoke about the authorities they recognized, the groups they interacted with, the institutions they valued, the tools and media they used for distributing their ideas, and the publications that expressed their values.

Considering these narratives meant including participants' longer-term practices in the analysis. By "practices," I mean people's conscious choices or strategies about how to live. Practices emerge from spontaneous acts, personal initiatives, vocational choices, and long-term experiences. Because practices involve longer-term decisions, they create wider possibilities for social change and more permanent ruptures of social conventions. An example of such a practice is journalist Dilek Güngör's (2006) newspaper column "Unter Uns" ("Among Us"), in which she tells witty stories inspired by her father, a Turkish Berliner who challenged stereotypes about guest workers.

Acts and practices arise from the need to be heard (Reinach, 1983), and therefore they are inescapably dialogical. The politics involved emerge from the situations that participants find themselves thrown into, or from conditions that emerge over time. The narratives of my participants expressed their claims about truth, values, and rights. They usually conveyed these claims discursively, but they also used the language of bodies, signs, and spaces.

Narratives as Testimonies and Truth Claims

I haven't thought about these for a while. That page was closed for me. I mean, living and staying in Germany, and being part of German society. It has re-opened now. (Ela)

So many things bother me; as we talk I can realize that. It becomes clear to me as I remember. (Selin)

After or toward the end of their interviews, many participants expressed their feelings about having provided an extended account of their life experiences. Most participants referred to how they felt, or reflected on how they had explained their experiences. It was an unusual experience for them to narrate their encounters at this length and in this format. In doing so, they experienced giving testimony about their lives.

Narratives are a form of testimony, but the "truth" they tell is not a matter of reporting facts. Individual narratives often contain factual errors. For example, some interviewees may give the correct dates for particular incidents; others might report other dates. The variation in the date could be interpreted as evidence that the accounts are invalid or at

least unreliable. These accounts may indeed be inaccurate in terms of the particular date of an incident (which can be ascertained from other sources in any case). Nevertheless, the errors themselves can provide insights into the importance attached to particular events. Portelli (1991) writes that when narratives deviate from factuality, "rather than being a weakness, this is … their strength: errors, inventions and myths lead us through and beyond facts to their meanings" (p. 2).

Similarly, the Personal Narratives Group (1989) present a compelling view of the truth as found in personal narratives:

> When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past "as it actually was," aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences … Unlike the truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them. Sometimes the truths we see in personal narratives jar us from our complacent security as interpreters "outside" the story and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive from them. (p. 261)

Narratives are testimonies in relation to the participants' own encounters in society. As they narrate, they remember and reassess what they have *witnessed.* Oliver (2000) writes:

> Witnessing has both the juridical connotations of seeing with one's own eyes and the religious connotations of testifying to that which cannot be seen, or bearing witness … It is this double meaning that makes witnessing such a powerful alternative to recognition in formulating identity and ethical relations. (p. 31)

The act of narrating reflects being present to the experiences that are being narrated. The narrators are observers of their encounters, seeing those events through their own eyes. While remembering events, they also describe the inner struggles they went through on a daily basis. This witnessing and experiencing at the same time makes the narrators both the tellers and the spectators of their encounters. They are narrating but

simultaneously hearing the narrative. Their narratives tell us about the contexts that have shaped their testimonies and the world views that have informed them. In hearing such testimonies, researchers may be reminded that their own views also influence the meanings derived. Our interpretations are shaped by our vantage points; accounting for these is part of the research process.

The impact of reopening and remembering is significant. Melda remembered one of her high school teachers commenting, "Although she is a Turkish girl, Melda got the highest grade on the exam." Melda said, "This sounds positive, but it is discrimination when you think about it." Then she explained what she meant. Making sense and naming are vital acts for raising awareness. These activities involve the ability to recognize and re-articulate the estrangement that people experience.

The act of narrating can be an occasion for the narrator to make choices about what is important in relation to the research, which can make narrating itself a significant political tool. The particular encounters that participants decide to narrate signal their subjectivity. The ways they see each incident prepare them to react or to become active. Their stories reflect their strategies for challenging existing structures and for being political actors in their own lives.

Narrative analysis helps to reveal participants' experiences of dominant ideologies and their struggles for recognition. The strategies engaged in these verbal reconstructions expose the assumptions embedded in them as particular views rather than universal realities. Therefore—as is apparent in the case of Melda—narratives are often effective sources of counter-hegemonic insight.

