

Migrant Women Transforming Citizenship

Life-stories From Britain and Germany

Umut Erel

MIGRANT WOMEN TRANSFORMING CITIZENSHIP

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Contents

<i>Series Editor's Preface</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
1 Constructing Meaningful Lives	1
2 Citizenship, Identity and Culture: The Contexts of Britain and Germany	23
3 Developing Agency: Schooling and Family	51
4 Women at Work	79
5 Challenging Family Boundaries	109
6 Longing and Belonging	151
7 Conclusion: Transforming Citizenship	181
<i>References</i>	<i>197</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>217</i>

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Series Editor's Preface

On 15 March 1885, in an address to the Royal Statistical Society, Ernst Georg Ravenstein put forward his 'Laws of Migration'. It was a watershed lecture, the first time that someone had sought to define the movement of people – regionally or nationally – as a phenomenon in its own right. Ravenstein intended his laws to provide a means by which the significance of recent migratory patterns, as reflected in the England and Wales Decennial Censuses for 1871 and 1881, could be deconstructed and accounted for. One of his Twelve Laws noted that the migratory patterns of women followed a rural to urban direction and that women moved far shorter distances than their male counterparts. There, for almost one hundred years, the study of gendered migration remained. Women became the hidden others of migration; secondary migrants who, with rare exceptions, left point A to travel to point B, only as wives, daughters, mothers or prospective brides, to be reunited with men who had travelled away from 'home' and, as the 'myth of return' became an integral part of their migrant experience, needed female support and care. It took until the 1980s for feminist studies to propel women to centre stage. Amongst the cast of *new* actors appeared a growing number of independent female migrants travelling increasingly long distances in order to achieve economic mobility and security.

Yet, as the author of this book points out, even within this new regime there was a bias, this time one which focused on the unskilled females who were finding work as cleaners, domestics and carers in the burgeoning global care chain. Little or no recognition was given to the smaller number of skilled females who sought to use their education and professional status to advance themselves in Western Europe and North America. In this volume, Umut Erel has sought to redress this inadequacy and, at the same time, take the study of female migration further. By focusing on women that she categorizes as the 'other, other', she has demonstrated the way in which skilled female immigrants have developed strategies which enable them not only to achieve economic security and professional status but, at the same time, combine this with transforming the rights and duties of citizenship within the landscape of the working female immigrant.

In this ground breaking work Erel juxtaposes the experience of skilled female migrants from Turkey in Britain and Germany. The choice of the two nation study is highly pertinent, locating as it does the struggle for recognition as 'full citizens' within contrasting frameworks, ones where the pathways to citizenship follow different routes. Using a micro binary approach she describes the various ways in which female agency has been operated by first, and in the case of Germany second, generation migrants on their journey. Through this we discover the ability

of females from the same sending society to fashion their economic, cultural, social and political behaviour in order to traverse the structures and needs of the society in which they have settled and within which they wish to be 'received' on equal terms. Not only does this volume provide us with lessons from the recent past it also provides guidance and hope for female migrants in the future.

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To Nazife, Ümit and Arjen
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Chapter 1

Constructing Meaningful Lives¹

Migrant women are laying claim to citizenship practices. Though marginalized from the nation as legal or cultural outsiders, they create new meanings of belonging. This book explores how. While there has been considerable debate on the changing meaning of belonging to a national society with accelerating transnational relations, migrations and the experience of 'new ethnicities' there has been little, if any, attention paid to how migrant women themselves re-define the concepts of postnational, multicultural or transnational citizenship. Through the life-stories of migrant women this book provides a missing link between theories and realities of transnational lives. The book closely reads life-stories of migrant women from Turkey in Europe to theorize how these emerging subjects create new, counter-hegemonic citizenship practices across boundaries of class, gender, ethnicity and nation. Just consider the following examples: Birgül, a Turkish medical doctor in Germany successfully takes legal action to be allowed to open a surgery. She argues that the law foresees provision of medical services to the 'population' that is inclusive of women from Turkey, rather than the nationally bounded citizens (see Chapter 4). Pinar, a single mother carefully builds a cross-ethnic family of choice. While she wants her daughter to learn the Turkish language and cultural practices, cultural pluralism is the core value she wants to transmit to her daughter (see Chapter 5). Selin challenges community representatives' and leaders' lack of democratic accountability. She incisively critiques that the British multicultural system's reliance on community organizations reproduces intra-community power relations of gender, class and ethnicity (see Chapter 6). These women's lives, both through their actions and as life-stories, help us to theorize the meaning of citizenship. The life-stories engage critically with the changing realities of growing up, work, family and social activism, providing a situated account of how the big issues of migration, culture and citizenship play out in actual social relations.

