

# Migrant Narratives

Storytelling as Agency, Belonging and  
Community

**Edited by Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich,  
Anastasia Christou, Silke Meyer,  
Marie Johanna Karner and  
Anton Jakob Escher**

First published 2024

ISBN: 978-0-367-63745-3 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-63749-1 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-12052-0 (ebk)

## **5 Female agency, resourceful victimhood and heroines in migrant narrative**

*Silke Meyer*

CC-BY-NC-ND

DOI: 10.4324/9781003120520-7

The funder of the Open Access version of this chapter is  
University of Innsbruck



 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

## 5 Female agency, resourceful victimhood and heroines in migrant narrative

*Silke Meyer*

### **Narrative – Hatice’s story**

This chapter is based on the story of Hatice, a third-generation migrant woman whose family came from Turkey to Austria in the 1970s. Hatice was born in Innsbruck where she went to school, finished her A-Levels and graduated with a Master’s degree in Political Science. At the time of the interview, she is 34 years old. Hatice is married with two young children and has a part-time job in accounting. Her husband works in a Turkish supermarket chain and she also helps out there.

To anticipate her biographical punchline: Hatice has “made it”. She talks about her family history, about former dwellings and encounters with Austrian authorities, Muslim marriage practices and gender roles as well as the significance of work ethics in migrant lives. These collective experiences of social exclusion and discrimination are encountered with stories about individual agency and social mobility and thus turned into success stories.

Hatice’s and her family’s story is furthermore echoed in the history of labour migration from Turkey to Austria (see Ströhle in this volume). Since 1964, the recruitment agreement between Turkey and Austria has channelled the movements of men and women in order to provide work forces in growing Austrian industries. In Tyrol, it was mostly men who came to Innsbruck, Kufstein, Jenbach, Telfs and the Stubai Valley in the 1970s and early 1980s, with their families following later. Hatice’s grandfather was the first of the family to make his way to Austria, and, worked in one of the iron factories in the Stubai Valley. His family followed in 1982 with his wife, four children, his brother and his brother’s wife and children. The men found work in the local industries. Hatice’s father married a girl from the neighbouring village in Turkey and they have two children, Hatice and her brother.

*SM:* So, you know about this interview, we are interested in remittances between Austria and Turkey, what people send to Turkey and why. Can you tell me your experience, your point of view on remitting, what you think is important about it?

*HD:* Yeah, well, it all started with my grandfather, he came to Austria in 1978, with the recruitment agreement and he worked with [name of factory], you know, in the industries. That's what they all did, back then, it was the factories, and all the Turkish men back then went to work there, you know.

*SM:* And the families followed later?

*HD:* Yes, that's what it was like with everybody. My granny, my two uncles, my aunt and my dad followed a few years later. I mean they were all glad, of course, there wasn't much back home for them, it was a poor country but still very beautiful. I have always loved it, with the history and tradition, and the food, oh my God, the food. It is what I call my "Turkish heritage", my family history. But here, my grandpa had work and we had a good life, look at where we are today, so I guess, it was all worth it. Much like with the rest of our family, it was the same for everybody, they found work here and a way to support the family. You see, it was important back then, and I guess, it still is important for a Turkish man to support the family. //Yeah// That's why it is so difficult for them now, when they are not in charge [laughs] but that's another story.

*SM:* No, no, tell me [laughs].

*HD:* I mean, you know, how can I say this? In our family, the men are very strong, head-strong, my father is, and, I also married a very head-strong man. But, in life, it is not about getting your way all the time, it is about knowing how to make a deal and get what you want. This is what I know and I know it from experience [laughs]. The men are not so good at that, the Turkish men, and that is why women took over.

*SM* [with a tone of surprise]: Ehm, eh, they took over?

*HD:* Oh yeah, they did. You can believe me. For example, I will tell you a story about that. With my uncle and aunt, when they moved to Innsbruck, they were looking for a home, a flat, and they had found a place, in Hötting, well, further down, at the Inn, St. Nikolaus. You know, this used to be a place where many Turkish people lived, quite a poor area back then, with the old houses. And when they moved there, my uncle, his German was much better, he did all the talking with the landlord. But it was totally clear that the landlord didn't really like my uncle, and he could not get it right with him. You know what it was like back then. It was awful, really, with all resentments against foreigners. But my aunt, with her broken German, and the way she was, she could hardly look the landlord into his eyes, but he would help out, repair the boiler, bring a new stove and such things. That's what it is all about: everybody thinks that with the Turks, the men are in charge and the women are always quiet and have no say but it is not like that, I can tell you that. The world is not always what it seems.

