Belonging and Otherness in Postmigrant Society: Experiences of Young Women of Turkish Background in Germany

Pınar Gümüş Mantu [1*]

[1] *Justus Liebig University Giessen*, GERMANY

***Corresponding Author:** pinar.guemues@sowi.uni-giessen.de

ABSTRACT

The social position of women of Turkish background has often been questioned on the basis of the dominant societal perception imaging them as being isolated in the domestic sphere, oppressed by traditional, cultural, and patriarchal norms, and thus unable to integrate into the broader German society. Although the younger-generation women, born and/or raised in Germany as children of Turkish migrant workers, to a great extent actively participate in public life via education and the job market, at a discursive and social-relational level they are still often perceived and categorized as the non-German and the non-European Other. This paper takes a closer look at the gendered and racialized experiences of young women of Turkish origin by paying special attention to how othering relates to belonging in the postmigrant social context in Germany. On the basis of ethnographic field data collected via in-depth and expert interviews, it intends to engage in a critical-reflexive discussion from the perspective of a social group that has long been imagined as dwelling at the margins of society. Drawing upon recent discussions on the culturalization of migration (and integration) issues, the paper traces the current articulations of the culturalized perceptions of 'the Turkish woman' through the reflections of young women of Turkish origin, and discusses belonging in light of their experiences of exclusion and otherness. Taking a critical approach to studying the concept of integration as a discursive historical process, the paper suggests that the self-positionings of the research participants have been substantially affected by the mainstream integration-centered discourse and its interfaces with othering. However, young women's active and subversive ways of dealing with these exclusionary discourses and practices point to a rather critical view of belonging, articulated through a stated consciousness of the past and present context, and claims for recognition in postmigrant Germany.

Keywords: belonging, Turkish postmigrants, postmigrant Germany, otherness, young women of Turkish background

INTRODUCTION[1]

As the largest population categorized as persons with a 'migration background'[2], and as the descendants of guest-worker migrants, who have 'unexpectedly' settled in Germany, the presence of people of Turkish origin in

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[2] For a critique of the use of the qualifier 'migration background' in connection with the process of ethnicization, see Horvath (2019); for a discussion of the social construction of the Other in the German context from 'foreigner' to 'migration background' […*vom Ausländer zum Migrationshintergrund*…], see Mannitz and Schneider (2014).

German society has mostly been discussed in negative terms in the discursive and political sphere. During the last decades, in the aftermath of the developments in the political sphere addressing integration as a key process in achieving a diverse German society[3] and a dialogue with the Muslim communities[4], the public and political discourse regarding the Turkish population in Germany has mostly been limited to and shaped by integration-centered discussions. The problematizing and continuous evaluation of its ability or (lack of) success in adapting and integrating into the cultural, social, and economic spheres of German society have been framed in mainstream discourse mostly in terms of the low levels of participation in education and the labor market[5]. Representing the largest group within the Muslim population in Germany, Turkish inhabitants have also been subjected to the process of stigmatization of Islam (Kaya, 2012) and the "negative feelings that are predominant in Germany regarding integration of 'the Muslim'" (Foroutan, 2013b), and they commonly embody "the figure of 'the Muslim' as the 'non-German' other" (Foroutan, 2013a). Critical perspectives mainly in the fields of sociology and related disciplines have uncovered the drawbacks of immigrant integration policies and discourses (Anthias, 2013; Korteweg, 2017; Schinkel, 2018). The particular manifestations of the limitations of these policies in the German context have been also discussed in terms of their paradoxically strengthening binary oppositions such as 'us' vs. 'them' or 'migrant' vs. 'native' rather than providing the ground for inclusion and participation as intended (Hess and Moser, 2009). However, there is still a considerable lack of knowledge and deeper understanding of the experiences of social groups with a migration background beyond the metaphor of integration.

Gender has a particular significance in this picture, as the gendered operationalization of integration discourses accompanied by a culturalist bias disproportionally distorts the perspective on women's experiences in the postmigration context. Women's nonparticipation in the public sphere has been seen, rather shortsightedly, as a mere result of traditional cultural norms, or their being fixed in their social reproductive role as mothers, and their social position has been pragmatically reduced to their potential/responsibility/incapability to facilitate younger generations' integration processes[6]. Lately, women of Turkish background have been imagined and classified within the formalist binary scale of either unable or unwilling to integrate (echoing the stereotype: religious, not working, low German language competence)[7] or successfully integrated as exceptions (exemplary success stories particularly in the job market or cultural field). There is a need for a nuanced understanding and critique of this sort of integration-centered view of women of Turkish origin in Germany.