How do different national contexts lead to distinct forms of transnational citizenship? The two contexts of Britain and Germany provide diverging concepts and policies of citizenship that allow for a differentiated examination of ethnicity, gender, multiculturalism and citizenship in Europe. Starting from the life-stories of migrant women from Turkey, the book explores notions of gendered and

1 I thank Sociological Research Online for permission to publish parts of Chapter 1, which have been previously published as 'Constructing Meaningful Lives: Biological Methods in Research on Migrant Women' <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/12/4/5.html> in Volume 12, Issue 4, published 31 July 2007.

ethnicized subjectivity. Subjectivity here is understood as the narrative construction of a liveable notion of self. This process of ‘making the self’ is not simply a free choice of different national, ethnic, or gendered ‘ingredients’. As migrant women from a so-called Muslim country, they are faced with Orientalist representations of themselves as passive, oppressed by men and backward traditions (see Chapter 2). The migrant population from Turkey is the biggest national minority group in the old Europe, where it plays an important role as Europe’s ‘Other’. Indeed, representations of gender relations have been at the heart of constructing these Others and research in European countries has often contributed to stereotypical representations of migrant women from Turkey.

By focusing on the experiences of highly educated and skilled migrant women, a group that has until now been neglected, this book looks at part of the story of gendered and ethnicized citizenship that has not yet been told. The life-stories provide rich insights into the agency of migrant women in ‘making themselves’ through engaging with social divisions and power relations of gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality. Governments in both Germany and Britain argue that the countries need to be allowed to choose the ‘right sort’ of migrants, i.e. skilled migrants. It is implied that ‘skill’ is a personal attribute of the migrant which helps avoid any problems of integration that previous waves of migrants or refugees experience. This book instead focuses on a group of migrant women who are skilled, yet, had great difficulty in having these skills recognized and being able to realize them in their working lives. Instead of viewing skill as a personal attribute, as human capital approaches do, this book explores the social construction of skill, asking how migration regulation, gendered and ethnicized power relations across a range of social sites contribute to the validation or devaluation of skill in the process of gaining employment and in the workplace itself. The social construction of skill furthermore sheds light on the processes by which the migrant women are recognized, or not, as competent citizens who can actively shape the societies they live in.

The two contexts of Britain and Germany are often presented as paradigmatically different cases of multiculturalist versus ‘volk’-based models of citizenship and integration for migrants. Diverging histories and policies of migration, nationality and citizenship have led to differential processes of gendered ethnicization. However, the book explores where both countries employ common modes of (partial) inclusion and exclusion, challenging the notion of two paradigmatically opposed cases. Indeed, the book critiques the failure of dominant modes of incorporation in Britain to fully theorize and engage with experiences of ethnic minorities other than the post-colonial Black and Asian groups. On the other hand, the dominant modes of incorporation in Germany reproduce ethnic hierarchies and exclusions, in particular by continuously disavowing migrant women’s active contributions to citizenship (Chapter 2).

The book uses an intersectional perspective – that is it views gender, ethnicity and class as intermeshing social divisions. These social relations and discourses on gendered ethnicization and class form the conditions of women’s lives, but

also inform the ways they make sense of their experience. In particular, the book examines the different ways in which the interviewees reject, incorporate or otherwise negotiate discourses and practices of gendered ethnicization as forms of belonging and participation. The distinctive aim and emphasis is to explore the ways in which the migrant women exercise agency, narratively in the stories they tell, subjectively in the self-identities they produce, and materially in the ways they act upon their circumstances. I am especially interested in how they construct their subjectivities through producing commonalities and differences with others.