*SM:* That is really interesting. How old were you back then?

*HD:* Oh, I was what, four or five? Doesn't matter, not important// OK// Anyway, nowadays, it is much more like this, the women have power and they close the deal (5 seconds pause) for example, the young women, like my friend, who brought a husband from Turkey and he cannot speak any German and find a job or anything.

*SM:* Really, I mean, I never ... why do they bring a husband from Turkey?

*HD:* It is quite simple [chuckles], because they need to find a Muslim husband. That should be interesting for you: The way it is, it is quite unfair really, because a Muslim man can marry a Christian girl, and this happens quite a lot, I think. But a Muslim girl cannot marry a Christian guy, and, then a man is brought from Turkey in order to marry a girl from here.

*SM:* OK, I see, and this works out?

*HD:* Well, not always, people get divorced and then there is shame for the family (6 seconds pause) but some guys, really, it is a disaster, they just don't get it, those Turks, the poor sods [chuckles].

*SM:* Why are they poor sods?

*HD:* They are just so helpless, they never do anything, just sit around and talk and play games, go to the betting shop and hang about. They show no interest in the Turkish community and what they have established. They just don't care.

*SM:* And these are all guys?

*HD:* All of them. Women have better things to do. They just get on with it, I mean, they have to. They look after the children, they go shopping, do the household chores, cook for everybody. And they just do it. [...] About the getting on with it, this is important, I think, I mean, I have a friend, she is from Serbia, and her mum was a teacher there, some sort of college teacher. And here, she is a cleaner and worked three jobs. And the thing is, she makes three times the money than she did in Serbia. So she gets on with it, she is not too good to be a cleaner, but just adapts to the way things are for her at the moment. When she does not work, she looks after her kids, that's why she took the job in the first place. And that's what makes her strong, I think, that she does not sit around and mope but gets on with her life, she always said to us: "girls, get to a job and make the best of it". And that's what makes her strong, a strong woman. [...] I remember we would come home after an afternoon playing outside and she would always have some delicious snacks for us. I got to know the Balkan cuisine that way, she was very traditional in her cooking, this is the taste of home, she would say. And they would also celebrate Serbian traditions and sing Serbian songs. It was different in our home. My parents were more eager to adapt to Austria, live and eat like Austrians, so we would also have spinach knödel [dumplings] and strudel. And this woman liked me very much, because with me, her daughter would speak German [laughs]. [...] It was always about work. All my parents and family

talked about was work, and who got a job there, and how is he doing. And only when you work, you can become somebody here, when you work hard enough, get up and take any job, like the Turks did. Jobs that only Turks would take on. The Turks are not afraid to get their hands dirty, they do what needs to be done, they go about it. It is the hard work that has given us the possibility to settle in this country, you could say, it is all about work. And now look at us, where we are now, I guess you can say that we have made it.

### **Methodological reflections and positionality**

The interview is part of a research project on remittances as social practice and negotiation of transnational belongings. The project centred on sending and receiving practices and the earmarking of money, objects and goods, ideas and social norms. In the interviews, people talked about remittances as a way of maintaining social ties with their homeland, but at the same time, they circle around difficult living conditions, new workplaces, language barriers, unfamiliar weather and food, homesickness and experiences of exclusion in Austrian society. These tales of arrival, surviving, coping and belonging have similarities in their account of work ethos, endurance and agency. Within the context of the research project, I met with Hatice, her parents and her brother several times. However, this is the only time I spoke with her alone. For the interview, we met in my office at the university, and I believe the academic environment contributed to her self-confident demeanour and the detached way of telling me her story.

Hatice is bilingual in Turkish and German which she speaks with a heavy Tyrolean dialect. The interviews were conducted in German, and I have paid special attention to reflect on linguistic devices and their meanings, without losing them in translation. I have recorded and transcribed the interview verbatim and in a more readable version. Emphasised words are underlined, para-verbal markers are given in square brackets, e.g. [chuckles]. Omissions are indicated with [...], short answers and stimuli by the interviewer are marked with //.

