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Extended Processes of Biographical Suffering and the Allusive Expression of Deceit in an Autobiographical Narrative Interview with a Female Migrant Worker in Germany

*Bärbel Treichel & Birgit Schwelling**

Abstract: The main focus of this paper is on processes of severe suffering in the sense of the concept of trajectory as developed by Anselm STRAUSS and Fritz SCHÜTZE. A sequential analysis and a detailed analysis of verbalization processes are carried out. This was done in order to show how meaning as uttered by the informant on a propositional level had to be interpreted symptomatically or documentarily and embedded in verbalization processes and process structures of the life course. This is particularly evident in cases where major mechanisms of biography development remain opaque and cannot be formulated by the informant on the surface of narrative production as it occurs with trajectory processes of suffering. In agreement with the assignment for all contributors to the conference section and volume, the paper deals with one particular autobiographical narrative interview and presents analytical steps and insights in one particular analytical framework; in the case of this paper autobiographical narrative analysis and analysis of process structures of the life course were used.

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<http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-03/3-03treichelschwelling-e.htm>.

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1. Introduction

In this paper an autobiographical narrative interview with a female migrant worker in Germany is examined in an attempt to show the degree to which the informant is involved in biographical processes of severe suffering in the sense of the concept of trajectory (RIEMANN, 1987; RIEMANN & SCHÜTZE, 1991; SCHÜTZE, 1981, 1995). In the course of our narrative analysis we arrive at the conclusion that, apart from the clearly inhumane working conditions for most migrant workers in Germany in the early years of migration, the major dynamics which cause severe suffering in the biography of our informant stem from conflicting plans pertaining to her role in the long-term financial care of her family of origin. The informant conceives of herself as an actively contributing agent in a kind of social contract regarding her wages: She provides financial support for her family, which also allows her brother to go to university, which would enable him to support the entire family, including the informant, in the future. The informant's family, however, sacrifices their daughter as the sole provider of the family for an extended time period, without planning for her return and disregarding her own biography and development.

In terms of method, the autobiographical narrative is submitted to a sequential analysis of units of presentation and of processes of the rendering of autobiographical experience in the format of primary and subordinated lines of presentation; in the communication schemes of narrative, description, and argumentation; and in more locally operating features of communication order and disorder. Although the informant, on the surface of her line of presentation, is loyal to her family, the sequential analysis clearly points to her family's responsibility for her biographical suffering: When comparing narrative with reflective parts in the interview, reflective activity mainly occurs in presentation activities that we refer to as "presentation activities of second degree" and rarely in the main story line. Only in those subordinated lines of presentation are allusions to her family's contribution to her suffering made. The surface structure of her interview thus indicates that her reflective command of her biography is clearly "lagging behind" her autobiographical experience. On the other hand, the myth of an intact family background in her country of origin serves as a cultural topos, which keeps her functioning in a strange and foreign environment.

2. On the Logic of Autobiographical Extempore Storytelling and its Analysis

The narrative to be submitted to analysis has the structurally closed format of an overall autobiographical story as it can be assessed in the context of a narrative interview (see SCHÜTZE, 1983, 1987).

Narrative interviewing makes use of the generally available cultural competence of ordinary storytelling. If carried through carefully, it provides extended, continuously unfolding empirical data on biographical and social processes. When looked at from a symbolic interactionist perspective, autobiographical extempore narrative is an important source of relevant data for analyzing social reality. This is so because biographical and social processes are so intertwined and emerge from the experiences of the social subjects, and social reality is mediated through symbolic linguistic concepts and discursive patterns.

In the assessment situation of a narrative interview, the informant is encouraged to produce an autobiographical narrative that follows his or her own line of thought and pattern of narrative organization without being disturbed or even interrupted by any interviewer topicalizations. The narrative production is organized by general principles of linearization, focusing, and the construction of a well-rounded gestalt (cf. KALLMEYER & SCHÜTZE, 1977). The process of analysis makes use of the self-organizing character of narrative production. One of the strongest analytical steps in the analysis of autobiographical extempore narration is thus the sequential analysis and structural description of the constituent parts of the narrative, as formally marked by the informant. The segmental and super-segmental units of presentation that can be derived from the segmentation and structural description are conceptualized as corresponding to units in the sedimentation of biographical experience on the part of the informant.

The object of assessment and resource of analysis is the sedimentation of biographical experience as it occurs in the informant. The idea that there is something like layers which make up experience as a whole was formulated by Alfred SCHÜTZ (1932/1974). Experience in SCHÜTZ's terms is conceived as the objectified version of the sum of experienced outer and inner events at a particular moment in time. Only in an attempt at reflective attention ("reflexive Zuwendung," SCHÜTZ, 1932/1974, p.104) can particular outer and inner events be made accessible. The process of producing an autobiographical narrative can be seen as an act of reflective attention, capable of bringing to the surface of shared attention outer and inner events, that make up experience as a holistic entity that has gained a *raison d'être* of its own.

The sedimentation of biographical experience consists of the representation of the external chain of events, the inner reactions relative to those events, as well as the state of understanding regarding events and experiences lived

through. The analysis refers to the experiential basis and the informant's interpretations that serve as orientations for further action. In the process of analysis the mentioning of external events and inner reactions is to be compared with verbalization processes during the interview. The methodical procedure of continuously relating external events and internal experiencing, the informant's interpretations, process structures of the life course and social processes, and processes of the verbal rendering of experience during the interview is termed by SCHÜTZE *pragmatic embedding*.¹ The methodical procedure of pragmatic embedding of the narrative contents is the analytical means that distinguishes the analysis of a narrative interview from its mere retelling. In the course of the process of pragmatic embedding it is possible to gain analytical distance from the informant's categories and to proceed to the generation of more general categories, which may go well beyond the informant's understanding of the biographical and social processes he or she sees him or herself involved in, but still have their origin in the informant's rendering as the basis of analysis.