The topic of how migration background impacts socio-economic participation in German society remains under-researched. Structural factors, discrimination, and exclusionary attitudes are interwoven in this picture. The second generation of Turkish migrants in Europe has been generally characterized by poor levels of education; however, they are still more upwardly mobile than their parents (Thomson and Crul, 2007: 1033). A recent study on the situation of female immigrants on the German labor market based on data from German Socio-Economic Panel reveals that even though second-generation Turkish women "catch-up with their male counterparts regarding educational qualifications, they have on average lower employment probabilities and earn less compared to them" (Salikutluk et al., 2020: 27). Relatedly, research focusing on employment opportunities of female migrants in Germany shows that "Turkish migrants (signaled by a Turkish name) are discriminated against at a significant level [sic], in particular when their photograph shows them wearing a Muslim headscarf" (Weichselbaumer, 2016: 17). Recent research on educational integration of the third generation of Turkish migrants[8] in Germany indicates that they achieve lower levels of educational success compared to their majority peers (Hunkler and Schotte, 2023: 394). A comparative study conducted with future teachers in the German education system found out that Turkish-origin students are faced with an "attributional bias", meaning that they are judged more harshly and held responsible for their academic underperformance, downplaying the responsibility of the educational system (Froehlich et al., 2016: 84). Although the younger-generation women, born and/or raised in Germany as children of Turkish migrant workers, to a great extent actively participate in public life via education and job market, at a discursive and social-relational level they are still often perceived and categorized as the non-German and the non-European Other.

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[3] The call for the first Integration Summit (Erster Integrationsgipfel) followed by the first Integration Plan launched in 2007 (Bundesregierung, 2007).

[4] The foundation of German Islam Conference (DIK: Deutsche Islam Konferenz) in 2006, (Deutsche Islam Konferenz, 2020).

[5] See the newspaper article on Welt-Online as an example (Lauer et al., 2010).

[6] For a discussion on migrant motherhood with an intersectional perspective in relation to citizenship, see Erel et al. (2021), for a discussion on motherhood in the context of migrant care work, see Lutz (2016).

[7] One of the most striking versions of this stereotypical image, the '*Kopftuchmädchen*' (Girl with the headscarf) as used by Thilo Sarrazin, could be given as an example, see Frankfurter Allegemeine (2009).

[8] The authors also point out that the group of third-generation Turkish students in their study was small, so "the findings are tentative and should be interpreted with caution" (Hunkler and Schotte, 2023: 395).

This paper aims to investigate recent articulations of this othering in the postmigrant context and scrutinizes the experiences of gendered and racialized forms of exclusion and stigmatization of young women of Turkish descent in Germany. The discussion on how these experiences of othering that span generations have been reflected in young women's sense of belonging is inspired by the conceptualization of belonging as a process and outcome of boundary and border-making (Anthias, 2021). Following critical epistemological feminist perspectives at the intersection of migration and gender, this paper intends to translate its research subjects' experiences of gendered subordination into "a source of alternative knowledge production" (Lutz and Amelina, 2021: 68).

INTEGRATION AS DISCOURSE: GENDER, CULTURE AND OTHERING

Critical approaches to the concept of (immigrant) integration has been one of the central issues of the critical reflexive turn in migration studies (Amelina, 2020; Nieswand and Drotbohm, 2014). On the basis of research on the Sharia debate in Canada, the Dutch integration debates, gender-based violence in the UK and Canada, as well as the headscarf debates in Europe, Anna Korteweg discusses how integration discourses cast immigrants as "racialized and gendered subjects", and how these racialized gendered groups then turn out to be "the subject of abjection onto whom generalized social problems are projected" (Korteweg, 2017: 432). Korteweg suggests studying integration "not as a category of analysis but as a category of practice"—applying Roger Brubaker's perspective (2013) about the category of the Muslim—in order to enable a focus on "social, cultural, and economic processes that produce groups in ways that move beyond integration discourse" (Korteweg, 2017: 440). Based on empirical comparative research on Muslim communities and integration regimes of Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, Ayhan Kaya draws attention to the process of stigmatization of Islam, and Islamophobia as a form of governmentality operating as cultural racism in Europe (Kaya, 2012: 201 ff.). He argues for "transnationalizing integration", mainly referring to migrants' "transnational space" including the social, political, cultural, and economic interactions in the country of origin, the country of settlement, and other localities (Ibid, 225 ff.). An analysis of the EU immigration and integration policy chain discusses how immigration and integration policies construct categorizations which engender stratification, inequality, stereotyping, and discrimination, all of which in many cases persists for generations (Mügge and van der Haar, 2016). Research based on monitoring immigrant integration in the Western European context has been also criticized as a "neocolonial form of knowledge production" (Schinkel, 2018).