Studying particular encounters between subjects who have dominant status and those who have subordinate status involves more than simply understanding the relationships between unequal interlocutors. This kind of inquiry is also a point of entry for examining the formation of political practices in everyday life. Persistent social inequality must be taken into account if we are to accurately understand their messages, in which references to disparity abound.

Narratives are also interpretations concerning the participants' own acts within their unfolding encounters. Participants give accounts of their failures to react, their ephemeral responses, or sometimes their sustained acts of social and political engagement. Their acts commonly involve resistance, demands for response, or ruptures of the social context. Therefore, narratives serve to build and retain the participants'

sense of subjectivity, self-worth, and autonomy. Making stories helps them work toward their own political goals for social change.

Specifically, my participants' narratives evoked the ambiguity of being German-born Turkish Ausländer in Berlin. Their stories revealed how geographic dislocation had altered their lives, experiences, and languages. In confronting discontent over losing their homeland, these narrators experimented with modes of articulating their conditions of being and belonging. They did so through personal acts and collective memories, and by claiming their diasporic experiences.

Such narratives illustrate how the forms of identity are mutable, negotiable, and interactive. We can see how these forms of identity interact with power dynamics in the midst of an encounter. Sharing memories of these encounters sheds light on the complexities of the participants' social and cultural lives. Their stories challenge the notion of the other as a static, unitary formation, while they express the changing diversity of cultural, ethnic, and class differences. The narratives include many events in which differences are bridged. In their reflections, the participants present themselves as active subjects, creating their own places in the world. A mosaic of histories emerges from their multiple reference points, which reflect the complex realities of people considered "other." Narrative analysis of everyday encounters shows that the participants' reflections are poignant, potent examples of what is possible when we disaggregate the categories of identity and belonging.

The Power of Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is a vital tool for exploring the ways in which people disrupt the categories of identity and belonging that separate "others" from "subjects." The particularities of personal narratives tend to contradict assumptions that people represent compartmentalized singular or even binary identities. Noting those particularities leads toward a vision that includes the multiplicity and fluidity of identities.

My focus on the narrative analysis of everyday encounters has many similarities with Dhamoon's (2009) analysis of difference. Following Dhamoon, we can see that narrative analysis allows us to examine the complexities of interaction in at least three ways. First, rather than treating all members of a social group as equally dominant or equally subordinate, a narrative analysis of encounters attends to the production of differences within and between social categories. A critical examination of these narratives exposes how discursive messages operate

through multiple forms of relative dominance (such as inferiorizing the Turkish language or treating İrem as an unusually acceptable Turk).

Second, narratives expose the relational processes of othering. They show what is at stake in producing an undifferentiated category of otherness, thereby masking a multiplicity of political effects. A study of relational othering indicates that dominance manifests itself in many ways, through interactive systems of normativity that are irreducible to any one relation of difference. The analysis of narratives can also reveal how the meanings (or standards) of otherness serve to re-entrench a specific set of interactive norms that privilege certain human qualities, be they whiteness, masculinity, capitalism, or heteronormativity. This form of analysis attends to the conditions by which dominant meanings are organized and upheld.

Third, such an approach exposes the interrelatedness of different issues. Analyzing participants' accounts, it becomes evident that social hierarchies are deeply embedded in one another, such that it is not possible to undo a particular mode of subordination without addressing them all (Fellows & Razack, 1994, 1998). For example, to dismantle particular racist, sexist, or classist systems of meaning, it is necessary to simultaneously dismantle manifestations of dominance that arise from racism, heteronormativity, and class privilege. Race-making intrinsically involves additional processes of gendering and class differentiation. This observation does not imply that gender or class are reducible to race, whereby race-thinking is just another name for all other modalities of difference. Instead, as Dhamoon (2009) has argued, social differences are ontologically variable in their character and effect. To organize all social issues around only one or two modes of oppression, or to claim that one form of discursive message is universally more significant than another, is to misunderstand how meaning is developed through diverse relational processes. As Hancock (2007) argues, when we place the relationship between interactive processes in the foreground, we can examine social differences without entering a debate over which groups "compete for the mantle of 'most oppressed' to gain the attention and political support of dominant groups as they pursue policy remedies, leaving the overall system of stratification unchanged" (p. 68). Therefore, if the overall system of stratification is not confronted, the habitual process of privileging and penalizing representations of difference will remain intact.