### ***Methodological reflections***

Methodologically, I analyse the biographical accounts on a content and on a linguistic level. In Hatice's story, her main argument is about the construction of female agency and the making of the "migrant heroine", demonstrating that identity politics in migrant narratives need an intersectional approach, taking into account the social categories of ethnicity, gender and class. In my interpretation, I cross-examine linguistic forms with content, in order to show how the arguments are weighed, what is foregrounded and marked as reportable (and what is not). On a linguistic level, I pay special attention to embedding (story within a story), forms of emplotment (where does a

story begin and end?), and, the establishment of tellability by using direct speech (Riessman 2008). Evaluative comments detach the narrator from the narrative and allow for a knowing external position. I also analyse the use and shifts of narrative perspective in order to examine the social positioning of the narrator, for example, representing the story as an individual report, or embedding it into a collective experience. My main objective is to interpret these narrative devices as forms of social positioning, with regard to the hegemonial migration discourse in Austrian society. I thereby use narrative as a way of evaluating one's own story and constituting a specific subjectivity (Jackson 2002).

### *Positionality and communicative roles*

I conducted this interview at the very beginning of our research project, it was, in fact, more of a pre-test than an interview to collect data. Although I started with the topic of remittances and frequently addressed them during the conversation, I hardly got any information on financial and material transfers. Hatice rather talked about the topic she considered important, which is gender and female agency in the Turkish community. My own position was twofold: I conducted that interview in the "powerful" role of a white university professor leading a research project and claiming expertise in the field of transnational studies. At the same time, I was a newbie eager to learn about the social practices and narratives in this very field: My knowledge was sparse and bookish, as I had not yet met with many interview partners and only read about the history of Turkish labour migration, remittances and transnationalism. As a result, Hatice led the interview and I followed, and whenever I tried to reverse the roles, she assertively shared her opinion of what was relevant and interesting for me, and what was not ("That should be interesting for you" or "not important"). We can see this right from the beginning: I ask about remittances and she answers with her family story. Hatice's story is about gender and ethnic stereotypes, about labour migration and work ethos. What it is not about, is remittances. Whenever I tried to focus the interview on the topic of remittances, her answers were short and almost brusque, whereas she became very talkative and relaxed when she addressed female agency and the inversion of gender roles. I therefore followed Hatice's lead in the interview, and we talked about her life, her family and friends and her view on the Turkish diaspora, migration and gender roles (and I never used the interview in the context of the research project).

Reflecting one's own role in field work is vital and the positions of Hatice and myself were clearly attributed: she was the expert in the transnational field, I was the rookie. She challenges my bookish and perhaps stereotypical knowledge with her story. On a meta-level, the entire interview can be read as an account of agency and resourceful victimhood: her as the insider with her transnational capital, inside knowledge and confidence to evaluate what is important in this context, while I took the role of the passive listener and

learner. But, ethnographers know that it is exactly this role of the beginner in a social field that generates data, gives insights, in short: is resourceful.

### **Analysis – Narrative positioning, construction of agency and resourceful victimhood**

The concept of narrative identity claims that identity has the structure of a life story (Bruner 1990), and as such, it is widely used in narrative analysis and narrative theory. While it is undisputed that narratives are a site of expressing membership and belonging and, thereby, of constructing identity, the notion of narrative identity is problematic. The concept suggests a unified and coherent idea of self, which can hardly be derived from the concrete, context-based and often fragmented stories people tell. Furthermore, non-narrative aspects like social practices and embodiment are excluded here (Deppermann 2013, p. 1). I therefore suggest that, in order to get from the concrete story to an idea of narrative identity, we need to look at the manifold ways of positioning in narrative. Positioning theory, as introduced by Harré and Langenhove (1991, 1999), examines the relation between the narrator, the story's content and its performance and interactions. Positioning is a discursive practice, sensitive to the situatedness and context of narrative, showing how “selves are located in conversations as observably and intersubjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines” (Davies and Harré 1990, p. 48). Positioning theory is particularly useful in the narrative analysis of storytelling in conversations, for it can grasp the communicative dynamics between interlocutors. Furthermore, it examines story elements with regard to communicative interaction and societal discourse and therefore takes a relational approach to narrative. Referencing Foucault and the idea of subject positions, positioning theory also takes into account power constellations, legitimate knowledge and normative expectations which determine the constitution of the self (Foucault 2002). Finally, by paying attention to small stories, i.e. snippets of conversation about mundane, ordinary and everyday events, and their mode of embeddedness in the big story or master narrative (Georgakopoulou 2015, pp. 255–272), positioning can be analysed as a narrative evaluation of societal discourse. Small stories are a way of personal sense-making by resorting to, conforming, contradicting and subverting a dominant master narrative (Bamberg and Andrews 2004, Bamberg 1997). Hence, narratives are moral tales in which people acknowledge or dispute social imperatives, expectations and normative powers. In their stories, narrators constitute themselves as socially recognised in a “lived patterning of intersubjective life” (Jackson 2002, p. 30, Christou in this volume, Riessman 2008). Positioning theory thus acknowledges the dynamic, multi-faceted, complex and sometimes ambivalent process of constituting a narrative self between individual experiences and societal discourse.