Focusing on the genealogy and development of the integration paradigm in the German political sphere and public discourse since 1970s, Sabina Hess and Johannes Moser emphasize how the notion of integration has been framed within the confines of the concept of 'cultural integration' focusing sharply on the fields of language, culture, and history, and expecting extraordinary achievements (*Sonderleistungen*) from the migrants in these areas, reflecting the deficit-oriented approach (*Defizitansatz*) toward migration (Hess and Moser, 2009: 12). German language competence and how migrants adapt to 'German values' seem to be the main areas in which migrants find themselves constantly evaluated, along with the related question of their willingness and ability to integrate. The narrow focus of Germany's official integration policy on the individual, embodied in the slogan '*fordern und fördern*' (challenge and support), relates to unsubstantiated perceptions according to which immigrants have insufficient social contact, poor language competence, and low educational achievement (Schönwälder, 2010: 155).

Tracing how gender is conceptualized in migration research in the German-speaking context, Helma Lutz and Anna Amelina (2021) draw attention to the trend during the late 1970s and 1980s to focus on the 'visualization' of women, often accompanied by a portrayal of migrant women as victims of patriarchal power relations, particularly in the case of Muslim women from Turkey (Lutz and Amelina, 2021, with reference to Huth-Hildebrandt, 2002). This trend relates strongly to the culturalization of migration and integration issues. An "ahistoric conceptualization" of Turkish or Muslim culture, which is assumed to be static and frozen in time and resistant to transformation through migrants' experiences in the German context has shaped the mainstream understanding of the life-worlds of Turkish migrants in Germany for a long time (Çağlar, 1990: 13). Critical perspectives show that the difficulties Muslim women face in several fields, such as language, education, or professional opportunities[9], "are not discussed in the context of discriminatory institutional structures but as family structures primarily defined by (backward) traditions and (religious) fanaticism" (Bischoff, 2018: 32)[10]. Research reveals how policy frames of spousal migration in Germany—usually equating migration with forced and arranged marriages in the case of Muslim-Turkish communities—have been formulated as being intrinsically connected to the

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[9] For a critical historical analysis of gender- and ethnicity-specific patterns in immigration and labor market policies in Germany challenging the shorthand explanations that relate Turkish migrant women's low levels of participation in the job market either to their unwillingness or to their traditional Turkish-Muslim culture, see Erdem and Mattes (2003).

[10] For a qualitative work tracing the image of the "adolescent girl who is tightly controlled by her 'traditional Turkish' family" in multiple areas of German mainstream culture, see Ewing (2006).

problems of female subordination and integration deficits in a highly gendered way (Block, 2014: 253). Another study on public political debates reveals how patriarchal Turkish migrant masculinity was presented by the politicians as a hindrance to integration not only for the men themselves, but also for the women and children around them, pointing to the damaging effects of patriarchal Turkish customs on younger generations (Scheibelhofer, 2014: 194 ff.).

The culturalization of migration issues has been tightly interconnected with othering processes and the related continuous (re)production of binary oppositions such as us/them, migrants/natives, modern/traditional, as well as various complex gendered articulations of those binaries. The ways in which representations of immigrant culture vs. national culture constantly constitute and construct one another in various spheres of social life, alongside the perception of immigrants as threats to national culture and fears of 'cultural loss', have recently been revealed in an anthropological examination of this field (Vertovec, 2011: 245). The idea of *Leitkultur* (predominant culture)[11]—relating to the idea of *Heimat* (homeland) defining those who belong and the others who do not—has been examined in light of its recent significance for migration debates in Germany, underlining its exclusionary potential:

> […] the idea of *Leitkultur* does not express a demand for mere integration, but rather for complete assimilation and, even more, the annihilation of the immigrant's self. That way it also produces a massive stigma toward any notion of Otherness. (Ahrens, 2021: 328)

How the cultural difference paradigm has manipulated the perspective on the social reality of Turkish migrants in Germany has been extensively discussed alongside a plea for problematizing the notion of cultural difference and critically engaging with the classical understanding of culture particularly in migration research (Sökefeld, 2004: 27–28)[12]. Nieswand and Drotbohm discuss the concept of culture as one of the intellectual crisis areas of migration and diversity research, in addition to the crisis of conceptualization of society and the categorical differences between 'foreigner' and 'native' (Nieswand and Drotbohm, 2014: 17). The cultural interpretation of social problems results in holding the foreign and inadequate culture or rather religion of the migrant responsible for the migration-related tensions in society, but not the failures of political inclusion attempts or racism in immigration societies (Ibid: 19)[13].

