Ethnic and Racial Studies

ISSN: 0141-9870 (Print) 1466-4356 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rers20

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To cite this article: Çetin Çelik (2015) ‘Having a German passport will not make me German’: reactive ethnicity and oppositional identity among disadvantaged male Turkish second-generation youth in Germany, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 38:9, 1646-1662, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2015.1018298

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2015.1018298

Ethnic and Racial Studies, 2015
Vol. 38, No. 9, 1646–1662, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2015.1018298

'Having a German passport will not make me German': reactive ethnicity and oppositional identity among disadvantaged male Turkish second-generation youth in Germany

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(*Received 24 July 2014; accepted 2 February 2015*)

The ethnic identity of second-generation immigrant youth has important implications for their association with, and integration in, receiving countries. This paper deals with the ethnic identity formation of second-generation Turkish immigrant youth in Germany, with particular attention paid to the notion of reactive ethnicity. While much of the literature discusses the ethnic retention of this specific group as unwillingness to integrate, this paper frames their ethnic identity formation as reactive ethnicity, which emerges in reaction to social exclusion. Utilizing a case study of Turkish students of disadvantaged schools, the article illustrates that reactive ethnicity is strongly linked to perceived discrimination and that it acquires characteristics of resistance when the dominant group denigrates and invalidates the immigrants' culture.

Keywords: perceived discrimination; reactive ethnicity; oppositional identity; Turkish second-generation youth; integration; Germany

Introduction

The comparative studies of 'modes of incorporation' of second-generation immigrants across Europe show that descendants of Turkish immigrants fare worse and leave school earlier in Germany (Crul, Schneider, and Lelie 2012). This disadvantaged position raises anxiety among mainstream Germans, as it is often being related to this youth's adherence to ethnic culture, which is interpreted as evidence of their disinclination to integration (Heitmeyer 2002; Heath 2014). However, while contemporary research has stressed how ethnic retention causes disintegration, little work has been done on the withdrawal of Turkish second-generation youth into their own world as a part of a strategy for coping with social exclusion. This is because limited research has been devoted to the identity formation of this group in Germany and to the processes that affect it. This link has been well documented in other contexts, such as the UK and the USA: Reynolds (2006), for example, has argued that transnational kinship networks and experiences in multi-ethnic Britain cause the emergence of an adversarial ethnic identity for second-generation Caribbean descendants in Britain, which relates to the black diaspora in the Caribbean and the USA. Rumbaut (2008) has drawn attention to the role of perceived threats, persecution and discrimination in the formation of reactive ethnicity among second-

generation Latino youth in the USA. Conversely, Baker and Hotek's (2003) study has shown that inclusive local policies such as bilingual skill training significantly reduce reactive ethnicity among a Latino group in Iowa.

Recently, several studies on ethnic retention and integration – such as Diehl and Schnell (2006), Skrobanek (2009), and Ersanilli and Koopmans (2011) – have somewhat advanced discussions about the notion of reactive ethnicity in Germany. Yet, these studies suffer from two general shortcomings. First, they exhibit a limited methodological scope, primarily using quantitative research methods; second, they do not sufficiently analyse the links between the formation of reactive ethnicity and oppositional identity. This study aims to fill these two gaps in the literature. I argue that a qualitative study on the identity formation of male Turkish second-generation youth in Germany and the processes that shape it can make significant contributions to the field in that it provides insights into the underlying dynamics of reactive ethnicity and oppositional identity, thereby complementing quantitative research. Drawing upon Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) theory of reactive ethnicity, this study postulates that, when people experience discrimination, they increase their identification with their ethnic group.

In the following, I will provide an account of the reception of Turkish immigrants in Germany. Next, I will introduce reactive ethnicity theory and its most important concepts, which have the potential to disentangle the underlying dynamics of the self-identification of disadvantaged immigrant youth. Then, I will unpack the relations between the interviewees' ethnic identifications and their perception of contextual processes. The conclusion will argue that the ethnic retention and oppositional identities of the interviewees in this study emerge in reaction to the ethno-religious hierarchy in Germany.