Hatice starts her story with her grandfather leaving Turkey for work, she continues with the low points of living in a foreign country and experiencing resentment and discrimination, and, finishes with a happy ending that it was

“all worth it”: “And now look at us, where we are now, I guess you can say that we have made it.” As with many other migrant narratives, she tells a success story (Bönisch-Brednich 2014) in the form of a quest for a better life abroad (Ahmed in this volume). The key to success is agency, for agency turns the migrant narrative into a success story, drives the quest for a better life and makes sense of migrant experiences as cathartic, enlightening, and, a turning point for the narrator (see Bönisch-Brednich 2008 and in this volume).

In this chapter, I argue that dealing with agency, respectively the lack of it, represents a way of negotiating belonging and participating in society. Agency is produced and presented subjectively in order to connect to socially ratified “evaluations and stances with regard to who is morally right or at fault” (Bamberg 2005, p. 10). Positioning oneself as an active, potent and efficacious subject is a major goal in many of the migrant narratives analysed in this volume (see Ahmed, also Christou in this volume). Unfolding agency and turning victimhood into a resource can compensate experiences of heteronomy, lack of power and social exclusion in everyday life. Narrating one’s story opens up room for new and individual evaluation that might contradict a dominant narrative and re-interpret social topics (Helfferich 2012, Lucius-Hoene 2012). In constructing agency in a story, a narrator can seize the opportunity to re-assess a situation and thereby express an individual moral judgement, which challenges social norms and societal discourse (Meyer 2018). Storytelling offers a variety of lexical and syntactical choices for constructing agency in figures and episodes, e.g. by choosing strong or weak verbs, active or passive sentences and moving the storyline through capable agents. Especially in migrant narratives, the linguistic marking unfurls possibilities to which migrant narrators or protagonists have no, or only limited, access in their lives.

Hatice in her narrative offers an unfolding of migrant agency along the categories of gender and ethnicity. Her main argument is the reversal of gender roles: “That’s what it is all about: everybody thinks that with the Turks, the men are in charge and the women are always quiet and have no say but it is not like that, I can tell you that.” The almost proverbial character of the statement that: “The world is not always what it seems” underlines the tellability of her proposition. She thus challenges the big story about migration and ethnic and gender stereotypes on passive migrant victims (Augustín 2003) through a number of small stories about female agency (Innes 2016). Hatice marks the significance of this point with evaluative comments, thereby shifting the standpoint from the personal to an external, and all-knowing narrator, who is in a position to see “what it is all about”. When we remind ourselves of the positionality in the interview set-up, we could also say that she enlightens the naïve interlocutor (a university professor) about common stereotypes and how they are untrue. In three small stories about a quiet woman who gets her way, about her female friends who import their husbands, and about the work ethos of her friend’s mother, she turns around the big story and master narrative of gender roles in Turkish society.



***Resourceful victimhood: “how to make a deal”***

For her first example, Hatice uses the narrative device of a “story within the story”. The effect of the story here lies in the twist in its tail. At the beginning, her aunt – we are never given a name – is portrayed as a helpless and subservient Turkish woman (she cannot speak German and “she could hardly look the landlord into his eyes”), subordinating herself to the landlord who represents the male gender and Austrian ethnicity, thus a hegemonic position. Hatice here gives voice to the silenced Turkish woman and presents a counter narrative (Bamberg 2004). Although her aunt is not “strong”, she takes the leading role in dealing with the Austrian authority of the landlord and knows “how to make a deal”. This creativity turns the helpless woman into a smart and agentive actor. At the same time, she manages to fulfil the obligations of the common perception of Turkish women (“the way she was”) and constitutes agency through a practice of resilience and reworking of ethnic stereotypes (Rydzik and Anitha 2020). Although she acknowledges the Turkish patriarchy in the beginning (“it still is important for a Turkish man to support the family”), she later breaks with the stereotype of male authority in Turkish society: “That’s what it is all about: everybody thinks that with the Turks, the men are in charge and the women are always quiet and have no say, but it is not like that, I can tell you that.” The evaluative comment (“That’s what it is all about”) marks the statement as seminal in her narrative, reinforced by another comment on a meta-level (“I can tell you that”).