The very definition of culture itself has been discussed as problematic as it is primarily associated with non-Western and minority cultural groups and used as if it were the main source of people's identity and the determinant of their actions (Phillips, 2010: 60). Focusing on honor killing and forced marriage debates in the Netherlands, Germany, and Britain, Gökce Yurdakul and Anna Korteweg illuminate how these relate to the political marginalization of the immigrant communities, as the "so-called backwardness of Muslims in particular is interpreted as their failure to accept gender equality norms" (Yurdakul and Korteweg, 2013: 205). Discourses based on the naturalization and essentialization of cultural differences also illustrate how the categories of Islam/Muslim as the cultural Other function in the construction of European culture itself, namely, the "seemingly peripheral discourse about the racialized, gendered Other reveals the tensions at the heart of the formation of the new Europe" (Yıldız, 2011: 72). Rostock and Berghahn argue that gender equality turns out to be "a useful tool to secure the image of a modern and emancipated German society" as a marker between Christian occidental 'us' and the (Muslim) 'Other' (Rostock and Berghahn, 2008: 358). Janine Dahinden et al. examine, from a boundary-work perspective and along the axes of ethnicity, religion, and gender, how the binary between 'the equal European women' and 'oppressed Muslim women' is constructed by young adults in Switzerland (Dahinden et al., 2014).

Drawing from Anne Phillips's discussion on culture regarding the migration/minority context, which emphasizes that cultures do shape but not determine who we are and what we do as individuals in society (Phillips, 2010: 67), this paper underlines the necessity of a critical lens in the analysis of culture. Relatedly, it employs a reflexive stance in order to avoid the trap of reproducing the understanding of Turkish/Muslim culture as determining the lives of migrant women. Rather, it investigates how young women of Turkish origin actively negotiate the (transnational) 'cultural' context they live in, and therefore it focuses on their individual agency rather than on a group-oriented interpretation of culture.

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[11] As translated in the article by Ahrens (2021).

[12] See the edited volume by Sökefeld (2014) for a range of works dealing critically with the notion of cultural difference and providing alternative perspectives for discussing culture in practices of Turkish inhabitants of Germany.

[13] "*die fremde und unangemessene Kultur, bzw. Religion der Einwanderer […] nicht die mangelnden politischen Inklusionsbemühungen […] oder der Rassismus in den Zuwanderungsländern*"

BELONGING IN A POSTMIGRANT CONTEXT

The term postmigrant, particularly relating to the conceptual potential it offers for understanding the current social transformations in European immigration societies, has been recently explored as a critical intervention in migration studies, sociology, pedagogical, and cultural and literary studies (Gaonkar et al., 2021: 19). Naika Foroutan spotlights the question of what happens after migration, and offers an alternative framework for studying recent social transformations in immigration society beyond the limitations of the notion of integration. Focusing on several levels of interaction processes in the postmigrant society (micro relationships between individuals as well as macro processes of structural changes and policies), this approach underscores the ambiguous and ambivalent, as well as the always-transforming character of the postmigrant society (Foroutan, 2019: 155 ff.). Erol Yıldız, in his elaborations on post-migrant perspectives particularly in the urban context, defines postmigrant as a shift of perspective (*Blickverschiebung*) as it takes the voice and experiences of migration as a point of reference. Therefore, he puts the emphasis on the political potential of such a perspective in terms of questioning social relations of power and dominance (Yıldız, 2016: 72). The postmigrant conceptualization figures as a critical intervention in migration research as it calls for relocating migration as one of the main categories for social analysis, however, not as the deviation from the 'normal' order of the nation-state, but rather as a current constructive fact of contemporary urban societies, particularly in the European context.

Postmigration as a concept has been widely used as an explanatory analytical frame particularly in case of the cultural practices of younger generations with migration histories/experiences in Germany and Austria. Yıldız and Ohnmacht argue that the young people of the postmigrant generation are not only passive subjects affected by the racist and ethnicizing discourses they face on a daily basis, but they also develop empowering convivial everyday practices and generate options for resistance (Yıldız and Ohnmacht, 2021: 164). How second- and third-generation young people from migrant families develop active and individually-oriented life strategies and self-positioning practices ranging from subversive and creative to practices of resistance under discriminatory and stigmatizing conditions has been studied with a particular focus on marginalized urban spaces from a social work perspective (Yıldız, M., 2016). Erol Yıldız and Marc Hill, in their analysis of the 'in-between' experiences and senses of belonging of postmigrant generations who emigrate to Turkey after growing up and living for years in Germany, criticize the perspectives fixed to local normalities either in Germany or Turkey and offer a new perspective for understanding the resistance of these generations referring to "mobile senses of belonging" (Strasser, 2009, cited in Yıldız and Hill, 2017: 284). Focusing on experiences of children of migrants in school and urban-neighborhood context, another recent study investigates how social marginalization, discrimination, and social control impact an ambiguous sense of belonging to Germany (Tize and Reis, 2019: 122). Structural discrimination (in access to services such as housing or employment due to cultural and language barriers) or discrimination in person-to-person interactions (racist and discriminatory encounters based on religion or ethnicity) then become the background for the "powerful and shared identity marker" of "being a foreigner – and therefore not belonging in Germany" (Ibid: 135).