The context of reception: Turks in Germany

Turkish migration to Germany first materialized as part of the guest worker (*Gastarbeiter*) programme in the 1960s, in order to boost the country's post-war 'economic miracle'. The arrival of guest workers significantly changed the labour relations in the country. It increasingly ethnicized the labour force by proletarizing Muslim Turks, associating this group with inferiority in the German ethno-racial system (Özyürek 2014). The Turkish minority group currently makes up the largest immigrant group in Germany, numbering 2.8 million, and is socially more disadvantaged in comparison to other minority groups (Diehl and Koenig 2013).

At first, the integration of this group was not an issue, because guest workers were in Germany only 'temporarily' (Ramm 2010). However, although recruitment halted with the economic crisis in 1973, the movement of Turkish people continued in the form of family reunions over the subsequent decades (Faas 2007). The governments of the 1980s and 1990s, notwithstanding, insisted that 'Germany is not a country of immigration'. This approach prepared the ground for Turkish governments to use their power in the Turkish media to discourage integration, based on the fear of losing remittances (Göktürk, Gramling, and Kaes 2007).

As it became clear that the immigrants would not return, the German governments commenced their *domestication* policies (Özyürek 2014). The principle of blood

(*ius sanguinis)* was modified into the principle of territory (*ius soli*) in the 2000 German citizenship law, which made it possible for children of immigrants to acquire German citizenship, but only if they renounced their parents' nationality[1] (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011). However, this reform intensified concerns regarding the incompatibility between Muslim Turkish immigrants and the society's 'guiding culture' (*Leitkultur*) (Klusmeyer 2001), which increasingly culturalized and ethnicized the concept of Islam in Germany (Tibi 2010). 9/11 has further marginalized and criminalized Islam and shifted the public image of Turkish immigrants from 'ethnic problem' to religious 'other' (Holtz, Dahinden, and Wagner 2013). In mass media and political discourse, Islam – bringing with it macho males, gender inequality and violence against women – has been portrayed as anathema to Western cultural values (Kunst and Sam 2013).

The reflections of these historical moments, policies and discourses have permeated various fields of daily life and associated a Turkish ethnic minority background with intentional disintegration and underachievement in public and scholarly discussions (Kristen and Granato 2007). This has also had implications for the self-identification of second-generation Turkish immigrant youth (Fischer-Neumann 2014).

Reactive ethnicity

A number of studies in various contexts has shown that the systematic discrimination of specific ethnic minorities, for example in the form of unequal treatment, may result in the minority members' perception that it occurs on the basis of their ethnic group membership, and thereby it increases ethnic identification and consciousness (Stone and Han 2005; Berry et al. 2006; Platt 2014). Persistent educational disadvantage and perceived discrimination particularly reinforce the valorization of a shared religious or ethnic background among youth (Phalet, Fleischmann, and Stojčić 2013).

Furthermore, reactive ethnicity can take the form of resistance and opposition to the majority group in favour of ethnic solidarity (Sewell 1997) and turn into an adversarial stance against mainstream institutions (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). In his study on counter-school culture of 'working-class lads', Willis (1981) has argued that resistance is not inherent in the lads' own working-class culture, but that it acquires resistance characteristics by the way in which it is negatively framed by dominant institutions. While maintaining the ethnic identity reflecting the parents' national origins as a reactive ethnicity results from perceived discrimination, its development into oppositional identity against the dominant society emerges from a lack of respect for, and devaluation of, the origin culture by the majority. In that sense, the appropriation of oppositional identity is not simply an adherence to ethnic culture, but the adoption of a subculture – an outcome of rejection by the dominant culture (Waters 2001). Nagra (2011), for example, found that, while the reactive ethnicity among Muslim Canadians post-9/11 is linked to a rise in perceived discrimination, practices of resistance to mainstream culture, such as increased self-learning about Islam, is the result of the denigration of Islam.