3. The Unfolding of the Trajectory of Suffering as Traced in the Informant's Narrative

The concept of trajectory was developed by Fritz SCHÜTZE in his pursuit of process structures of the life course. Differentiations of the concept can be found in REIM (1994), RIEMANN (1987), MAURENBRECHER (1985), and NITTEL (1992). Based on the empirically founded insight that social activities cannot only be described in terms of intentional action, but quite often have to be conceptualized as reactions to external constellations of states and events across extended periods of the life course, SCHÜTZE was led to develop a comprehensive theory of biographical suffering (cf. SCHÜTZE, 1995). The concept of trajectory goes back to STRAUSS's & GLASER's work on processes of dying (GLASER & STRAUSS, 1968; STRAUSS & GLASER, 1970). In their book "Social Organization of Medical Work," STRAUSS, FAGERHAUGH, SUCZEK, and WIENER (1985) give the following definition:

Course of illness is, then, both a commonsense and professional term. In contrast, *trajectory* is a term coined by the authors to refer not only to the physiological unfolding of a patient's disease but to the total *organization of work* done over that course, plus the *impact* on those involved with that work and its organization. (1985, p.8)

The concept of trajectory was originally coined as a social science category for the description and analysis of the ensemble of processes of disease and professional work of care from a researcher perspective. SCHÜTZE's contribution

¹ *Pragmatic embedding* is used here as a translation for SCHÜTZE's concept *pragmatische Brechung* (e.g. SCHÜTZE, 1987).

consists in furthering its development and generalization as a fundamental theoretical concept for the analysis of biographical and social processes.

The biographical process structure of trajectory theoretically grasps the counterpart of temporally extended intentional biographical action in the framework of biographical process structures termed biographical action schemes. The concept of trajectory denotes extended processes of social disorder, or, rather, the erosion of social and biographical order. A person who is subjected to such a downward social development experiences the continual defeat of his or her expectations, a loss of orientation, and the estrangement from others and from his or her own inner self. Processes of suffering develop an internal dynamics, that lead to a limitation of the action capacities, and thus continuously gain biographical dominance.

The analysis of the dynamics of Hülya's trajectory of migration draws from the segmentation of the linear unfolding of the autobiographical narrative into its units of presentation on the segmental and super-segmental level of narrative and experience. A model of the chronology of a trajectory process is given in RIEMANN & SCHÜTZE (1991, pp.342-344) and SCHÜTZE (1995, pp.129-131). In terms of its trajectory structure, the narrative can be described as follows: At the outset of each trajectory process, there is some potential for a negative development in the sense that the informant has acquired in his or her biography the proclivity for getting hurt that combines with actual difficulties in the informant's current living situation. Hülya is brought up in a traditional rural context in Turkey. Regarding her inner disposition for getting hurt, it is not only her unquestioning obedience as a young female in Turkish culture, but probably also her deep trust in the benevolent care structures of a family system that support her readiness to migrate to Germany for work and provide for her family. In terms of negative exterior conditions, we learn about the severe poverty of her family, the fact that her father, because of sudden disease, cannot financially support the family, and the predisposition of the family to migrate for work; the family moves to wherever the father finds work. These biographical and contextual framing conditions stand in close connection with the informant's early "quasi decision" (as we would like to call it) to go to Germany as a migrant worker. This is outlined in segments 1 and 2 of the autobiographical narrative (lines 122-131 & 133-167).

In the next stage of the trajectory development, the trajectory potential begins to pick up dynamics and leads to a constellation of exterior conditions that can no longer be controlled. The informant is no longer in the position to act but is forced to react to overwhelming exterior conditions. In the case of Hülya, the trajectory potential becomes dynamic when the first constituent steps are taken to prepare her for migration; that is a doctor is consulted to testify that Hülya is older than she actually is, and she is registered at the labor office as a candidate for working migration (lines 169-195). In the course of three years, the family made several attempts to get Hülya's official age changed. During

that period no alternatives to secure a family income had been taken into account; Hülya does not mention any discussion of that matter within the family. This is taken here as a hint towards the assumption that there existed a certain readiness in her family to use or sacrifice her for their survival.

When Hülya learns that her applications to go to Germany were accepted, she is working in the field, and people from her village tell her: “You will go to Germany. Mail arrived today, for you.” (lines 197-198)

Segment 3 (lines 169-211) shows how Hülya’s family and village create relevant facts in the process of her migration, and how she is put on the track. This major event at the outset of Hülya’s trajectory is presented in a very pronounced way in the format of experienced speech.

It is also characteristic of the outset of a trajectory process that it occurs like a shock. Hülya undergoes a shock experience when she is sent for a medical examination in Istanbul, where she is submitted to a dehumanizing procedure (segment 4, lines 213-244). In Istanbul her brother turns out to be a major processing agent in the dynamics of Hülya’s trajectory of suffering. During the medical examination and the further administration of her migration in Turkey, Hülya, for the first time, gets the feeling of becoming a stranger in her own family and country. Her estrangement is symptomatically expressed through instances of experienced speech:

And then my brother grumbled, ‘Did you have to be /eh/ so nervous or upset?
What happens if you lose and the whole thing has been in vain?’ (lines 240-241)

Hülya is unable to describe what occurred to her in formats of more distanced speech. She sticks to the verbal exchanges between herself and her brother (and also between herself and the examiner). She is no longer in command of the things that happen to her and can only refer to them in a very direct, uninterpreted way, just as when she learns about her acceptance as a migrant worker from the people in her village.

The feeling of estrangement is characteristic of a stage where the trajectory process is already in its flow. Estrangement is the dominant impression Hülya conveys when describing her arrival in Germany in the next segment of presentation (segment 5, lines 260-291):

and ... I found that strange! Even other people, fellow-countrymen, didn’t knock at our door and/ whether or not we needed something and so on. Well, we were all so sad, but we also didn’t talk ... among each other ... (lines 282-285)

Once she has arrived in Germany, Hülya feels even strange to her fellow countrymen. For some time there is also a lack of communication among the young Turkish women who share the same fate. The state of anomie and estrangement is both the result of the trajectory process and a means that keeps it going, since without communication and solidarity it is hard to conceive of ways out of the downward moving process structure.