The Context: Britain and Germany

The specific conditions that the women find in Germany and Britain differ and give them differential scope for constructing their subjectivity, as well as regulating their agency. This cross-national perspective throws into relief the relation between different migration and citizenship regimes and processes of differential ethnicization and racialization. While this research design may raise expectations that the book will explore the differential positioning of *ethnic communities* in Britain and Germany, this is not the scope of this book. Instead, I explore how the *individual migrant women* relate to notions of community and construct their own notions and practices of community. Indeed, the position taken in this book differs from that often adopted in studies on ethnic minority communities. One problem of community studies is that they tend to assume the membership and boundaries of ethnic minority communities as given. Instead, this book explores the boundaries and criteria for group membership that the women elaborate. These can change over the life-course and shift situationally. In order not to foreclose an exploration of these dynamic processes of identification the longwinded term ‘migrant women from Turkey’ or ‘of Turkish background’ is used to describe the sample. This is intended to take account of the ethnic diversity of the population of Turkey and avoid reifying nationalist and Turkish supremacist discourses and practices of the Turkish state, often reproduced in the Diaspora. Though some critique this notion of ‘migrants from Turkey’ for obscuring Kurdish identities, as it falls short of explicitly naming and recognizing them, it is argued that the non-recognition of Kurdish ethnic identity cannot be resolved simply by using a ‘correct’ linguistic term. While it is important to scandalize the racism and ethnocidal policies directed at Kurds, the migrant women in this study had a variety of ethnic allegiances and identifications: Azeri, Kurdish, Zaza, Cherkess, Macedonian, Yörük and Turkish. Thus, an ethnic label of ‘Turkish and Kurdish’ would be reductionist. Second, the term ‘migrant women from Turkey’ is intended to encompass the multiple forms of identification of migrant women with their countries of residence such as ‘British’, ‘German-Turkish’, ‘bi-cultural’ or ‘migrant’.

Structure of the Book

Before turning to the methodological underpinnings in the remainder of this chapter, this section will outline the structure of the book. An exploration of issues of citizenship and agency as articulating ‘subjugated knowledges’ runs like a red thread right through the book. The remainder of this chapter explores the value of life-story methods for the study of citizenship to understand migrant women’s agency and knowledge of the world in which they live. Chapter 2 discusses theories of citizenship, the ways in which the migrant women are positioned discursively, legally and socially in Britain and Germany. From Chapter 3 onwards, the book examines the different sites of citizenship the migrant women elaborate in their life-stories. Their experiences in concrete situations guide me to explore what the abstract concepts of agency, citizenship and culture mean in everyday life. In this sense, Chapters 3 to 6 can be read as illustrating, questioning and developing further our theoretical understanding. Yet, the life-stories are also important interventions into the representation of migrant women in their own right, using the words, concepts and ideas of migrant women, the book portrays important aspects of their lives. Chapter 3 traces the ways in which they developed themselves as subjects with agency in the site of schooling and family. Both family and schooling are central sites of producing gendered, ethnicized and class identities. For young migrant women, these are often viewed as pulling them in different directions. Chapters 4 to 6 look at how the migrant women substantiate their agentic capacities. In Chapter 4, the occupational trajectories and self-presentations of the interviewees are examined. The book looks at the ways in which gender, ethnicity, class, migration status and specific forms of transnational social and cultural capital influence their access to skilled work. Chapter 5 explores migrant women’s negotiations of sexual identities and personal status and looks in detail at their practices of transnational mothering and intergenerational transformation of ethnic identities. It argues that prevalent views of migrant women as ‘traditional’ fall short of the complex social positioning and do not take their agency in challenging racialized boundaries of modernity and tradition into account. Chapter 6 examines the migrant women’s political activism and active dimensions of citizenship and articulations of a politics of belonging. Chapter 7 draws these strands together and discusses how this in-depth engagement with migrant women’s everyday lives can help us refine our understanding of citizenship by linking the three moments of becoming subjects with agency, substantiating agentic capacities and becoming rights-claiming subjects. Furthermore it evaluates life-story methods as useful epistemological starting points for intersectional analyses of citizenship. But first I will discuss why life-story methods can help us understand migrant women’s self-presentations and how their subjugated knowledges can contribute to transforming our thinking about citizenship.