The descendants of Turkish immigrants achieve the lowest educational qualifications and leave school earlier in Germany (Song 2011). They are also much more likely to be discriminated against than any other group due to their ethnic and religious

background. The nationwide surveys conducted by the Ministry of Labour in 1995, for example, found that Turks were twice as likely to be exposed to various forms of discrimination (such as insults, physical attacks and unequal treatment) than Italians and Greeks (Mehrländer, Ascheberg, and Ueltzhöffer 1996). A replication of this study in 2004 has explored once again the strong perceived discrimination as a general trend for this group and has also shown its increase from 1999 to 2003, most probably due to 9/11 (Goldberg and Sauer 2005). Kaas and Manger (2012) studied ethnic discrimination in Germany's labour market with a correspondence test. They found that student internship applications with a German-sounding name received up to 24% more callbacks from companies when compared to similar applications with a Turkish-sounding name. The latest research also showed that Turkish immigrants are mostly aware of their negative public image and that they have the highest perceived discrimination among minorities in Germany (Fischer-Neumann 2014).

Despite these findings, little research has examined the relationship between discrimination and reactive ethnicity for disadvantaged Turkish youth in Germany. Diehl and Schnell (2006) have examined labour migrants' identification and social assimilation processes in Germany. They found no indicator of reactive ethnicity for Turkish immigrants and their descendants. However, interestingly, they did not focus on the identification of structurally disadvantaged immigrants, for which the theory of reactive ethnicity is specifically designed. Relatively newer studies including disadvantaged Turkish immigrant youth have unveiled the contradictory pathways of identification that they follow. Skrobanek (2009) has focused on descendants of Turkish immigrants who have attended a type of disadvantaged lower secondary school, the *Hauptschule*. He found a strong re-ethnicization, resulting from the perceived personal and group discrimination. Skrobanek and Jobst (2010) have revealed for the same group that experiences of discrimination and the directly associated devaluation of ethnic culture induce the valorization of ethnic culture as a counterculture.

Against this backdrop, this study enriches the limited literature on reactive ethnicity in German migration research, by providing qualitative evidence about the ethnic identity formation of male Turkish second-generation youth. I suggest that Portes and Rumbaut (2001)'s theory of reactive ethnicity can help to explain the experiences of the marginalized segment of Turkish second-generation in Germany.

Data and method

This study draws on semi-structured in-depth interviews with male Turkish students who were born in or who arrived in Germany before schooling age, complemented by six months of participant observation of everyday life in school. All interviewees had at least one parent born in Turkey. Interviews were conducted in 2011 with the participants of the vocational preparation programme (*Berufsvorbereitungsjahr*) offered by the labour office. Students who do not finish school with a certificate or manage to find an apprenticeship in a company are channelled into the 'intermediary sector' (*Übergangssystem*), which is designed to provide some qualifications and skills, but not a recognized vocational certificate (Baethge, Solga, and Wieck 2007). The interviewees in this study were school dropouts, ranging in age from fifteen to eighteen years and

mostly from vocational schools, who now completed their compulsory education in this vocational preparation programme.

The interviewees were sampled using the snowball technique, which served the purpose of gaining access to participants and building trust (Noy 2008). To contact interviewees, I also received much help from two social workers of Turkish and Kurdish background working in the vocational preparation programme. Once they had established my legitimacy, I successfully attained trust and rapport with my informants. Because the two social workers were male, I could not receive the same degree of support for establishing regular contacts with female interviewees. Therefore, this study is limited to male interviewees only.

I conducted twenty interviews with students, as well as multiple casual conversations with school staff and teachers. These occasionally recorded conversations assisted in comparing the students' and teachers' accounts, which allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the students' identity formation. The interviews were conducted in Turkish and German, mostly a mixture of the two, and lasted between fifty-five and eighty minutes. The small sample size made it possible to gain deeper and fuller understanding of the data. The semi-structured interview design allowed for phrasing the questions and adjusting the language in each interview according to the respondents' characteristics (Berg 2004). This was particularly important for the respondents, who generally use a mix of German and Turkish. The transcribed semi-structured interviews were analysed using the ATLAS.ti, following the principles of qualitative content analysis. That is, the data were systematically subjected to procedures of summary (reducing the data to smaller parts), explication (formation of categories and coding rules) and structuring (extracting a consistent structure) (Mayring 2007).