Gaonkar et al. describe three different trends of conceptualizing postmigration within the German-speaking academic field: (1) postmigrant generation, with a focus on experiences of the descendants of migrants silenced in public discourse; (2) postmigrant society, with a broader focus on conflicts, obsessions, and negotiations in the society shaped by past and ongoing migrations, including conflicts around representation, racism, and structural exclusion; (3) postmigrant as a critical analytical research perspective which questions the established approaches in migration studies (Gaonkar et al., 2021: 19 ff.). In his article titled "When do Societies Become Postmigrant?" Kijan Espahangizi emphasizes the importance of a perspective grounded upon the history of knowledge in dealing with issues of migration and integration, and relatedly defines postmigrant as:

> an analytical perspective that allows for the examination of the extent to which notions of migration, integration, diversity, racism, multi-, inter- and transculturality have, in recent decades, created not only new opportunities for inclusion (for some), but also new distinctions and configurations of exclusionary structures. (Espahangizi, 2021: 66)

Drawing upon this perspective, this paper investigates how the notion of integration has been effective in the production of various configurations of otherness and exclusion in the case of young women of Turkish background. Relatedly, this work aims to make the perspectives and experiences of the postmigrant generation visible with a particular focus on gendered forms of racialization and exclusion, and to contribute to a better understanding of the postmigrant society in Germany in terms of conflicts and negotiations.

Regarding its focus on belonging in postmigrant context, this work is mostly inspired by Floya Anthias's perspective in studying "belonging, non-belonging (or differential belonging) as a process and an outcome of boundary and border making and the marks these leave on human experience, location, and modes of identification" (Anthias, 2021:24). In a similar vein, this paper explores questions of how discourses on integration

(and migration) relate to social boundary and border making practices, and how these interfaces are reflected in young women's articulations of a sense of belonging. It aims to explore how young women of Turkish origin reflect on processes such as social exclusion, stigmatization, and racialization in several areas of social life (for instance, education, work, social participation, etc.), and engage with them by setting symbolic boundaries while producing their self-representations. In doing so, this work also investigates the "difference made by the content of symbolic boundaries in the construction of cognitive and social boundaries" (Lamont and Molnár, 2002: 187). Within this framework, the concept of 'translocational positionality' (Anthias, 2009) provides a productive analytical tool to look closer at the experiences of young women with a migration history from Turkey in Germany. Firstly, this approach enables a translocational understanding in terms of the "interplay of a range of locations and dislocations in relation to gender, ethnicity, national belonging, class and racialization" (Ibid.: 12). Secondly, the conceptualization of "positionality" opens up the space for scrutinizing belonging at the intersection of structure and agency:

> Positionality combines a reference to social position (as a set of effectivities: as outcome) and social positioning (as a set of practices, actions and meanings: as process). That is, positionality is the space at the intersection of structure (social position/social effects) and agency (social positioning/meaning and practice). (Anthias, 2009: 12)

Inspired by this approach, this paper develops an analysis of its research participants' sense of belonging from a cultural-sociological perspective, particularly zooming in on the ways they position themselves in relation to their social locations regarding gender, racialization, othering, and exclusion.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Empirical discussions in this paper are based upon a preliminary field research[14] conducted between January and October 2021, including five in-depth (online)[15] interviews with young women of Turkish background aged 21–31, and two expert interviews (one online, one in person). Young women were either students or active in the job market at the time of the interview. One of the expert interviews was conducted in an integration office and the other in a youth office. The interviewees in in-depth interviews were all members of the third or fourth generation, born and/or raised in Germany as a result of their families' migration from Turkey under the guest worker program that had started in the late 1950s and continued until the 1970s. The interviewees were all living in the state of Hessen, coming from different cities and villages. Interviews were carried out bilingually, in Turkish and German, in most of the cases switching between the two[16].

The field research was conducted using an ethnographic approach, in order to gain a thorough understanding of everyday lives of young women with migration history from Turkey. Close, methodical contact with research participants provides the researcher with extensive and complex data that cannot be gathered otherwise. In this sense, ethnographic research is a "scientifically motivated" way of "delving empathetically into the complexity of the culture and political world of the people" (Bray, 2008: 301). Employing the ethnographic approach and aiming at developing an in-depth understanding of individuals' experiences contextualized in social relationships, this research is conducted not 'on', but 'with' its research subjects, and defines the research process as a space of reflective discussion and knowledge production inclusive of its participants.

In-depth interviews were planned as semi-structured conversations with the research participants. Rather than being solely a methodological tool to extract data from the interviewees, in-depth interviews are seen as "exploratory in nature and cooperative in terms of knowledge production" (Fedyuk and Zentai, 2018: 173). Therefore, interviews could potentially point to new/unexplored discussion points/topics for the research, and were conceptualized as a cooperation between the researcher and the research participants as well as an opportunity, and a process of producing collective knowledge on the topic. They aimed to collect detailed data primarily on individual experiences and family migration history. Focusing on everyday life experiences of young women, they sought to examine how women of Turkish origin viewed their relationships with others in society, how they reflected on their experiences relating to the notion of integration, and how they negotiated and/or responded to the mainstream ways of categorizing and imagining the 'Turkish woman' in the German context. Expert interviews were organized as structured and topic-focused conversations which provided insights into the articulations of the concept of integration and the notion of cultural difference in official settings from the perspective of practitioners.