In the next segment (segment 6, lines 291-308) Hülya describes her dirty work and her supplementary job of cleaning the building after her ordinary working time, which is also largely unpaid.

In segment 7 (lines 308-331) Hülya steps back from her narrative and begins a reflection about her biographical situation at the time of her first employment. In a conflict with her company about the supplementary cleaning job, where she is threatened with being sent back to Turkey, if she refuses to do the cleaning, she finds that she is in a trap:

But I /eh/ also didn't have money. When I came to Germany we had to take money from other people. First, I had debts, that was an affair of honor, I had to pay this back. And, second, I always thought, no one will believe me when I tell them what /ehm/ has happened in Germany. And they will think that I might have stolen something. Or... and therefore the police has sent me home and so on. (lines 323-328)

Hülya is condemned to stay in Germany, because of financial obligations² and, most importantly, because she cannot rely on the foundations of trust in her family and village back home.

After this fundamental insight into the hopelessness of her situation, Hülya reaches some sort of equilibrium which allows her to do her hard work for some time. In segment 8 she describes the routines of her hard working day. This period of relative equilibrium, of temporarily coming to terms with her suffering, also encompasses the next segment (segment 9, lines 346-409), where Hülya talks about her first injury with a knife on the job and about how she is not properly cared for by her company. In that context she also mentions a delegate from Turkey who inspects her company without looking at the more problematic parts of the migrant workers' working conditions.

The time after her first employment, when she is picked up by some relatives who live in Germany, can still be subsumed under the period of relative equilibrium. Hülya's life gets a little more complicated, since she has to obtain a permit of residence and get a new job by herself (segment 10, lines 411-543).

The major topic of this segment is Hülya's sense of community and her longing for human warmth in her personal relationships, which she characterizes as a major trait in Turkish culture. She talks about the close relationship she had developed with the young Turkish women she was living with while working for her first company. This is not the case as Hülya begins working for a second company. She regrets that her fellow countrymen seem to change once they are in Germany for a few years. Consequently, she adds a reflection about her own personality. From the linearization in this segment it can be inferred that she fears that she might change as well (cf. NOHL, 2001, for a discussion on the discursive dealing with differences in the modes of sociality as experienced by young Turkish men in Germany). The segment is concluded

² It is not clear in this passage whether she is referring to her own debts or to money her family had borrowed—maybe for sending her to Germany in the first place.

by describing how a new arrangement of living is organized, again based on community. Hülya changes her room in order to live together with a few young Turkish women.

The next segment marks a change in the unfolding of Hülya's trajectory. The unstable equilibrium, that could so far be managed, is disturbed (segment 11, lines 544-573). During her second vacation in Turkey Hülya is married to a Turkish man. It is agreed, though, that she can go back to Germany for another year. In a background construction (lines 546-555) Hülya expresses how her mother suffers from Hülya being a migrant worker in Germany and her brother having to leave for military service. These two cases of leaving seem to have been dealt with in similar ways by her family; however, we do not learn whether Hülya's particular suffering was dealt with in her family as a topic at all.

Our line of argument, that Hülya's arranged marriage in Turkey and the ignorance of her family relative to her real situation as a migrant worker in Germany lead to an increase of disorder in the biography of the informant is supported by the fact that immediately afterwards, when she returns to Germany, her trajectory of severe disease begins. Hülya has to undergo two operations, and up to the time of her narrative interview she is unable to find out for what reason(s) she had been operated on. It was even discussed that it might have been cancer. That the circumstances of her operations remain ambiguous clearly points to a peak phase in Hülya's trajectory. During that time she is virtually unable to organize her everyday life. As far as her biographical suffering is concerned, when confronted with her bad state of health, her situation as a migrant worker clearly becomes a matter of secondary importance. It is also characteristic for the peak phase of a trajectory that only some of its aspects are tackled and then over focussed, whereas others are neglected. In this case, Hülya's energy is entirely consumed by her health problems. The trajectory of migration is transformed into a trajectory of disease (segments 12, lines 575-630, and 13, lines 632-669).

The next phase in Hülya's ongoing trajectory is dedicated to the theoretical activities of working through the trajectory experience. Hülya performs this kind of biographical work when she goes on a vacation to Turkey after her operations. During that time she tentatively touches on the origins of her suffering and develops an attitude towards them (segment 14, lines 671-731). This stage of the trajectory will be submitted to a more detailed analysis in the next section. It is of key relevance in the unfolding of Hülya's story since it deals with the mechanisms of her suffering. It is also of importance in terms of biographical development, given that the attitude Hülya develops in her reflective activities will greatly influence her future perspectives.

Hülya's understanding of the mechanisms of her trajectory—as rudimentary as it may be—leads her to take measures to control her suffering: She starts to organize her life in Germany on her own. In segment 15 (lines 733-831) Hülya

tells how she fights her case (concerning her dismissal) at the labor court; how she starts to learn German; how she finds two new jobs on her own; and how she fights for her rights in working life.

In her pre-coda comment (segment 16, lines 833-841) Hülya refers to her lingering bad health. Her coda is brief and only marks the end of her narrative (segment 17, lines 843-844). In her post-coda comment (segment 18, lines 846-871) Hülya talks about how she feels exhausted. As far as her integration in Germany is concerned, she draws a positive conclusion saying that she feels accepted and appreciated by her neighbors. She even evaluates her working life in a rather positive way. It is significant that her family and her country of origin do not appear in the coda part of her narrative.³

4. Exemplary Analysis of one Segment of Presentation

The speech segment to be submitted to a thorough analysis is taken from a stage in the process of trajectory development which lies behind its peak (segment 14, lines 671-731). In this phase, an informant would typically come to the point where he or she attempts to theoretically work through the trajectory dynamics. These theoretical activities would occur in the format of argumentation. Hülya's narrative does not contain many argumentative passages in the strict sense of the category. This in itself can be interpreted as an indicator of severe biographical suffering, since the informant does not overtly produce many attempts to theoretically evaluate the experiences she communicates in her narrative passages. Theoretical reflection is, however, important in order to develop an attitude towards biographical experience.