The research was supported by six months of participant observation at the vocational preparation programme. I occasionally attended classes, spent time with the respondents in and outside of the schoolyard, and participated in events such as year-end parties, celebrations and festivities organized by the school. Participant observation was extremely helpful for understanding the relations between what the respondents said in the interviews and what they did in their daily lives (Gans 1999).

Perceived discrimination

For my interviewees, ethnicity is a marking factor in their life: they hold a strong pro-Turkish identity. As the main arena of socialization for students, the accounts of the interviewees in this study mostly pointed to school as a fundamental site of various and subtle forms of discrimination. For instance, Emre,[2] seventeen years old, complained that whenever there was noise in the classroom, teachers always held Turkish students responsible: 'The teacher used to choose only two or three persons together with me. He has been mostly choosing us. It was always Turks. I have never seen the teacher telling Germans off.'

Emre's observation attests to the pervasive sense of discrimination by teachers among the interviewees, in the form of unequal treatment based on ethnic group membership. Other interviewee, seventeen-year-old Deniz, adopted a passive attitude in his relations with teachers because he believed that 'whatever he will do he will be

discriminated against by German teachers, because he is Turkish. He assumes that teachers' prejudices and discriminations are related to his ethnic background.

However, my interviewees mostly noted that, in addition to their ethnic background, their religious background is a clear reason for why they are treated unequally at school – a perception that is congruent with the construction of the image of Turks as religious 'other' post-9/11 (Ramm 2010). Derda, seventeen years old, stated: 'Teachers had kind of a grudge against Turks and Muslims.' When asked how they knew that teachers were prejudiced against them because of their ethnic and religious backgrounds, my interviewees based their claims on their regular observation of teachers' attitudes. The following exchange with seventeen-year-old Sinan is an example:

> Sinan: The previous one [teacher], she is, I don't know, she was against Turks. She was Russian or Polish maybe. But she did not like *Ausländer*. She did not like Turks, Kurds and Arabs at all.
>
> Researcher: How did you understand that?
>
> Sinan: Because there were Russian guys, she was treating them well. She was treating Polish students well. But when it comes to us, it was different. Ehm, I mean, you are doing the same thing, for example, in math as the Russian guy. She'd say "well done" to him, but would tell me: "Why are you doing it like this?" But we did the same thing, you know. You see? I mean she was irritating you; she was sneakily looking for something to blame you.

While there are always differences between immigrants and natives, the Turkish cultural background, compounded by the Islamic background, forms a sort of 'bright boundary' separating Turks not only from the majority, but also from other Christian minorities (Alba 2005). In the above quote, Sinan uses the term *Ausländer* to refer only to Turks, Kurds and Arabs, but not to Poles and Russians. This is telling, because it resonates with the strong association of the term with migrants of Islamic background. The quote, referring to the teachers' privileging Christian over Muslim minorities, also implies how pervasive the belief about their Islamic background constituting a reason for hostility is among the interviewees.

It was also observed during the field research that the interviewees exchange stories about teachers' mistreatment of their siblings and close friends. They also warn in advance fellow students who will take courses from specific teachers with a reputation for discriminating against Turkish students. These stories and warnings reinforce the perception that others see their ethnic and religious background negatively and make them more conscious of their ethnic and religious identification.

Other interviewees also recalled numerous experiences of discrimination, suggesting that their ethnic and religious backgrounds expose them to severe disadvantages at school. However, sixteen-year-old Erdem's story about a teacher's mistreatment is particularly telling because he was the only interviewee who did not strongly identify himself with his Turkish or Islamic background. Erdem has blonde hair and speaks German without any accent. He has almost exclusively German friends and finds

Turkish youth aggressive and not well integrated. Nevertheless, he also thinks that Turkish students are discriminated against:

> Erdem: In Obervieland, when we were talking in the classroom, if I say a word or laugh, she [the teacher] used to get angry only with me. I was sometimes getting really annoyed.
>
> Researcher: What do you think was the reason for it?
>
> Erdem: Turcophobe! I was the only Turk in the classroom.

In Erdem's view, his Turkish name makes him subject to discrimination, not his behaviour, attitude, or way of speaking, which are all very German. His remarks reveal that strong perceived discrimination is not an outgrowth of tight group identification. Even in this case of weak identification with the ethnic group, the interviewee mentioned discrimination.