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[14] This phase of the field research is described as preliminary, since field research is planned to be continued with more interviews.

[15] All the interviews conducted during this period took place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic and contact restrictions.

[16] The quotes from the interviews used for research purposes have been translated into English by the author.

Interview data were transcribed and thematically interpreted in several rounds of close reading, during which the transcripts were annotated in detail as the first step of the analysis. These notes were then organized under codes relating to the main concepts of the research such as integration, belonging and otherness, and they therefore "speak to the conceptual framework, research questions, or themes which derive therefrom" (Fedyuk and Zentai, 2018: 184). How pieces of data in each interview relate to one another and how they contribute to a larger narrative or provide contradictory perspectives under same codes was studied in detail. Inspired by the perspective of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998), this research tends to define the way it works on its topics as 'a way of seeing' underlining the self-reflexive understanding of the researcher as an active composer of the research analysis (and data) rather than just 'objectively' applying some predetermined procedure to the data collected. Relatedly, the researcher has employed a reflexive research practice in line with Iosifides's assertion that "being reflexive about our own positions in social settings, own thought categories, beliefs, emotions, points of view, conceptual schemes has to be an explicit and vital part of our research endeavors" particularly in migration research (Iosifides, 2018: 103). This entailed constant reflection on her own social and educational status as a postdoctoral researcher, her recent migration biography from Turkey, language (in)competence and relationship with languages in use during the field research.

EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS

The interpretation of the data shows that young women of Turkish origin experience a considerable discrepancy between social integration (i.e., participation in education or the job market) and everyday sense of being included. Latent processes of othering and exclusion, particularly in gendered forms, still effect ordinary experiences of young women of Turkish background in Germany in a substantial way. In this context, belonging could be understood as a field of struggle along the lines of binaries such as 'us vs. them' or 'foreigners vs. Germans'. Young women's experiences also reveal the aspect of inherited otherness which they take over from the previous generations, particularly from their mothers, but live through and reflect on in novel and changing ways. The discourses on integration, although mostly engaged with in a critical way, still seem to form a reference point in defining young women's self-positioning and sense of belonging in the postmigrant context.

"Where Are You From?": Belonging as a Field of Struggle

Although all the respondents were either students or active in the job market, born and/or raised in Germany, and have a profound knowledge of the German language and culture—in that sense, 'perfectly integrated' members of society—they mostly reported instances of othering and the impossibility of avoiding being perceived as migrants or foreigners. In some cases, the emphasis on outward appearance (as a sign of not being European/German/white) was particularly striking as it evoked the racialization process as embedded in everyday life, i.e. the job market, education. A student of sociology reported as follows:

> We have to define ourselves so [as migrants]. Even if our attitude or the way we speak and behave does not reveal it, our outward appearance makes it visible in any case. I have a Turkish passport, and because of this I usually get eliminated in job interviews, because [the passport makes it] obvious that I am of Turkish origin. Actually, I say that I am Turkish anyway! But on the other hand, that I am German too! This is a difficult situation. I am fourth generation, but still, I cannot situate myself properly. Even if I feel German personally, outward appearance is always a problem, a lifelong one! People keep asking, "Where are you from? Where are your parents from?" (A3, 22, student)

The fact that the interviewee describes her outward appearance as a 'problem', as it reveals that she is not 'fully' German even though she also feels as a member of German society, is striking in terms of demonstrating the burden of the individual experiences of being the Other in society. In this context, even acknowledging one's own sense of belonging becomes a space of struggle. Experiencing continuous subtle or open denial of her being a full/native/normal member of the broader society, the interviewee shares the difficulty in 'situating herself properly' even though she feels German and Turkish at the same time, confirming her dual sense of belonging to the two social contexts that she relates to.

Being often subjected to insistent questions about one's origin has an exclusionary effect, and it was a common experience reported in other interviews as well. For the interviewees, such questions act as a reminder of their migrant background and signal the continuity of their status as foreigners. This proves the mainstream perception of the Turkish inhabitants of the postmigrant society as ones not 'coming from Germany' even though they were born and raised in the country. As constant reminders of Otherness, these questions, as discussed in the influential work of Mark Terkessidis, function as daily tools of othering and part of the latent systemic functioning of the 'banality of racism' (Terkessidis, 2004).