Constructing Meaningful Lives

Despite all disciplinary differences in the use of life-story methods there have been some shared assumptions about life-story methods.² The first is that of authenticity and giving a voice to marginalized views and voices. This has been an important emancipatory step in recognizing that history and society are also lived and constructed 'from below'. Yet, the underlying notions of authenticity and 'giving a voice' have been criticized from different vantage points. One of the criticisms is that the power relation between researcher and researched involves a setting of the agenda by the researcher, most importantly in the process of analysing and interpreting (cf. Gluck and Patai 1991) as well as presenting (Lejeune 1980) the life-story. Therefore, Stanley (1992) suggests the notion of auto/biographies to take account of different moments of ambiguity: narrativizing a life involves degrees of fictionalizing through selecting and interpreting the events told and shaped into narrative genres. However pronounced the narrator(s)' desire to be true to fact, these fictionalizing moments are irreducible, since life itself is ambiguous and always bound up with our making sense of it. The relation between author and subject of a biography constitutes the second moment of ambiguity. Stanley (1992) concedes that the understanding of the subject is mediated through the researcher's own biographical experiences. So that the 'I' that speaks or writes is inflected by both the researcher's and the subject's biographies. The distinction between autobiography, biography and fiction is thus more usefully viewed as a continuum.

Life-story methods elicit not only what happened, but also how people experienced events, and how they make sense of them. Thus, life-stories are an important vantage point for exploring the links between subjectivity and social structures. Memory and narrative are used for constructing a liveable, meaningful life-story, aiming for a narrative wholeness of the self, notwithstanding the fact that these biographies are revisable. In this sense, life-stories are an important element in constructing personal identity and its relation to collective identities (cf. Antze and Lambek 1996, Giddens 1991, Plummer 2001).³

Migrant Women as Subjects of Life-stories: Uniqueness versus Collective Identities

Life-story methods raise complex epistemological and ontological questions on the constitution of subjects as individual and collective, the role of self knowledge

2 In the following the terms life-story method, and auto/biographical method are used interchangeably to denote this wide field of study and its varying aspects.

3 Identity here is understood as a dynamic process of becoming that negotiates ascriptions and social positioning, when referring to the 'self' I refer more to the meanings elaborated by the interviewees rather than ascriptive aspects.

and presentation in the constitution of the 'Self' as well as the 'life'. This chapter will unpick some of the gendered and ethnicized aspects of these.

The canonization of the autobiographical genre projects its origins to practices of introspection and memory developed in the Christian confessional. The canonization of 'great' biographies and elevation of some autobiographies into the status of seminal texts thus contains specific gendered, racialized and classed evaluations about the form and subject of biography (Marcus 1994). This is particularly significant in the context of Orientalist power/knowledge structures that deny the quality of introspection and rationality to those from so-called Muslim cultures, instead viewing them as over determined by 'Oriental fatalism' and therefore lacking true originality and agency (cf. Said 1978).

Tracing the development of philosophy and criticism of the autobiographical genre from the nineteenth century onwards, Marcus (1994) argues that in the twentieth century, 'creative' persons' autobiographies have come to be seen as the ideal type of the genre: 'seminal' autobiographies therefore are seen to express uniqueness. Auto/biographies of marginalized people challenge the gender, class, ethnic and culturally specific assumptions of an ideal subject of auto/biography. While this importantly aims at democratizing practices of auto/biography, often there is an underlying dichotomization that views these new voices 'from below' (Plummer 2001: 90) a priori as 'collective stories' (ibid.). As Plummer argues, 'more marginal voices (...) speak not just of themselves but of and for "others" in the world. The autobiographies "from below" hence work to create a different sense of autobiographical form, one where consciousness of self becomes more of a collective exploration than just a private one' (ibid.).

As Plummer rightly points out, these new voices often self-consciously aim at articulating collective identities and experiences of marginalization. However, there is a danger that this disregards the complexities of subjected people's experiences and their representation.⁴ I agree with the importance of de-constructing de-socialized notions of 'individuality' as hegemonizing particular forms of white, European, male, bourgeois subjectivity. However, approaching life-stories as either expressive of individuality or collectivity, does not challenge the dominance of subject positions viewed as 'individual' or 'unique'. Instead, it simplifies the constitution of subjected subjectivities by ascribing them a collective voice only. The capacity of marginalized people to express uniqueness and individuality is denied: Lewis argues that class and race have become the binary divide along which the notion of self-knowledge as individual or collective is organized, assuming 'white people having psyches while black people have community' (1996: 25), however instead of dichotomizing the notions of individuality and collectivity they should be seen as aspects worth exploring in every life-story. In this sense,

4 Thus, with regard to Italian working class oral cultures Luisa Passerini argues that often people prefer employing stereotypical story telling personas to an introspective tone. However she cautions against confusing the choice of narrative style with the life as it was lived (1987).

dichotomizations of individual versus collective modes of biography do not take account of the complexity of life-stories, both those told with an individual or collective inflection.