The counter narrative of the strong female migrant introduces an intersectional perspective in the study of agency and leads us to the notion of resourceful victimhood. As Judith Butler and others have pointed out in their reflections on vulnerability and resistance: Even if agency is blocked in one dimension – here: the social position of the migrant –, it does not mean that it is blocked in every dimension and that there are ways to resist that blockage (Butler *et al.* 2016). When we succeed in thwarting the dichotomy of vulnerability and resistance, we can discover the complexity of agency and vary, as Talal Asad advocates, from its “triumphalist” reading which is found in the focus on self-empowerment and notions of responsibility (Asad 2000, p. 29). Rather, research on agency should take into account pain and suffering as an expression of a social relationship. Addressing another’s pain is a form of enacting social relations. When Hatice tells me how shy and passive her aunt was, she addresses her pain and turns it into a resource in the narrative.

***Active women, passive men: “why women took over”***

Hatice continues with giving further examples of reversed gender constellations when she tells me about the young women who make use of their transnational capital by bringing husbands to Austria: “the women have power and they close the deal, the young women who bring a husband from Turkey and he cannot speak any German and find a job or anything”. Now it is the Turkish

husbands who cannot speak any German, but contrary to Hatice's aunt, they are much less effective: "They are just so helpless, they never do anything, just sit around and talk and play games, go to the betting shop and hang about." Although female Muslims are disadvantaged by the religious convention of having to marry a Muslim ("it is quite unfair, really"), they eventually adopt a position of power, when, in Hatice's words and evidence, they "bring a husband from Turkey". "Bring from Turkey" – rather than "come to Turkey" – is an active verb which highlights the women's perspective and agency. The young women thus deal successfully with a system of potential oppression and do not lose their self-determination. Although this practice is no recipe for a happy marriage and a potential divorce can bring shame to the family, Hatice does not dwell on this point but only mentions it in passing. If the marriage breaks up, in Hatice's eyes, the fault lies with the men because "they just don't get it, those Turks, the poor sods." The men are reduced to their ethnicity ("those Turks") and pitied ("the poor sods"). They remain passive and have no resourcefulness to turn their situation around.

Returning to the question of positionality: My own reaction to this episode plays entirely into Hatice's line of reasoning: When I utter – or rather stutter – my surprise about the statement that "women took over", Hatice reacts with a feeling of vindication ("You can believe me") and by pointing out my lack of knowledge ("it is quite simple"). Within the interview, she again positions herself as the expert vis-à-vis an uninformed conversation partner.

*The making of migrant heroines: "girls, get a job and make the best of it"*

The third story about her Serbian friend's mother also puts an agentic woman centre-stage. Again, agency is a key characteristic of the protagonist. In a few sentences, Hatice makes her the model migrant: her work ethos, her flexibility to "adapt to the things that are for her", her willingness to take a job well below her qualification and the motive for doing this all: to support her kids. Most of all, she does not complain but takes it as it is: "girls, get to work and make the best of it". The direct speech resembling a saying or a motto marks the significance of the appeal to fellow females. Her story within the story is about the way she turns the position of a potential victim in a low-skilled and exploitative job into a resource: making money and making the best of a situation.

While adapting to the demands in the workplace in Austria, at home, the woman remains true to her ethnicity when preparing Serbian food for her children and, as Hatice puts it, maintaining the traditions of her homeland. The narrative produces a subject position of a migrant heroine with a work ethos of diligence and stamina, solidarity towards the community in both the country of origin and residence, upholding traditions of the country of origin like cooking Balkan dishes and singing and folksongs, while being open to acculturation and willing to integrate, here: to speak German (Meyer 2023).