Another question reported in the interviews had to do with whether or not people with a migration background had plans to return to their 'home country'. One of the research participants, born and raised in Germany, obtained her BA and MA, and was a doctoral candidate and research assistant at the university at the time of the interview, definitely fits the profile of a very 'well-settled' individual with a migration background in terms of educational and socio-economic integration parameters. She recalled a conversation she had had with the director of the school in which she was doing her internship during her university studies:

> He said: "Would you consider going back to Turkey?" Going back? What does this mean, really? I never lived there! How should I go back? I said: "No, I do not have any such plans." He said: "There is a big potential there. You speak German very well," and then he added: "Perhaps you could have more opportunities there." What was he trying to say? That doors were closed for me here? That I could not get a job I wanted here? (A4, 28, student, employed)

These 'potential return' questions are quite common and work in a very similar way to the ones about a person's 'actual origin', namely, as reminders of not belonging in Germany. Members of the postmigrant generation are apparently still expected to go back to their countries of origin, even though their families have lived in Germany for generations. Moreover, this example lays bare that despite all the legislation aimed at inclusion, and all the on-paper anti-discrimination measures, the invisible symbolic boundaries in everyday interactions are still very much in place and they solidify structural boundaries, in this case by implying that the chances are low for the candidate to get a job in Germany because of her 'migration background'.

Representing 'The Cultural Other'

The cultural essentialist view articulated through exclusionary and stigmatizing practices directed against members of society with a migration background has also emerged as a recurrent theme in the interviews. Issues such as the headscarf or school trips arise as symbolically loaded topics, as if they described the 'Turkish/Muslim culture' or explained the behavior of the members of this group. One of the interviewees, a psychology student at the time of the interview, remembers an anecdote from her elementary school years. Questions aiming to detect 'the cultural signs' apparently work in a way to further exclude the child in this educational setting, rather than support her in terms of participation:

> She [the teacher] asked: "Does your mother wear a headscarf or a hijab?" I still do not know, to this day, why she asked this question. I have no idea! Or there were some school trips including overnight stays. Once, I was unable to go because we could not afford a ski holiday. My teacher said, in front of the whole class: "Why are you always excluding yourself from the things we do?" She said that in a way, as if my mother and father did not allow me to go to school trips because I am a girl, a Muslim, and Turkish. The children at school are usually not aware of what they are saying when ridiculing something, but they [teachers] should be more careful. For example, after this, a girl approached to me and made fun of it: "You cannot stay with a boy in the same room. That is why your mom and dad do not allow you to go skiing." (A2, 21, student)

This quotation is a clear example of how culturalization of migrant issues makes socio-economic (and other structural problems and hierarchies) invisible. Even though her parents were both university graduates (one with a degree from Germany and the other from Turkey), they had been working low-paid 'migrant' jobs with night shifts and long working hours. As a consequence, they could not afford to pay for her school trip or attend all of the parents' meetings that usually took place in the evening. The culturalized shortcut way of interpreting situations like this one not only obscures social stratification based on structural differences, but also strengthens structural boundaries and divisions based on stereotypical images and exclusionary discourses. Below is a similar account in which the interviewee makes a strong claim for belonging in both German and Turkish society at the same time, despite the dominant and widespread insistence on the imagined cultural difference/otherness, particularly in the case of women of Turkish origin:

> One can be Turkish and German at the same time. You do not have to decide for either one. I think that German society, which expects from you to be a German, is not ready for integration. This is mostly about women. For example, a few weeks ago, my friend's boyfriend asked me: "Does your father choose the man you will marry?" I laughed a lot. In a job interview, since I have a Turkish passport, the lady there asked me: "Does your father force you to keep your Turkish passport?" No! I do not want to pay 300 Euros for a German passport at the moment and therefore I postpone applying for it. (A3, 22, student)

The above examples reveal how the stereotypical image of the Turkish woman as oppressed by the patriarchal and archaic norms and traditions is still effectively shaping the mainstream view of women of Turkish origin. Being in education, having a university degree or having a job does not shield one from this prejudice or othering in general. On the contrary, it is still a 'surprising coincidence' that young women of Turkish origin can go to school, have a job or make their own decisions. An interviewee narrates that she still has to convince others that she is not oppressed in her family, particularly regarding her freedom in terms of education. She has been very successful during her whole educational path in Germany, obtained her high school diploma, and even worked in her free time giving private lessons to several younger students. At the time of the interview, she was pursuing a BA to become a teacher:

> They are usually surprised, and always [wonder] if we are under pressure. I say that it is not the case in our family. If you want to, you can go to school [university], if you do not want to, then you do not go. I have chosen to go to school. (A1, 31, student)

As it has been discussed in the previous sections of this paper, there is a troubled and complicated interface between the concerns about gender equality in the context of migration and integration, and the racialized discourses based on the image of a homogenous patriarchal Muslim/Turkish traditional culture. Insisting on identifying women of Turkish descent as a social group deprived of gender equality is very much related to the European self-image as the modern Western civilization protecting gender equality. According to this discursive frame, potential agency and active critical engagement of young women regarding the cultural practices in their family histories seem beyond imagination. This way of seeing young women not as individuals but as representatives of a 'culture' of which they are also seen as 'victims' becomes evident as a way of reinforcing the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' and a strategy of continuous migrantization and othering in the postmigrant context.