The methodological approach of this book bridges the tension between an emphasis on the uniqueness of a life-story, often associated with the humanities, and social science approaches to life-story methods. While life-stories in literary/cultural studies are often studied as expressive of individuality, social sciences approaches to life-stories tend to look at life-stories as expressive of collective experiences, illustrating the social structures these collectivities experience. This dichotomy is problematic, in particular where it pertains to marginalized groups, who have little access to self-presentations in publicly validated forms. If life-stories that are structurally similar are presented one after the other, this produces an effect of seriality, suggesting to the reader that the subjects are devoid of individuality and simply represent one variation in the collective modes of being. Dominant representations of migrant women from Turkey reify them as the 'Other Other' (Chapter 2), essentializing gendered and ethnicized cultural assumptions in the image of the oppressed woman of Muslim background. One of the effects of such representations is to portray them as a homogeneous group, downplaying individuality and scope for agency. Women who do not conform to such representations are bracketed out as 'exceptional' (cf. Chapter 3), too individual to really matter for any endeavour of understanding the social positioning of migrant women of Turkish background. Thus, the notion of individuality (too much or too little of it) is not a simple descriptor but indeed a tool for constructing the very category of migrant women of Turkish background. When presenting material from this book at conferences, I have often been told that the women whose life-stories are presented here are not 'typical'; could I please talk about the majority of migrant women from Turkey whose lives are mired in integration problems? Against this backdrop this chapter tries to balance an attempt to do justice to the idiosyncrasies and expressions of individuality in order to avoid casting them into ideal- or stereo-types, while maintaining that they do illuminate wider social structures. While the life-stories presented here produce and reflect both individuality and collectivity, they cannot be neatly typologized.

Instead, I would like to question the desire for typologizing. Typologies are reductionist representations of migrant women's lives that tend to reproduce Orientalist power/knowledge structures: excesses of meaning, contradictions and dynamic processes of self-production in dialogue with a range of others disappear in favour of static, entirely knowable objects of social science. Therefore, instead of categorizing the migrant women's experiences, narratives and the selves produced through these, this book aims to uncover different themes in their life-stories and how these are constituted by fixing or destabilizing subject positions which the interviewees claim, negotiate or reject. Thus, particular types of stories and sense making are shown. This sense making is not only individual, even if the experiences of the story tellers are, but relates to various collectivities within and across gendered and ethnicized subjectivities. By avoiding a typologization

of the interviewees and their life-stories, the book aims to de-construct the dichotomization of individual and collective/mass, an issue with which the interviewees themselves struggle (cf. Chapter 7). The subject positions and the discursive repertoires with which they are constructed and interpreted are fluid and open to be used by different social actors. Individuality and collectivity form different strategies of legitimizing authenticity; instead of ranking such claims for authenticity, this book questions their bases and dynamics.

Authenticity is always a purposeful construction. Migrant women are minoritized and marginalized in the societies of residence. They are constituted in official and everyday discourses as objects of knowledge and their legitimacy is surveyed, rendering their speaking position unstable and in question. The demands of others or their own desire for authenticity then may become a specifically gendered and ethnicized incitement for fixing particular notions of self. Constructions of authenticity can become means of access or exclusion to ethnically and gender specific subject positions, belonging to communities and entitlements. Rather than taking them at face value, one should interrogate constructions of authentic 'Turkish femininity' as to the political and social projects they articulate, bearing in mind that biographical representations often elide with models of the ideal life (cf. Marcus 1994).