The interviewees in this study recalled multifarious incidents of discrimination in their school careers. All of them also confirmed that they constantly experienced discrimination by recalling subtle institutional regulations, such as the absence of a translator in disciplinary meetings. The students themselves had to undertake the task of translating in meetings between school authorities and parents. This humiliating practice communicates to the students that the school does not value their culture and language at all and that they are not as valuable as German students in the eyes of the authorities.

Formation of reactive ethnicity

While the individuals in this study varied greatly in their perceptions and opinions, they had a strong sense of perceived discrimination. Their comments are also suggestive as to how they negotiate this substantial perceived discrimination in relation to their identity. Given that discrimination is strongly perceived on the basis of ethnic and religious background, dis-identification with the ethnic group might be a way to escape discriminatory practices. However, although they were all born and raised in Germany, none of the informants defined himself as German. They did not refer to any hybrid identity such as German Turk, *Berliner* or *Parisien*, either, which is the case in some circumstances (Çağlar 1998). They mostly displayed a strong emotional commitment to a pro-Turkish identity. During the interviews and daily interactions, I frequently observed that the interviewees reinforced their ethnic identity reactively by referring to unequal treatment due to their backgrounds. Sixteen-year-old Onur said:

> How to put it, for example, I was sometimes late to class. At such times, she [the teacher] used to punish me, like, write this for one hour or stay half an hour longer in the classroom. But, when others, those who are getting on well with her, did the same thing; she used to do nothing. She used to just say, it is OK, sit down. So we were seeing what was going on. We were telling each other: "Look, she is protecting him, but not *us*."

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) have argued that collective marginality and systematic inequalities racialize youth's identities and sharpen group boundaries. The conviction that they are discriminated against due to their background seems to give the interviewees' marginality a collective dimension. Onur's comments reflect this connection by showcasing how the perception of partisanship – 'she is protecting him but not us' – generates a sort of common fate for the group in question and functions as leverage for heightening group consciousness.

Other interviewees' ethnic identity orientation also emerged in reaction to feelings of being excluded, ostracized and discriminated against at various levels. For example, Yasin explicitly remarked that his Turkish identity came more to the fore throughout the years he spent at the *Förderzentrum*, which is designed for mentally handicapped students. In a rage, he said that he was unjustly put into this type of school and for many years exposed to a range of humiliating practices there:

> I was not dumb. I read many books. If they [the teachers] treated me better, I would have treated them even better. They kept sending me out of the classroom; I used to ask, why? They kept saying you are noisy. Then, some of them spoke to me in High German. They think, I do not understand, just to put me down, you know … They sent me off to this fucking place … I completely changed there. It affected me badly. I began to defend Turkey everywhere, because I loved it more … how to put it, as one grows older, he changes, changes style, changes everything. So, I completely changed there. It was not a good place. I was even a racist for some time.

In reaction to his perceptions of negative treatment in the special school, Yasin has appropriated different degrees of Turkish ethnic identity, ranging from non-ethnic identity to racism. As the former increases, so does the latter. Hence, this excerpt shows the clear-cut link between perceived discrimination and reactive identity formation as a coping strategy.

Reactive ethnicity resulting from the perception that one is exposed to discrimination on a daily basis becomes particularly concrete in the interviewees' attitude about their passports. When the interviews were conducted, according to law, a child born in Germany to immigrant parents was forced to choose between German citizenship or that of their parents' country of origin between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three (Howard 2005). Most of them being close to their eighteenth birthday, and a few being even older, the interviewees were exchanging a great amount of information on this issue during my field research. A large majority of the interviewees stressed that the German passport would not give them anything, but that they would carry their Turkish passport with honour and pride. When I challenged them by saying that one can travel visa-free and vote in German elections with a German passport, they most often stated that they do not want to carry the passport of a country of which they do not feel a part. However, it was interesting to see in the interviewees' remarks that embracing their Turkish passport in a reactive manner is strongly linked to the conviction that the German passport will not protect them from being discriminated against on daily basis. When talking about the practical values of holding a German passport, nineteen-year-old Muhammed remarked:

> Oh yes, yes, with a German one [passport], one can travel without any visa, that's true. Definitely, that's true. Yeah, but, I could also do everything with a Turkish passport. And I feel myself as a Turk because, I mean, many things in my life, you know, like we speak Turkish at home. Why should I carry a German passport? And having a German passport will not make me German, right? Why should I take it then?