The coda of this story emphasises, again, the role of a work ethos both in the Turkish community and in the Austrian society. Work dominates the conversation at the family dinner table and it dominated the interview. Hatice's description of her family's work ethos is related to a position of agency, being able to succeed economically and socially in the place of residence: "only when you work, you can become somebody here". Social mobility through work ethic is an important motive not only in Hatice's migrant narrative (Nowicka 2014, van Hear 2014). Furthermore, the work ethos becomes ethnicised because "only the Turks" do these jobs, and, "are not afraid to get their hands dirty". The agency and attitude to taking any job makes the migrant worker superior in this story, in short: it is the key element in constituting the subject position of the migrant heroine.

### *Counter narrative and social positioning*

Migrant narratives frequently deal with an exposed position, with being "othered". Narrators either make their exposed position meaningful through individualisation, or they alleviate it through practices of solidarity (see Leurs *et al.* 2020, Lehmann 1980, pp. 56–57, Meyer 2017, pp. 105–107). Hatice makes use of both perspectives in order to make sense of her own story. First, she arranges her family history into a collective experience of labour migration, recruitment acts and diaspora community ("that's what it was like with everybody"). Being part of a social group takes on a supportive role: "one" is just like "everybody", no exception and therefore normal under circumstances that generally deny this unmarked position to the narrator. But she also uses the individual experience to underline her message of female agency. Especially in the personal stories about her aunt and her friend's mother, Hatice uses the linguistic form of the embedded story and thereby marks the tellability of her observation and opinion. The scenic descriptions further heighten the plausibility of the content. The narrative device of the story within the story thus strengthens her credibility: By recounting somebody else's life, her message becomes more general and believable (Nelles 2005).

Narrative analysis should always pay attention to gaps and silences, too. Hatice does not tell me much about herself (with the exception of mentioning her head-strong father and husband) and does not talk about her own experiences as a third-generation migrant or as a Muslim. She also never shares with me whether she prepares Turkish dishes for her family, though she does tell us that her parents were eager to include Austrian dishes. When she does identify with her Turkish background, it is in a historical perspective on family history ("my Turkish heritage"). When she acknowledges experiences of discrimination and social exclusion, she places them in the past ("You know what it was like back then. It was awful, really, with all resentments against foreigners").

Despite these gaps, we can learn about Hatice's point of view by exploring the theoretical potential of positioning on three levels (Bamberg and

Georgakopoulou 2008). First, she positions herself in the “there and then” by narrating the story of other female migrants and evaluating them positively. By starting her story with the grandfather, she lays the groundwork for her migrant subject position which then develops into the counter narrative of female agency. As if to stress this position, she secondly takes an interactive stand with me and places herself in the “here and now” of the conversation. Here, she shows agency herself in confidently leading the interview away from its original topic, and, by taking the position of a commentator pointing out what I should consider important. For example, when I ask for her age during the interview, she replies quite brusquely with: “Doesn’t matter, not important”. She also underlines the twist of agency through her intonation and emphasis of certain words and with para-verbal comments. Her chuckling suggests that she seems to enjoy my surprise at the twist of her tale. Thirdly, she positions herself with regard to the dominant discourse of migration and its master narratives of masculinity and femininity. Here, the relation between small stories and big stories are telling: through her anecdotal descriptions of lethargic men and agentive women she constitutes a counter narrative contradicting ethnic stereotypes about the Turkish community.

Hatice’s main messages in the interview are the counter narratives which break gender and ethnic stereotypes. She addresses female agency and the reversal of stereotypes through embedded stories and thus offers a plurality in her migrant narrative by challenging and re-evaluating dominant discourse. Her narrative motive is to turn a supposed lack of agency associated with gender and ethnicity into a position of spirit and strength. This is what Hatice’s story is about: challenging common perceptions of migrants and positioning herself outside dominant discourses. Or, in her words, underlining the perspective that: “The world is not always what it seems.”

## Bibliography

- Asad, T., 2000. Agency and pain: an exploration. *Culture and Religion*, 1 (1), 29–60. doi: 10.1080/01438300008567139
- Augstín, L., 2003. Forget victimisation: granting agency to migrants. *Development*, 46 (3), 30–36. doi: 10.1177/10116370030463005
- Bamberg, M., 1997. Positioning between structure and performance. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7, 335–342.
- Bamberg, M., 2004. Considering counter narratives. In: M. Bamberg and M. Andrews eds. *Considering counter narratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 351–371. doi: 10.1075/sin.4.43bam
- Bamberg, M. and Andrews, M., eds., 2004. *Considering counter narratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1075/sin.4>
- Bamberg, M., 2005. Agency. In: D. Herman, et al., eds. *The Routledge encyclopedia of narrative theory*. New York: Routledge, 9–10.
- Bamberg, M., and Georgakopoulou, A., 2008. Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text and Talk*, 28 (3), 377–396. doi: 10.1515/TEXT.2008.018