Thus, the choice of in-depth study of a small number (10) of life-story interviews reflects the author's concern with engaging in-depth with the complexities in each of the self-representations. The focus of this study is precisely to uncover moments of agency in the migrant women's life-stories. These forms of agency are revealed in the narrative self-representations. In this context, the argument of this book pertains to the meaning making processes in the life-stories rather than the frequency with which particular experiences occur in the group of skilled migrant women. This group of skilled migrant women from Turkey is numerically small and we know little about it, therefore any form of statistical representativity is not meaningful as a sampling tool. The interviewees were chosen because of the ways in which their life-stories and experiences illuminate on one hand the structural positioning of skilled migrant women, and on the other hand because they have made choices which are particularly relevant in shedding light on the processes that can transform our understanding of citizenship practices.

Structural Readings

Life-stories can be read in various ways. They may be used to provide factual data on events that are not, or only partially, recorded otherwise. They also provide data on the impact of social structures on people, which is not obvious from looking at structural data itself. These ways of reading life-stories have been termed by the Popular Memory Group (1982) 'structural readings'. Those aspects of a life-story that pertain to the ways in which meaning is constructed, they term 'cultural readings'. A cultural reading focuses on the way the interviewees give meaning to their experiences. These two aspects mutually constitute each other.

Structural readings of the migrant women's life-stories reveal effects of immigration legislation on personal lives, where one cannot simply read off the legal or policy texts. They reveal structures of exclusion and resistance that quantitative or larger scale studies render invisible. Moreover they can call into question the categories of legislation and theorization based on these as for example the discreteness of statuses of refugees, labour migrants, au pair, marriage migration, student migration, professional or undocumented migration. The life-stories also offer critical insights into constructions of identity and belonging constitutive of citizenship. Some contemporary research still assumes that the migration into a Western country and the living conditions female migrants find there constitute their first encounter with modernity. It is assumed that European societies provide an entirely new avenue to emancipation. Instead, I would argue that migrant women are faced with multiple formations of modernity with contradicting effects of gendered control in both countries (cf. Pessar and Mahler 2003, Piper 2008). The structures of incorporation into the receiving society may, at least initially, indeed enhance their gendered vulnerabilities. Since life-stories do not narrow down lived experience to one single category or event, they offer a privileged vantage point for understanding and theorizing the processual dynamics of migration and the intersectionality of gendered, ethnicized and class structures of power as the following example shows.

Nilüfer entered England as an au pair, the only legal entry category open to her at the time. She wanted to learn English to prepare for joining her father in Canada, when he fulfilled the residence requirements that would enable him to sponsor his daughter on the basis of family reunification. Soon after arriving in England however, she quit the au pair job because she felt she was treated 'like a slave'. Technically, she had become an illegal resident. However, she managed to get an au pair contract from a friend to maintain legal residence. In spite of this legal residence, she did not have the right to take up other employment, having thus become semi-compliant (Anderson and Ruhs 2006), i.e. while aspects of her life in the UK were deemed legal, others (i.e. working) were not. She found an undocumented job as a waitress, which did not however pay enough for her to realize her aspirations of higher education because of the excessive overseas student fees. Nor could she afford to pay the fees to attend vocational colleges and English language schools, which she perceived as an alternative route to education. The irregularity of her residence and work permit status as well as the lack of social networks on whose financial, social and emotional support she could rely put her in a very vulnerable position. Despite this, she took the initiative to gain access to education, she entered a sexual relationship with her employer, who in turn paid her higher wages and guaranteed her employment:

N: But when I was working in that restaurant there, and I was very desperate as well. I had a relationship with the owner of the restaurant. He was thirty years older than me (laughs).

U: (laughing) Most of your boyfriends were much older, hah?

N: But this one was not boyfriend, this one was mostly[to] secure my job, secure my place and get more money. So this one was that. ... Was terrible, it was disgusting.

U: Yeah.

N: It wasn't anything that I wanted to do because I love to do.