The passage to be discussed in this chapter can be characterized as the informant's authentic effort at theoretically coming to terms with an extended period of biographical experience. Although it is organized as a narrative, it contains quite a considerable argumentative potential. This argumentative potential is materialized in presentation activities of second degree; that is, in subordinated efforts of presentation, termed *background constructions*⁴ in the framework of analysis of autobiographical discourse. Background constructions provide for the most part argumentative approaches to biographically relevant subject matter which cannot yet be tackled in the first order line of

³ It has to be kept in mind, though, that the post-coda part may not be available in full length, because at this point the tape was finished.

⁴ The concept *background construction* was developed by Fritz SCHÜTZE, cf. for example RIEMANN & SCHÜTZE (1991). The necessity for producing background constructions results from the interactive constitution of the communication scheme of narration. Whenever relevant stretches of experience are left out from the flow of narrative production for some reason, some sort of repair activity can be registered in the narrative. Such repair activity is often performed through background constructions.

presentation. They can be regarded as “on line” instances of the performance of biographical work in the flow of extempore storytelling.

In the case of our informant, several background constructions serve as discursive locations for approaching biographically relevant kernels of experience, that is, they allow the informant to shed light on the mechanisms of her suffering. The background constructions to be discussed deal with Hülya’s husband’s and family’s attitudes concerning her bad health, her marriage, and her own attitude toward her marriage. These issues are important to the more general long term biographical action scheme of migrating back to Turkey. It is worth mentioning that even at the time of the interview, several years after her marriage and divorce, Hülya is unable to integrate these topics into a straight line of narrative structure.⁵

Table 1: Discourse structure of peak phase of trajectory

<i>Discourse Structure</i>	<i>Narrative</i>
Main Story Line	Yeah, then in the summer of 1977
Background Explanation	I had been discharged /eh/ in the end of April or beginning of May, I had been ... in the hospital for three weeks or four weeks, I am not quite sure any more.
Main Story Line	Then I urgently wanted to go home.
Background Explanation	I didn’t / then I was at home for a few weeks, I didn’t really recover, but I started to work again.
Main Story Line	/Eh/ in the summer, in July or June, I don’t know /eh/ I went home even though I /eh/ was not allowed to take such a long trip.
Background Construction	I always ... thought of my ... family, my ... husband, what he would think of me even though he had <u>agreed</u> with one or two years. They had /eh/ written all the time that I should return right away. I simply

⁵ The segment of the narrative which is analysed more thoroughly in this paper is presented in terms of its discourse structure and the corresponding stretches of presentation activity. As far as its exact wording is concerned, there may be slight deviations from the interview text as provided on the Internet. These deviations result from the fact that the authors have produced a revised translation from the original segment of interview, which is in German. This should not be interpreted as a critical commentary on the quality of the translation in the appendix; the English translation of the German interview is excellent; also, it conveys information about speech production phenomena such as false starts, self repairs, and other indicators of reflective activities that occur in the process of speaking (e.g., BUTTERWORTH, 1975; CHAFE, 1979, 1980, 1990; DECHERT 1980; GOLDMAN-EISLER, 1968; KOWAL, 1991). These provide important insights when a closer analysis of the linguistic rendering is done, as the framework of autobiographical narrative analysis suggests. We thought it was helpful to do our own translation of the segment which was submitted to a closer description as part of our own text analysis, which also draws on more subtle linguistic features.

	couldn't do it. Because of my health, because of my financial situation anyhow and: they just cannot imagine what it is like here. You cannot throw down everything and run away! You have to settle (things with) the documents, department have to run around from one department to the next one, go to the consulate and everything.
Main Story Line	And ... well, I wanted to go on a vacation first of all,
Background Construction	and even though I had always written afterwards how I was and what had been done I had always <u>embellished</u> this a little so to speak so that my mother, my husband should (please) not be sad. I said, 'It wasn't serious, I have undergone an operation and I feel excellent again and so on'. Nevertheless my mother worried a lot, she would have almost gone mad, she just cried without interruption.
Main Story Line	I was at home, but right away / I didn't go to my husband right away,
Argumentative Grounding	because I didn't know where he is living. /Eh/ he had /eh/ he had been transferred. He worked at the post (office). /Eh/ When we got married we got married in our village and I didn't accompany him ((she laughs)) to his working place, I didn't know (where it was). /Eh/ first of all, it was not possible for me to take the trip on my own because of my health.
Main Story Line	I went to my mother and she was with my brother. I could / because I had also become very sick after the long trip I had to stay there at first for a little while. And then together with my mother, they—we took a cab.
Detailing	It was a long way of three, four hours, but she said, 'No way! You can't take the bus!'
Main Story Line	When we were there /
Background Explanation	well, they had heard though that I am there already, but /ehm/ my husband and his family felt <u>insulted</u> because I had visited <u>my</u> parents first. And therefore they didn't come even though I was sick.
Main Story Line	Yeah ... Well, we <u>didn't</u> quarrel and so on,
Evaluation	<i>but I had ... right away at the ... we ... /</i>
Background Construction	Also, after the wedding we had just been together for /eh/ one week. He is /eh/ my relative, /eh/ the son of my uncle of my maternal side. A nice person, (he) is a good person, but ... Well, you just expect something <u>different</u> from relatives and /eh/ something different from your husband and ... He was ... /eh/ not like I had ... imagined... I also had /eh/ had choices that year when I /eh/... / He had not /eh/ worried at all. He didn't ask me either what had been done there ((referring to the operations)) and what it was like and nothing at all. It was important for him /eh/ his <u>pride</u> when I would return and why, that I didn't return when he had written, not right away. And he just blamed me. I couldn't even listen. I was so ill. So / I was so miserable, nevertheless