Otherness as a Gendered Inheritance

Most of the interviewees referred to their families' migration stories as they shared their reflections on integration and sense of belonging in society. It was significant that in all interviews they told stories of their mothers as cases of non-belonging. As women of the first and second generation, their mothers usually did not or could not work, or worked publicly invisible care or cleaning jobs. Relatedly, they mostly had very limited contact and opportunities for learning and practicing German. Observing their mother's experiences has obviously influenced younger women's ways of weaving their own positionality in German society. In many cases, serving as interpreters for their mothers—who had faced language barriers and were often judged because of their lack of competence in German—they not only observed, but actively participated in this context. An interviewee, whose mother migrated to Germany to get married, recounts an anecdote from a hospital, where she accompanied her mother as her interpreter:

> Then I remember, we were there to pick up my brother and the nurse asked my mother: "Why can you not speak German? You have been here for 19 years!" My mom said: "I understand a little bit." Then the nurse said: "If you had learned just one word every day you would have memorized a whole library by now." On the one hand, the nurse was right. However, she had never been in this situation. I do not think that they have the right to judge or give advice on this. (A4, 28, student, employed)

Witnessing the embodied experience of 'voicelessness', in terms of not being able to express oneself in the public space due to language barriers, creates important first-hand 'historical' knowledge for the younger generation. They have observed at close quarters what it means to be speechless in social life, and they describe their own positioning in relation to this, as they now have the required tool – language. The below quote by an interviewee, who was working as a secretary at the time of the interview, is telling in this sense:

> For example, our mothers or the previous generation, they could barely speak German. They could not express themselves. In order not to say something wrong, they always stayed silent and stood aside. Now, [younger women] all speak very well, they can adapt. Things has changed and will be even better. (A5, 23, employed)

The boundaries built around language in the case of previous generations crisscross several fields of everyday life and portray a broader disconnect in the social and public sphere. This theme has also emerged in an expert interview, where the practitioner working with young people reflected on the job preferences of young women of Turkish descent and how this related to their witnessing of their mothers' migrant experience:

> Boys [young men with a family history of migration] often do not continue their education. However, girls usually go to university, in order not to experience the weakness and helplessness that their mothers have experienced, in order to be informed and aware mothers themselves someday. They all pursue good jobs. The ones who had difficulties always prioritize education in their lives. These children lack something. When someone feels some sort of absence, then she knows how valuable [the missing] thing is. Being a teacher is one of the favorites, being a doctor, or a lawyer. (E2, youth expert)

The findings of this research hint at the importance of scrutinizing the generational transfer of migrant experience/history related to belonging and otherness, and trigger further questions regarding the articulations of inherited otherness in postmigrant context. How does witnessing and inheriting their mothers' experiences of being 'the migrant Other' impact the way in which young women with migration history from Turkey negotiate belonging in the postmigrant context today? How do they reflect on their everyday experiences of exclusion and racialization in relation to their familial memory of othering? What are the gendered ways in which these experiences of being the Other are rearticulated through conflicts and negotiations within the dynamics of the postmigrant society?

CONCLUSION

The fieldwork conducted with young women with migration history from Turkey (born and/or raised in Germany, currently studying and/or working) indicates that they have a high level of awareness of the structural boundaries they experience in everyday life, such as othering and exclusion in an educational setting or the job market. Moreover, they historicize their family experiences of being 'the migrant Other' in society, particularly referring to and comparing their own experiences with their mothers', namely women of the first and second generation of Turkish migrants in Germany. Relatedly, their reflections reveal that their experiences of exclusion, migrantization, and othering are in a way inherited. However, they evidently engage with this inherited knowledge in an active way, building agency within the broader context of these structural boundaries and border-making practices. Their response to the persistent racial, cultural, and stereotypical imaginings and ways society reacts to them is based on critical belonging. They are critical in terms of setting clear boundaries to protect themselves from exclusionary and stigmatizing incidents they encounter in social settings by questioning, rendering them meaningless or sometimes reacting actively by making fun of them. They claim a sense of belonging against the background of this critical engagement and continual othering that comes with being a young woman of Turkish origin in postmigrant Germany. The discussion in this paper also stands by the point that the limited concepts of integration "say very little about how the members of the postmigrant generation manage to cope in globalized everyday life" (Rotter and Yıldız, 2021: 188). However, a critical analysis of the concept of integration seems to be still analytically productive in revealing the effect of this historical discursive phenomenon in everyday cultural practices connected with social boundaries and belonging. This critical analytical engagement contributes to a deeper understanding of postmigrant realities and raises nuanced questions that go beyond integration-centered thinking on inclusion, dialogue, and belonging in the postmigrant society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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