This extract shows how power relations of gender, class, and migration status rendered Nilüfer vulnerable to sexual and economic exploitation. However, she used the limited resources to gain education which she hoped would enable her to 'get out' of this situation. As it turned out, she found the situation of sexual exploitation so unbearable that she quit this job, lost her income and access to education. Agency and victimization in this instance were closely intertwined, the limitation of her choices through immigration legislation put her in a 'desperate' situation where the course of action she chose, i.e. bartering or selling sex, was one that she strongly disliked. Thus, her victimization propelled her into a form of agency that in turn victimized her. At another waitressing job, she worked for some months without getting paid. Her semi-compliant residence status and the undocumented nature of the work made it practically impossible for her to take any legal steps to receive her wages as she feared it might lead to the discovery of her semi-compliance (cf. Bosniak 2008). At this workplace, Nilüfer met a man whom she eventually married. While they were initially happy, her husband's suspicion that she had married him mainly to obtain a secure residence status became a strain on their relationship. When her husband turned violent the considerations of leaving him or getting divorced for Nilüfer also included the fact that she had not yet got an independent right of residence. In spite of these structural constraints Nilüfer entered higher education and separated from her husband. At the time of interview, she was finishing her degree. Already this brief reading of Nilüfer's life-story gives us factual information on the factors impacting on migrant women's life chances and choices. Moreover, it shows ways in which structural positioning constrained and channelled her agency but did not preclude it. In fact, Nilüfer's life-story reveals counter structures to those of immigration control. These structures of undocumented residence arrangements and employment within an ethnic community are highly contradictory: while circumventing the restrictions of the British migration regime, they exploit other power relations such as gender and class (cf. Erdemir and Vasta 2007, Romhild 2007). In a climate of changing and ever more differentiated civic stratification, i.e. a stratification of rights of migration, residence, work and access to social services (Morris 2004), it is important to investigate the emergence of new hierarchies and power relations within the migrant group, too (cf. Lutz and Koser 1998, Vertovec 2007). I suggest that by employing both structural and cultural readings to the migrant women's

life-stories, we can explore these hierarchical structures and dynamics, calling attention to inadequate conceptualizations of gendered migration experiences. The migrant women's situated knowledges provide a good entry point for researching the increasing diversification and the contradictions of gendered migration experiences and dynamics, a critical task for studies of gender and migration (cf. Carling 2005, Pessar and Mahler 2003, Piper 2008).

As discussed in the next chapter, a dominant paradigm in the research on migrant women to Europe has viewed them as passive victims of processes of dislocation and modernization. They have been seen as victimized at once through the process of migration and through the particularly strict patriarchal control by the men of their ethnic group. Life-story methods that take the subjectivity of the migrant women as their starting point have a powerful potential to redress such representations since 'biography provides the link between the migrant agent and the structure of society' (Lutz 1995: 314). Pessar and Mahler suggest in their framework for studying gendered transnational practices that we need to include 'cognitive agency' (2003: 817), i.e. how people imagine, plan, strategize and think about their migration, in our study of migrants' agency. Such aspects of imagining and planning a migration can affect people's life-course. As Dilek points out, an important reason why she entered an academic career rather than work in industry, was bound up with her hope that the particular university she worked for would allow her to go abroad. For her, migration had thus been a 'fantastic dream' long before she finally did migrate to the UK. Bound up with this fantastic dream was her desire to realize alternative gendered lifestyle as a single woman with no intention of getting married or partnered. This, however, she had found difficult to realize in Turkey, both because she could not afford to live on her own and because she encountered subtle and open pressures to conform to expectations of colleagues, some family members and friends. In this sense, her dream of migration had structured her life, through choice of jobs, before migration and the fantasy of what life in Europe might be like intertwined with her adamant resistance to conform to sanctioned gendered lifestyles within Turkey. Thus, it is important to pay attention to how the migrant women give meaning to their experiences, i.e. apply 'cultural readings' (Popular Memory Group 1982) to their life-stories.

Cultural Readings

Cultural readings involve different aspects: on the one hand, there are more or less idiosyncratic meanings created from particular personal experiences, yet, these are never independent of social meanings, be it on a smaller scale of family, friends, work place, social or political groups or on a wider scale, mediated through generalized others (Plummer 2001: 44). Media, legal and institutional as well as transnational movements' discourses provide frameworks for the telling and interpreting of life-stories. Nowadays, the life-story has proliferated within media and has become a major mode of transmission of information of all kinds on a

large scale. Be it in the fields of politics, publicity, literature or sport, 'as soon as one switches the button [of the tv or radio] one bathes in the intimate, the direct, from man to man (sic!)' (Lejeune 1980: 316, my translation from French). This public proliferation of life-stories calls into question the assumptions primarily of classic literary biographies and autobiographies representing an authentic 'I' in the mode of sincere and painful confessional which can only find truthful expression as the outcome of introspection and reflection (cf. Marcus 1994).