	I had to play the young daughter in law at home for the visitors and guests and so on. My mother cried all the time because she had to see this ...
Evaluation	<i>But I knew this /eh/ right away /eh/ that we didn't ... harmonize. That it wouldn't end well, even if I would return for good.</i>
Main Story Line	Well, it became like that in 1977 and 1978... You know, with the letter and things like that, there was already some quarrelling. Not personally, but just in written form. And in 1978 I didn't /eh/ I didn't want to go to him. I wanted to - I went to my parents right away. I stayed there for three weeks and my parents in law came all the time that we should reconcile and so on. And my mother wished so badly that we should reconcile again. Then I went there until ... the end of ... my ... vacation. And that was my <u>whole</u>—marriage.
Background Construction	And afterwards I didn't go back to my husband. I said, 'we are too different'. I read life (in) small letters, he reads capital letters. /Eh/ for him everything was so superficial and different, totally different and ... we were as different as day and night. Of course, older people don't understand it. Our mothers, my mother and my mother in law, have experienced life quite differently. They only accept one reason for divorce, my mother or /eh/ Turkish women: only if she is /eh/ unfaithful or very bad things happen, or if the parents in law don't want to have her. If a <u>man</u> is /eh/ unfaithful it is even an honor for him because he can still get ... enough women and so on. But for /eh/ if a woman does it, it's a <u>disaster</u> . She either gets killed or, if (he) has still gotten some common sense left, the man gets a divorce, but a woman ... Even when the man /eh/ is guilty they don't ask nevertheless. It's always women who are guilty when they get divorced...
Main Story Line	In 1980 we got divorced ...
Biographical Comment	<i>Well, I / he wasn't in Germany, I was alone all the time. It didn't matter to me, but I was just sad ... /ehm/ that I am now only in the position of a divorced woman, you know, and that's also not so nice. If I had derived something out of my marriage I wouldn't have been so sad. Only married in vain - only <u>to be married</u>, to be a housewife, only my mother and my parents, well practically I was a victim. Hadn't been forced, but by my mother or by my parents. <u>Always</u>, I always sacrificed myself for other people ...</i>

The informant begins the segment by telling that after her long and severe disease, during which she had to undergo several operations, she wanted to go to Turkey on a vacation. As far as her presentation work is concerned, the informant is unable to communicate her decision to go to Turkey in summer 1977 in just one straight line of presentation; she needs several attempts and thus kind of *stumbles* into telling about the biographically decisive event of visiting her family and husband. On the symptomatic level of narrative lineari-

zation⁶, the discontinuous character of her presentation work points to the difficult event structure she is going to deal with.

First, Hülya feels the need to provide some background information regarding the short delay between her discharge from hospital and her trip to Turkey and the fact that she was still in poor health. In order to give these pieces of background information, she interrupts the presentation of her main story line twice, thus indicating that these two points are necessary to understand her overall physical condition when she went to Turkey. These two pieces of relevant background explanation inform us about her personal situation at the time when she meets her family in Turkey.

A third interruption of the main story line has the format of a background construction. It deals with a subject matter which has a deeper biographical impact, namely the question as to whether Hülya should return to Turkey forever, given the fact that she is in very poor health:

I always ... thought of my ... family, my ... husband, what he would think of me even though he had agreed with one or two years. They had /eh/ written all the time that I should return right away. I simply couldn't do it. Because of my health, because of my financial situation anyhow and: they just cannot imagine what it is like here. You cannot throw down everything and run away! You have to settle (things with) the documents, department have to run around from one department to the next one, go to the consulate and everything.

In this background construction Hülya mentions that her family and her husband wrote letters urging her to return to Turkey. Hülya contrasts her family's suggestion to return with her particular situation in Germany, both as far as her state of health and the bureaucratic hassles of migrating back are concerned. In this background construction Hülya shows understanding of her family's ignorance, although it has to be taken into consideration that her family should have had some sense of what it means to migrate in terms of administrative requirements, since the measures to get Hülya to Germany had been quite complex and needed to be carried out carefully. From its contextual embedding it becomes clear that *return* in "I should return right away" in this part of the narrative is understood by Hülya as *migrating back to Turkey*.

In the presentation format of a background construction Hülya thus reflects about the possibility of returning to Turkey forever, her return being envisaged because she is seriously ill. It is interesting, nevertheless, that her return forever is never pronounced explicitly nor even dealt with in a first order presentation activity. The fact that Hülya has to step back from her main story line and produce a second order presentation activity points to the supposition that the invitation to return forever might not have been serious. Although her husband and family seem to have taken notice of her bad physical condition, their letters may have meant little more than the mere canonical expression of regret. A rather strange point Hülya makes in favor of not being able to return for good

⁶ On the linearization problem in speech production cf. LEVELT (1981, 1989).

supports this argument: She is unable to migrate back because of her *financial situation*! Since she is probably the only family member who has a regular income that would allow her to travel from Germany to Turkey, it is questionable that financial reasons should have kept her in Germany. It could, however, be the case that she sends so much money for support to her family, that this would indeed not allow her to migrate back. Since she can afford to travel to Turkey for vacation, it seems more plausible to assume that the agreement for her to stay one or two more years after her wedding has more or less the character of an economic contract, keeping her in working migration in Germany for a limited period, while still being able to support her family of origin and to save money for living with her husband.

It is indeed very harmful for Hülya to reflect about the role her family of origin plays in her migration process. As she conveys in other parts of the interview, the myth of an intact family context back home in Turkey is the only thing that sustains her under such inhumane working conditions and the ethnic discrimination that she is exposed to in Germany. In a state of biographical crisis, however, she is forced to think about herself and of possible ways out of her miserable situation. A permanent migration back to Turkey should of course first emerge as a possible solution. Hülya must have gotten a sense of her family's lack of care, although she is unable to pronounce this clearly. The fact that she touches the important issue of permanently returning home and the canonical letter writing of her family (as a mere theoretical rather than practically supporting activity) together in the format of one background construction shows that Hülya does draw a relationship here, even though this remains below the surface of her explicit presentation. She deals with these biographically important details within the format of a background construction and thus indicates that even at the moment of the presentation of her narrative she is unable to integrate those harmful facts into a straight narrative format.

The continuation of her main story line presents the outcome of her biographical reflection: "Well, I wanted to go on a vacation first of all." It is not the question of migrating back; Hülya wants to go to Turkey for vacation. In a sense, the concept of *home*, which Hülya had chosen in her main story line to denote her going back to Turkey, seems to have lost its location.