The indifference to the German passport stems from the shared belief that the associated nationality does not change how passport-holders are going to be perceived by the majority. They assume that they would still be discriminated against, irrespective of the kind of passport they carry, because, in their view, immigrants from specific backgrounds are not welcome and are systematically excluded. Muhammed continued:

> Some [German] people just reject us. Not all of them, of course. But some say, if you are Turkish, then stay away from me. Of course, there are bad and good Turks here. But most of them [Germans] do not think this way. If you are Turk, Arab or Kurd, they exclude you; they discriminate against you.

Aziz placed similar emphasis on feeling unwelcome:

> It seems to me that Germans do not trust us. I really do not know why. They specifically do not trust young Turks. They even do not want to get closer to you on the street … they would not even stand next to you. To tell the truth, they would not even ask you anything, they would just leave.

Regardless of the passport, these young men believed that Turks are not wanted. In some instances during the field research, I witnessed joking conversations among the youth that they should have changed the their eye colour from brown to blue, and their hair colour from brown to blonde to be treated better in school. From their perspective, if they decide to carry a German passport, they will sacrifice their identity for nothing. Moreover, given their low socio-economic status, the concrete benefits of a German passport, such as travelling visa-free, do not make any sense to Aziz. The great majority of them have never been abroad, except for trips to Turkey. More than half of them had visited Turkey only once or twice in their entire life; some had never even visited any city other than nearby Bremen. The above interview excerpts illustrate that the perceived systematic discrimination makes the disadvantaged male Turkish second-generation youth included in this study feel insecure and alienated from Germany; in this way, it contributed to their ethnic identification.

Reactive ethnicity and oppositional identity

The interviewees seem to reaffirm the uniqueness of their group identity in connection with their conviction that they are being exposed to unpleasant experiences of discrimination at varying levels. This reactive ethnicity provides them with a positive collective identity. However, as mentioned above, reactive ethnicity may turn into oppositional identity as a result of the perception that dominant institutions negatively frame minority ethnic culture (Nagra 2011). Therefore, unlike reactive ethnicity, which refers to simply maintaining ethnic culture, oppositional identity refers to a

subculture acquired as a result of rejection by the dominant culture and which rejects not only dominant culture but occasionally even ethnic culture (Willis 1981; Waters 2001).

During the interviews, many spoke about the negative views concerning Turks in public debates in Germany and the reflections of these images onto their interactions in school. When asked how many of their German friends thought this way about Turks, they said almost without exception that they had no German friends, but that they knew that Germans looked down on, and were afraid of, Turkish culture and Islam by referring to the negative stereotypes in society. They named stereotypes such as being premodern, backward and aggressive as others' core representations of Turks. This shows that these Turkish youngsters were well aware of the generally negative view of Turks found by some studies in the wider public culture – views that frame Turks as backward, fundamentalist and lazy (Klusmeyer 2001; Gruner 2010). When I asked how they inferred that Germans disrespected their culture even though they had no German friends, the interviewees pointed to a number of subtle incidents that they had encountered in their life. The interview with Temel, seventeen years old, illustrates this:

> Temel: I don't know, they [Turkish teachers], how to put it, they see me as their own people, but Germans [teachers] don't see me as they see German students … when a Turkish teacher speaks to me, he speaks friendlier, cause I am one of his people, get it? But when Germans look at you, they do it as if they look at a lazy bastard. They approach you and Germans differently.
>
> Researcher: Can you explain little bit more, I mean, I wonder how?
>
> Temel: For example, how to put it, I had a bad teacher, Mister Klaus, he kept saying all the time, like: "We Germans treat our women well and you foreigners do not let them do or say anything." Like this, you know …

Temel resented his teacher for his representation and essentialization of women's mistreatment as a natural part of Temel's culture in order to show it as inferior to German culture. In reaction, he separated himself from the Germans and shaped his own ethnic identity by referring to in- and out-group formations – 'I am of one of his people, get it?' And he developed mistrust towards German teachers, which became tangible in his innumerable arguments and conflicts with them. When asked whether the conflicts with the teachers concerned him, he said:

> No, no. Such things [his conflicts with teachers] go around fast. That's why they chicken out and don't fight with me. Other students butter up teachers, you know. I never do that. I shout back at them. So they chicken out … when I am angry, I would not care about anything. I do not care about what grade they [the teachers] give.