'Story telling communities' (Plummer 1995) are important in producing social identities, through claiming a space to tell stories hitherto unspeakable and through forming a public that is prepared to listen and validate to stories about formerly marginalized or taboo experiences. Through the interplay of audience and speakers, such experiences and new validations of identities can be spoken. As they become established, these story telling communities create certain scripts for 'self-stories' (Denzin 1989) of how to tell and think about identities. In Plummer's example, stories about what it meant to be gay can be enabling and inclusive for building a community. Yet, these scripts also set limits and rules e.g. on the ability to speak of continuing heterosexual desire or relationships (cf. Stein 1997), or on how ethnic minority gay and lesbian identities could be (mis-)recognized and consequently became themselves disciplining and normalizing.

In the interviews with migrant women from Turkey I have found that some stories were told, discussed and re-told and contributed to the establishment of collective identities. For example, in Germany, this took place on a large scale in the constitution of a social movement based on the political subject position of 'migrant' in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which elaborated a political identity of 'migrant' as the privileged subject of anti-racist politics. This movement and identity developed in opposition to the dominant notion of 'foreigner' ('*Ausländer*') which was embedded in discourses which posited them as culturally incompetent strangers to German society, who could only be seen as either problems for, or victims of, German society. The migrants' movement elaborated a subject position in which 'migrant' came to signify a politically resistant identity against nationalist and racist discourses. As such it afforded a degree of autonomous political agency that the subject position of '*Ausländer*' did not. Many of the second generation migrant women in this study posited themselves in this discourse in their life-stories (cf. Chapters 3 and 6).

One story that played an important part in the identity constructions of second generation migrant women was that of leaving the parental home. For most of my interviewees their leaving home took place against the wishes of their parents, in some cases the parents put up massive resistance to the young women's project of leaving home. Leaving home to live independently from parents or husband was ethnicized as 'leaving Turkishness' and parents tried to sanction their daughters' behaviour with threats of exclusion from the family and/or wider ethnic community. Most young women had to deal with this traumatic process of leaving the parental home on their own, as Suzan recounts:

S: ... earlier for me it was either you're a Turkish [female], then you've got to get married, you've got to do what your parents say, you've got to stay respectable, blah blah blah. Or, you are thus like virgin – whore, but in this case like Turkish-German. You're German, you've got a boyfriend, you can [have a] profession, blah blah blah. It was all extremes, it was divided, either-or, there was no being in-between. ... in order to be with Germans, you had to reject everything that was Turkish absolutely, there was no way of keeping anything. (...) And I could not imagine having Turkish friends, I did not know any others who were like me.

U: Yes.

S: And for me it was (...) I ran away from home when I was 18, didn't have any contact with my parents, didn't speak any Turkish – I nearly forgot all my Turkish and didn't want anything to do with it. And I moved out – ran away with the idea (...) that my parents would reject me. I never thought that instead they would lament me. [I thought] that my leaving home would mean giving up my Turkish identity, giving it up completely.

Thus when later in their life they met migrant women from Turkey who did not reject the gender roles they embodied, this became a turning point in their life-stories.

S: [When a male German friend told her about his female Turkish flatmate and her friends], you would really like them, they are like you. I was like, 'I don't think so'. I was so certain that they'd be totally different. When I went to see him [the Turkish flat mate] was out (...) but her dissertation [about second generation migrant women] was lying around. My friend had done a drawing for her so I started leafing through it and when I started reading I could not believe it. This was my story and it was a hundred per cent. I sat there and cried because for the first time I found ourselves in this – oh my god ... you know that was incredible, this feeling of being torn between the family and the boyfriend, having to adjust to both sides. It was incredible, a wonderful experience. (...) [When she met other women in this group] well for the first time I [realized] you can be Turkish and leave home and still do belly dancing, despite this you can still joke around in Turkish or in German if you feel like it, and yet none of them is a virgin! Oh that was so cool, for the first time I had found women who were like me – yet the fantastic thing about the group was that each one was different.

They talked about their different experiences of leaving the parental home and in these discussions elaborated a new identity for themselves that refused both 'German' and 'Turkish' hegemonic gender regulations. They could only begin to articulate these identities when an audience of young migrant women developed who were open for this and offered its support by listening. Of course,