In the background construction and the main story line, Hülya discusses the biographical action scheme of migrating back to Turkey, which is of course suggested by her situation of being married to a Turkish man and strongly indicated through her poor state of health. The fact that Hülya is not actively supported by her family and husband in her reflecting about returning forever, given that she is seriously ill, does not cause her to complain about or condemn her family. Since family ties are traditionally an important cultural topos in the Turkish culture, Hülya rather finds arguments to explain the reaction of her family. She is able to do so because she is competent in both Turkish and German contexts of living; she states that her family cannot properly assess her

situation. This refers to the administrative difficulties a permanent migration back to Turkey would cause, as well as to her real state of health.

Her family's lack of initiative regarding Hülya's poor health condition is dealt with in another background construction: When informing her family and husband about her operations, Hülya had always glossed over the matter. It is again decisive that a background construction is needed to deal with this. It becomes thus structurally clear that Hülya did indeed touch on the issue of her family's lack of support, although she is explaining it away, and that she is suffering from it.

When Hülya's main story line continues, it deals with her arrival in Turkey and the conflict she encounters there, primarily with her husband's family: They feel insulted because their daughter-in-law first went to her family of origin and had to stay there for a few days because of her health condition.

When Hülya looks at her relationship with her husband in particular, she finds that they did not quarrel. But when she comes to evaluate her relationship to her husband from a personal point of view, she concludes that they did not fit together very well, that she knew this from the beginning and that her coming back forever would not help the matter. It is revealed later in this segment that Hülya did indeed connect to her marriage far reaching expectations regarding her still envisaged migration back to Turkey. It is not her return that should have helped her marriage, but her marriage that should have helped her return forever. In following that kind of plan she in a way approves of the traditional idea that a woman needs to be provided for by her husband. It is astonishing that a husband is needed to allow Hülya to return since she has been the financial basis for her family of origin for many years. When reflecting about this construction one could even be tempted to suspect that she would not have been received in her family without any preconditions.

Her passage of evaluation is interrupted by another background construction in which Hülya consequently deals with her failed expectations as far as her marriage is concerned: Instead of showing authentic care for his wife, her husband is more concerned about his pride, thus acting more as a relative who has to enforce cultural expectations, than as a husband, who is also worrying about his wife as a person. In this background construction it becomes clear to Hülya that her husband is nothing more to her than a relative, whose task it is to make sure that she still functions as a member of his traditional culture, even though she lives in Germany. That he is a cousin indeed may have contributed to a clash of schemata on his side. The fact that the cousin is a relative from Hülya's maternal side makes her mother's contribution to Hülya's trajectory structure appear in a different light.

The background constructions Hülya has produced in this speech segment all deal in some respect with her family of origin and her mother in particular. It is interesting to note that Hülya ends her background constructions, that is, her mostly argumentative way of dealing with biographically relevant issues,

with reference to her mother. Statements like “Nevertheless my mother worried a lot, she would have almost gone mad, she just cried without interruption” and “My mother cried all the time because she had to see this” at the end of her background constructions not only topicalize the mother’s sadness and helplessness, but also allude to her contribution to Hülya’s suffering. On the one hand, Hülya’s mother is not described as a person who actively provided help to her, when she was sick, and when she had to take over duties as a daughter in law in her husband’s family. On the other hand, Hülya’s husband is a descendant of her mother’s family line, and it can be assumed that her mother had played an important role in the arrangement of the marriage, which may finally prevent her from more actively supporting her daughter in the new household.

Of course, Hülya merely touches on the issue of her mother’s share of responsibility for her suffering when she biographically reflects about her disease, her marriage, and her vacation at home. She comes to a more explicit reflection of her mother’s cultural role in another background construction, which is inserted into the main story line within the statement about her final divorce. In that background construction she deals not only with how she differs from her husband, but also with the difficulties a divorce would bring about, particularly for women from a rural background. With the statement “It’s always women who are guilty when they get divorced” she documents that she must have been blamed by her mother, who was even cooperating with her mother-in-law in the matter.

Hülya’s biographically relevant discussions in the various background constructions of this segment have the function of allowing her to work through important stretches of experience. They have a clarifying potential for the informant. Although the segment only tentatively touches on the mechanisms of trajectory unfolding, one can see from a sequential analysis that biographically relevant reflections about those mechanisms occur in its argumentative parts. These deal with the role Hülya’s mother played in the period of her illness, the failure of her marriage, and, since these issues are connected, in the trajectory of her migration in general. In a biographical comment Hülya thus concludes: “Always, I always sacrificed myself for other people.” In her biographical comment, which deals with her feeling of having sacrificed herself, Hülya refers to her marriage and her divorce. Also, she twice refers to her parents and to her mother in particular: “...*only my mother and my parents*, well practically I was a victim. Hadn’t been forced, but *by my mother or by my parents*. Always, I always sacrificed myself for other people.”

When she makes reference to her parents, she cannot spell out in what respect she sees them connected to her being a victim. She interrupts herself twice. But then she comes to the more general conclusion that she always sacrificed herself for other people. Regarding the linear unfolding of her narrative, she draws a relation between her suffering and her parents. It is not her marriage she is talking about when she sees herself as a victim. It is through the

discussion of her marriage that the general mechanisms of her suffering seem to have come to the surface. These cannot be confined to the clearly exhausting and dehumanizing conditions of her work in Germany.

In the process of a detailed autobiographical extempore narrative, Hülya develops the unfortunate insight that she had been abandoned by her family of origin for their own financial support. This line of argument is supported by the fact that the transformation of Hülya's trajectory of migration into a secondary trajectory of disease starts exactly after she had been married to a Turkish man during her vacation in Turkey. From that time on in her narrative Hülya rarely deals with her work and life in Germany. The peak of her trajectory of suffering is clearly connected to her family experience. From a Western European perspective, it can only be suspected how deeply this insight must have touched her in her cultural and biographical identity, since family ties are such an important concept in Turkish culture. From symptomatic features of Hülya's linguistic presentation, such as hesitation phenomena and certain argumentations, one can infer how the concept of family ties can also function as a constraint in the DURKHEIMIAN sense. Since it is part of the canonical stock of cultural knowledge, it enters into discussions in the form of topically given information and can hardly be submitted to discussion at all.