- Bönisch-Brednich, B., 2008. Migration, gender and storytelling: How gender shapes the experiences and narrative patterns in biographical interviews. In: M. Schulze ed. *German diaspora experiences. Identity, migration, and loss*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 331–343.
- Bönisch-Brednich, B., 2014. Migrationserzählungen. In: R.-W. Brednich, *et al.*, eds. *Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung Band 14*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1750–1754.
- Bruner, J. S., 1990. *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Butler, J., Gambetti, Z. and Sabsay, L., eds., 2016. *Vulnerability in resistance*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Davies, B. and Harré, R., 1990. Positioning: the social construction of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 20, 43–63. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x
- Deppermann, A., 2013. Positioning in narrative interaction. *Narrative Inquiry*, 23 (1), 1–15. doi: 10.1075/ni.23.1.01dep
- Foucault, M., 2002 [1969]. *The archaeology of knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Georgakopoulou, A., 2015. Small stories research: Methods – analysis – outreach. In: A. De Fina and A. Georgakopoulou, eds. *Handbook of narrative analysis*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 255–272. doi: 10.1002/9781118458204.ch13
- Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L., 1991. Varieties of positioning. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 21 (4), 393–407. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-5914.1991.tb00203.x
- Harré, R. and van Langenhove, L., eds., 1999. *Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional action*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Helfferrich, C., 2012. Agency-Analyse und Biografieforschung. Rekonstruktion von Viktimisierungsprozessen in biografischen Erzählungen. In: S. Bethmann, *et al.*, eds. *Agency. Qualitative Rekonstruktionen und gesellschaftstheoretische Bezüge von Handlungsmächtigkeit*. Weinheim: Beltz, 210–237
- Innes, A., 2016. In search of security: Migrant agency, narrative, and performativity. *Geopolitics*, 21 (2), 263–283. doi: 10.1080/14650045.2015.1107044
- Jackson, M., 2002. *The politics of storytelling: violence, transgression, and intersubjectivity*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press.
- Lehmann, A., 1980. Rechtfertigungsgeschichten. Über eine Funktion des Erzählens eigener Erlebnisse im Alltag. *Fabula*, 21, 56–69. doi: 10.1515/fabl.1980.21.1.56
- Leurs, K., *et al.*, 2020. The politics and poetics of migrant narratives. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23 (5), 679–697. doi: 10.1177/1367549419896367
- Lucius-Hoene, G., 2012. “Und dann haben wir’s operiert”: Ebenen der Textanalyse narrativer Agency-Konstruktionen. In: S. Bethmann, *et al.*, eds. *Agency. Qualitative Rekonstruktionen und gesellschaftstheoretische Bezüge von Handlungsmächtigkeit*. Weinheim: Beltz, 40–71.
- Meyer, S., 2017. *Das verschuldete Selbst. Narrative Umgang mit Privatinsolvenz*. Frankfurt am Main: campus.
- Meyer, S., 2018. Narrative ethics and cultural analysis. Insolvency stories and moral debt relief. *Fabula*, 59 (1–2), 50–69. doi: 10.1515/fabula-2018-0004
- Meyer, S., 2023. Theorizing remittances: Social positioning and the making of migrant subjectivity. In: S. Meyer and C. Ströhle, eds. *Remittances as Social Practices and Agents of Change: The Future of Transnational Society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1–25.
- Nelles, W., 2005. Embedding. In: D. Herman, M. Jahn and M. Ryan, eds. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. London: Routledge, 134–135.

- Nowicka, M., 2014. Successful earners and failing others. Transnational orientation as biographical resource in the context of labor migration. *International Migration*, 52 (1), 74–86.
- Riessman, C., 2008. *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Rydzik, A. and Anitha, S., 2020. Conceptualising the agency of migrant women workers: resilience, reworking and resistance. *Work, Employment and Society*, 34 (5), 883–899. doi: 10.1177/0950017019881939
- Van Hear, N., 2014. Reconsidering migration and class. *International Migration Review*, 48 (1), 100–121. doi: 10.1111/imre.12139