One political implication of narrative analysis and the study of "othering" is that we cannot assume that all othered subjects will

automatically be allies or, conversely, that they are inevitably different. Narrative analysis provides a way to detect potential political alliances without assuming either that all struggles are fundamentally similar in character, or that all othered subjects are sisters and brothers. Of course, many commonalities exist among the subjects who fall into any particular category of otherness (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality), as we see in the case of German-born Turkish background Berliners. In many cases these various othered people may desire some form of community and solidarity. However, these people's narratives still indicate great individuality. Understanding their particular narratives involves learning to respect both people's personal differences and the relationships between their struggles. The sociopolitical struggles that these people's narratives promote do not end with any official recognition of minorities by a state, or with an assignment of differentiated rights, or even with radicalizing practices of inclusion. Instead, the radical changes these othered people long for arise through their own actions in disrupting the ways that all representations of difference are relationally constituted. This disruption happens through discourse on the processes of inclusion and exclusion. It involves discourses on people's experiences of not belonging, of yearning for one essential place of belonging (such as a diasporic homeland), whether these discourses are shaped by the state or not.

The exemplars of diasporic citizenship are people who have lived in social borderlands since birth. German-born Turkish Berliners actively negotiate the boundaries of citizenship, playing multiple roles with challenging, contradictory implications for identity and belonging. At the same time, the narratives of such Ausländer remind us that the dichotomy of inclusion/exclusion oversimplifies the processes by which people belong together. These people occupy ambivalent spaces, are sometimes included and other times excluded, as they struggle to transcend the limits of any particular culture.

Conclusion

Narratives are a fruitful focus of research, providing insight into individuals' experiences and the meanings they draw from them. The forms of narratives also tell us about the cultural frameworks that individuals use to make sense of their lives. A close analysis of the narratives produced by even a small sample of individuals may yield

evidence for understanding the intersubjective meanings shared by a community.

Everyday encounters can be analyzed in three ways. The first is to examine the processes that differentiate dominant subjects as the *norm* and subordinate subjects as the *others*. We need to look at how differentiated people relate to these various meanings through their own discourses on inclusion and exclusion. We need to listen to people's own accounts of how the general categories of otherness are produced, and how the varied meanings of these categories affect their lives.

Second, we can study how self-directed and externally imposed meanings are produced in social life at the individual, intergroup, and intragroup levels. By examining how these interactions play out through the discourses of belonging and othering, we can show how these differences are regulated through dominant norms, or challenged by the responses of participants marked as others. We can subject *all* meanings to scrutiny, because the meanings developed by participants marked as others are also part of the power pattern.

Third, we can take account of the relational processes within dominant discourses. We can look at the gradations of inclusion, exclusion, and belonging, noting the degrees and forms of penalty or privilege. This type of analysis allows us to explore relational differences in the context of "mapping out confrontations."

In summary, a narrative analysis of everyday encounters seeks to account for interrelated social processes: the processes of differentiation (rather than just the singular objects of difference); the processes of making the meanings of differentiation operational (by the state or by members of society); and the interrelated processes of confrontation that contest differences among social groups.

Narrative analysis of everyday encounters enriches the sociological inquiry into the politics of othering. Such investigation challenges previous sociological categories and leads us beyond the binary logic of inclusion/exclusion. This kind of research shows that we, as scholars, can reposition our focus—from examining what is different about the other to investigating the processes used to define identities and relations. We can home in on the acts and practices of actual personal encounters in society, rather than focusing on the procurement of tolerant policies from the government. Understanding the politics of othering involves examining how and why discourses of inclusion and exclusion produce specific socio-political arrangements. This seemingly modest

method facilitates an understanding of how to oppose and dismantle dominant processes through acts and practices in everyday life.

Dominant ideologies (such as those surrounding national identity) are unable to address the fundamental flaws in the unified, homogeneous conceptions of citizenship on which they rest. The most functional alternative, I suggest, is to explore the narratives of the "other" citizens who are transforming the very idea of belonging. As revealed by narrative analysis of their everyday encounters, these others are articulating new ways of being citizens. Rupturing the norms and categories of race, ethnicity, and culture, their fluid interactions articulate alternative ways of being.

In terms of the process for writing narrative analysis, Anzaldúa's (2007/1987) observations in *Borderlands* are helpful. She explains that a text is an interwoven mosaic pattern, some parts being thin, others thick. The task of the writer is to figure out how to fit the pieces together so that the subject's complex structure is revealed. The narratives of everyday encounters are not delivered with ready-made categories, neatly pre-sliced like pizza in a box. They do, however, recount evocative incidents that suggest how such categories play out in daily life. Narrative analysis investigates how participants deal with the underlying meanings of identity, difference, and belonging. Most of the time, their experiences span the boundaries between categories, definitions, and identities. Therefore, narrative analysis itself, like the experiences it unpacks, is a process of constant hybridization, full of variations and seeming contradictions.

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