In a comprehensive study of collective orientations of young Turkish men in Turkey and Germany, NOHL (2001) develops the category of *reciprocity*. In group discussions, the young Turkish men elaborate on ideas of reciprocity within the sphere of the family, which operates across generations and may work with a time lag. Being conceived of in terms of reciprocity, family care given to the young people by their parents is something rather essential and natural, which fundamentally characterizes the relationship of the young people with their parents. In the framework of concepts of reciprocity, it appears equally natural to the young people that care offered to them when they are young is to be returned to the parents some time in the future. When talking about reciprocity many of NOHL's informants used ethnic schematizations, in that they were suggesting that reciprocity is something genuinely Turkish that distinguishes the Turkish culture from the German culture. Taking into account the young age when Hülya is sent to Germany as a migrant worker, she may be seen as having been forced to pay back for care she received before the appropriate time; that is to fulfil the reciprocity contract while being a child.

NOHL (2001) also found that those of his informant groups who had come from families with migration experiences strongly felt that there were different modes of sociality within the Turkish and the German cultures. In order to deal with this *experience of difference* in their group discussions they constructed a separation between the (inner) sphere of the family and the sphere of the external society in which they were living. It was this separation of the inner and the outer spheres that enabled them to cope with the experiential discrepancy of living in two different modes of sociality. This *separation of spheres* makes it

possible for the young people to speak with respect about their parents, even though some of their traditional views can hardly be reconciled with the everyday life of the young Turkish men in Germany. Due to the separation of spheres, the family may remain something sacrosanct, just as it is to Hülya.

With respect to long term biographical planning, the informant Hülya seems to be confronted with two patterns of action which cannot be reconciled within her biography. On the one hand, she is subject to working migration; that is, she is integrated into a long term family action scheme of financial support and therefore has to leave her culture of origin to go to Germany. On the other hand, she accepts an arranged marriage to a Turkish man and thus acts in correspondence with an institutional pattern of the life cycle that is largely determined by expectations formulated in her culture of origin. The passage distinctly demonstrates how these two patterns of action enter into a conflict that can only be resolved by the informant escaping from the dynamics of at least one of them, namely the marriage. When she acknowledges that her marriage has failed the migration trajectory is transformed into an action scheme of organizing life in the culture of the country of migration. The fact that these two patterns of action cannot be successfully integrated within the biography of the informant has of course to do with the growing estrangement of the informant from her culture of origin, and also with the estrangement her family feels from their daughter in Germany. Neither the informant nor her family in Turkey anticipated that changes in both contexts would occur and that their relationship would suffer as a result.

The clash of schemata is documented in the way Hülya and her family treat the problem of the mysterious diseases. From a traditional perspective, it is to be feared that Hülya, after her operations, may be unable to bear children, which would be an important aspect in her traditional marriage to a Turkish man. Therefore she never completely informs her family and husband about the seriousness of her illness. On the other hand, Hülya has good reason to complain about the lack of sympathy shown to her by her husband and his family. When reflecting about her state of health and the way this is almost excluded from the interaction, particularly with her husband, she feels increasingly estranged from her culture of origin and develops a sense of her situation being subject to outside influences in a double sense; namely, with respect to her destiny as a migrant worker and as a traditionally married woman.

The growing estrangement from her culture of origin is also reflected in the lack of communication about those biographically important issues. The time Hülya spent apart from her family has also led to a lack of understanding; that is, neither Hülya nor her family and husband can be sure what particular events in the other context really mean. The growing estrangement and misunderstanding are intensified by the character of the Turkish language, which is highly metaphorical, and inseparably connected to the experiential context of

living; something which Hülya, since her time in Germany, does not share with her family.⁷

5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper an attempt was made to analyze the autobiographical narrative of a female migrant worker in Germany in terms of the basic theoretical concept of trajectory. The informant (Hülya) undergoes extended processes of biographical suffering that have their origin in her migrating to a culturally different country, in the inhumane working conditions she unexpectedly encounters as a hired migrant worker in Germany, and, most importantly, in the growing understanding of the hopelessness of her situation, given that her family of origin does not simply invite her to return home, but largely ignores her suffering. They only ritually regret her loss without really taking into account her severe suffering in Germany. When her arranged marriage to a Turkish man in Turkey fails she gains more competence in organizing her life in Germany, thus documentarily (in the sense of Karl MANNHEIM) demonstrating that her marriage represented a way to migrate back to Turkey. Without being provided for she sees herself unable to return to Turkey; this is an extremely negative insight for her biographical stability and cultural identity since she has been the sole financial provider for her family of origin for many years.

Many of those negative insights into the mechanisms of Hülya's suffering are rarely stated explicitly in the interview. They can only be derived from a sequential analysis and structural description of Hülya's rendering of her life story in her autobiographical extempore narrative. The sequential analysis identifies units of presentation following markers of incision and relates them to the sedimentation of experiences in the informant. From the structural description of those units of presentation and an analysis of their linearization the relevant process structures of the life course can be inferred. The process structures of the life course constitute the framing context in the light of which each proposition the informant formulates (or prefers not to formulate) has to be submitted to analytical understanding.