Claiming resistant or oppositional Turkish identity takes forms such as defying authority and challenging teachers and the police – actions that are endorsed as 'cool'. The interviewees' appropriation of such attitudes cannot be interpreted as maintaining their ethnic culture. Rather, it refers to a subculture where 'coolness' and ethnic pride bestow empowerment among peers, even though it comes at the expense of academic

achievement. Towards the end of my field research, a social worker from the school informed me that Temel had been expelled because he had physically attacked a teacher.

Many of my other interviewees also expressed their disappointment with the portrayal of Islam and Turkish culture as backward in school. Whether real or imagined, this portrayal echoes the findings of studies that show that the public image of Turks in Germany has increasingly come to be associated with sexist practices and violence against women (Ramm 2010). However, the perception of this systematic devaluation of their ethnic culture does not estrange the youth from their ethnic origin, but reflects itself back onto the construction of their oppositional self-identifications. This can be seen in the interview with seventeen-year-old Cihan:

> Cihan: There has been discrimination between Turks and Germans here for a long time. *Some teachers look down on you, they come down on you.* It is often difficult to resist it. They smash you when you are small, but they can't do anything now.
>
> Researcher: How do they smash you?
>
> Cihan: You know, they used to shout at and punish you. Others leave the classroom, but they make you stay, give you extra work to do, such things … *I mean, they were the people who don't like Turks*. But they can do the same thing now, if they have the balls. *They* chicken out and don't fight with *us* now. They could smash us, if they had the balls. If they disturb me, I will not respect their age. I am pissed off at the German teachers. I really do not like them. I mean, if they did me any wrong, I would finish them off.

The nuances in the processes of both reactive and resistant identity formation are reflected in Cihan's comments. Like him, many of my respondents affirmed their ethnic and religious identity by using *they* and *us* markers in their accounts. While mentioning several incidents that look like individual conflicts, they elevated them to the group level because they thought teachers despised 'their people'. They reactively adhere to their ethnic identity, but then turn this identity into an oppositional form for resisting the perceived, unjust dislike towards their people. Furthermore, this resistance can sometimes come out in even more aggressive and damaging ways. For example, seventeen-year-old Enes reacted in an extreme way to the perceived denigration of Turkish culture in school when, three years ago, he set the school on fire. He said in the interview that he did it because German teachers disrespected him and other Turks in the classroom in subtle ways, such as speaking ill of Islam and accusing Turkish students of always speaking loudly and being mischievous.

Not only in the interview statements, but also in the daily interactions at school I observed oppositional practices. While they mostly used a mixed language of German and Turkish in the schoolyard, the interviewees occasionally switched to Turkish only when a German teacher walked by. When I asked them why they did so, they replied that in this way they could swear at the teachers; the teachers would get suspicious, but could never prove anything, thus it would drive them crazy.

The difference between reactive ethnicity and oppositional identity becomes more discernible in relation to the occasional rejection of the parents' culture by the interviewees. Eighteen-year-old Ahmet's father had come to Germany at a young age.

He holds a regular salaried job. During the interview, Ahmet stated that his father spoke German well and motivated him to speak fluently. But as the interview went on, Ahmet started to complain about his father:

> He is a nice person. He always says good things. He tries to motivate me for school. He works regularly. But his lifestyle, his attitudes, the way he speaks is different, I mean, too German. He is not like the Turks. He is calm. He hangs out with Germans a lot. I do not like it. I do not understand why he is like that. He is too much into Germans.