In the case of the present interview, it is revealed that Hülya's vacation in Turkey, which led to her divorce, marks a turning point in her biography. In terms of its occurrence in the process structure of a trajectory of suffering, it takes place after its peak phase, which contains many indicators of a breakdown of orientation and a transformation into a trajectory of disease. The vacation and divorce episodes stand for an effort undertaken by the informant to theoretically come to terms with her trajectory of suffering. Although the pas-

⁷ The authors owe this valuable insight to Arnd-Michael NOHL, the author of the study on collective orientations of young Turkish men in Turkey and Germany.

sage in its dominant line of presentation is narratively organized, it contains a considerable argumentative potential, which is materialized in its subordinated lines of presentation. It also contains a growth of knowledge on the part of the informant, which is reached through the reflection activities in the background constructions. Consequently, the reflection activities in the background constructions can be explored in order to learn with what pieces of relevant background information the informant is concerned before she comes to the conclusion that she has always sacrificed herself for others (as she states in a biographical comment at the end of the passage examined in this paper). Due to the background constructions, which interrupt the main line of narrative presentation, the structural rendering of the episode appears rather discontinuous. Nevertheless, the informant always resumes her main story line and concludes it with an evaluation and a biographical comment, thus coming up with a well-rounded narrative gestalt in the end. As interpreted from the symptomatics of its presentational unfolding, the unit as a whole can be understood as an authentic effort of the informant to closely explore the origins of her suffering. The sequential analysis and structural description are thus necessary for the reconstruction of the dimensions of her suffering, and also for the reconstruction of the dimensions of her understanding of her suffering. Not all pieces of knowledge the informant gains about the mechanisms of her suffering can be put into an unambiguous proposition. However, in her background constructions Hülya alludes to the origins of her suffering when she mentions her family's lack of care.

The methodological necessity of pragmatic embedding of the informant's utterances helps to reconstruct the sedimentation of the informant's experiences. It helps to shed light on those episodes, which are only tentatively referred to, because at the moment of narrating the informant has yet to develop a distinct attitude towards them, or because they are simply too threatening to be formulated. This is particularly the case in narratives on extended processes of biographical suffering that are still acute; distinct knowledge about the mechanisms of the dynamics of suffering would help to develop strategies of coping with the trajectory. Pragmatic embedding of the informant's propositions helps to avoid drawing any facile conclusions with regard to their meanings in the biography of the informant. This is particularly evident in the interview as discussed here: It stems from a woman who has grown up in the Turkish culture and then experienced life as a migrant worker in Germany. Hülya's culture of origin and her later life as a migrant worker are unfamiliar to the researchers. This is indeed helpful in the analysis, since many parts of the informant's story are new and interesting for the researchers and thus not simply overlooked. But it is also true that many parts of the informant's life remain strange from a first naive reading of her interview. A careful analysis is thus needed in order to keep from understanding only the understandable. This is equally true for the episodes being referred to, as for the linguistic means of reference. The sequen-

tial analysis and structural description are part of the methodological repertoire of understanding the other, that is, understanding from the point of view of the stranger, as it is central to ethnographic research (cf. SCHÜTZE, MEINEFELD, SPRINGER & WEYMANN, 1973). The necessity for methods of understanding the other is most striking in the analysis of this interview, especially since it tells the story of a cultural stranger; methods of understanding the other are important in any analysis, since they help to gain insight and control the researcher's perspective.

We can only briefly mention the collective processes of suffering relative to working migration. Regarding working migration to Germany, whole generations from Southern European countries are in some way concerned with trajectory experiences: As the interview shows, individual workers can hardly cope with the working conditions they encounter in Germany. But one can also learn from the interview that families in the countries of origin, who have sent somebody abroad, can experience a great deal of suffering. In both Germany and in Turkey it is hardly taken into account that migrant workers do not come only as workers but come as individual human beings who undergo biographical development and change. It is plausible that Hülya's mother suffers from the loss of her daughter, as Hülya tells again and again in her interview; it is also plausible that Hülya is sacrificed by her parents, as she carefully and with great difficulty alludes to in the unit of presentation being analyzed here.

Migration processes across extremely different spheres seem to be susceptible to processes of estrangement. These result in a lack of communication between the actors on both sides of the migration path as well as a lack of understanding of the experiences of the actors. Problems in communication structures as well as problems in the respective faculties of understanding lead to the inability to resolve conflicting constellations of action schemes which necessarily occur in transgression of cultures.

Finally we would like to mention that Hülya's biography represents a classical example of the process structure of trajectory. Hülya manages to cope with the mechanisms of her suffering when she gains knowledge about them. However, she is exhausted and suffers from various mysterious diseases. Hülya's story delineates the process of her acquisition of understanding with all its consequences. Regarding her future living perspectives in Germany or in Turkey, Hülya is caught in a trap:

There is a head in the family. When someone has money, (when) a family member works for a few days somewhere, then they buy something to eat and then they get by. (lines 975-977)

Hülya never stops longing for Turkey, but it is her understanding that she would never be able to live there independently. From her personal experience she draws the conclusion that any family member who earns some money would be exploited by the others—just as it happened to her.

Her biographical situation of being caught in a trap is only alluded to in a complex and ambivalent argumentation as a response to one of the final interview questions. It is also presented in a generalizing way, but it is clearly formulated in place of a more concrete rendering of Hülya's own particular situation. In that context the legitimate question arises as to why she is prevented from looking more acutely at her family of origin when dealing with her own biographical situation. In response to this question we would like to suggest that her severe biographical suffering makes her blind to some of its origins, and it is indeed characteristic for trajectory processes that their mechanisms remain partly opaque. On the other hand, concepts of reciprocity and the separation of the inner sphere (her Turkish origin and family) and the outer sphere (the mode of sociality in the society to which she migrated) as developed in order to cope with experiences of differences in contexts of migration prevent her from more clearly considering her real situation with respect to her family of origin (cf. NOHL, 2001). The way Hülya carefully deals with the issue of her family and of migrating back home for good and how she hesitates to think things through, points to the suggestion that the myth of an intact family background for her might function as a cultural topos⁸; that is, a set of ideas coherently available in Hülya's culture of origin, that Hülya has internalized without further questioning, and that still direct her judgement. And, of course, without having something to long for, it is hardly possible to imagine how Hülya manages to survive at all.

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⁸ This concept is thought of in analogy to what POPITZ et al. (1957) call a social topos. Topical arguments originate from the collective experience of a given group or society. They are available as ready-made reactions to issues of general interest to the respective group or society. When used in discourse, topical arguments are particularly strong, in that they direct the dealing with whole sets of topics. On the other hand, it is difficult to discursively deal with stretches of experience, which run counter such canonical knowledge structures.

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