Ahmet does not adhere to his father's ethnic culture, which includes respect for one's elders, as he does not praise whatever his father does. In contrast, he opposes his father's friendship with Germans. One can actually infer from his remarks that Ahmet is angry about his father's naivety, which, in his view, does not allow him to see the Germans' rejection of Turks. Ahmet does not passively adhere to his father's ethnic culture, but internalizes a subculture in his own neighbourhood, which results from Turks' rejection by dominant society.

The informal interviews conducted with the teachers disclosed that, except for a few, they also cannot escape from the wider negative social perceptions about Turkish youth; some interviewed students then interpreted the teachers' attitude as a rejection of their ethnic culture. The teachers had a clear tendency to assign a specific negative culture to the students on the basis of their ethnic and religious backgrounds, as shown in this interview:

> Teacher: Most of these [male Turkish] students do not know what responsibility is. They live in two worlds. Their parents at home flatter them and give them superiority over their sisters. This is how they have grown up. They are not behaving responsibly. However, they cannot behave this way in school. This is not what we can tolerate here. We cannot allow them to behave this way here in school.
>
> Researcher: How? I mean, how do they behave in school?
>
> Teacher: The way they treat female teachers, for example. I think it is because of the lower position of women than men in Islam. They are observing the female roles, male roles at home. They are socialized this way, you know. So, they do not respect us [female teachers] here.

When reminded that many Turkish students from similar backgrounds attend higher academic school tracks, teachers tended to explain this in reference to these successful students' exposure to German culture, or their parents' wish for integration. When asked what they mean by German culture, the teachers most often stressed the equal treatment of women, women's freedom, freedom of speech and individuality. This concurs with the 'ethnicization of sexism' (Jäger and Jäger 2007) in the media, which associates Islam with patriarchal violence, such as forced marriages or honour killings. Yet, in discussing the role that the students' cultural background played in their low academic performance, a teacher of Turkish migration background, who worked in the same school, related the issue to the family background in a non-cultural way:

> No, no, not the culture. It is not a cultural problem. It is a matter of having a consistent, compact family at home. Many German students who have a chaotic family life have problems even worse than Turkish students. Go to the homes of the many Turkish students who are successful. You would see that they have a very conservative family life. The parents are practising Islam, attend mosque regularly, and the mother wears a headscarf. The issue is that they have a consistent, compact family, so children know when to eat, when to go to bed, no conflict at home. So, they [the students] may have a regular life, not a chaotic one.

After sharing with him my observation that many German teachers to whom I talked related the lack of students' success to their cultural background, he replied:

> Because it suits their book. Most Turkish students have a language problem. When they do not understand the courses, they get bored and create disciplinary problems. Most of the teachers do not understand this fact and explain it with cultural arguments. So, in this way, they are having a consistent, but not a true picture of what's happening. It is nice because then they can think what they do is already enough. They cannot change this reality. No, this is just taking the easy way out. They are easily getting rid of responsibility this way.

These statements by a teacher show that the students' perception of their culture and religion's denigration may not be groundless; from the perspective of the second teacher, such denigration also serves a specific purpose for some teachers. He argues that this devaluation helps to naturalize the underachievement of the Turkish students and in this way simplifies the teachers' task. Overall, while there may be slight variations in the forms that it takes, the perceived systematic disapproval of their culture in public debates ethnicizes their interactions and sharpens the group boundaries from the interviewees' perspectives. The opposition to the dominant culture derives from this disapproval, which relegates the ethnic culture to a lower position.

Conclusion

This study rests on interviews with local youth and teachers, as well as participant observation of school life, to empirically document the ongoing negotiation and creation of ethnic identities of Turkish second-generation youth who attend disadvantaged secondary schools in Germany. It has explored the heightened ethnic identity in the face of perceived discrimination and how ethnic identity acquires features of resistance in reaction to a perceived systematic devaluation of the ethnic culture in public debates and daily interactions. Therefore, it makes a novel contribution to the theorization of reactive ethnicity from the German context.

I have documented that the perceived discrimination accentuates group differences, heightens group consciousness of those differences, and hardens ethnic identity boundaries in the minds of the disadvantaged Turkish youth included in this study. Many of my young respondents reactively maintain adherence to their parents' ethnic origin. This finding corroborates the discoveries of previous studies on reactive ethnicity, such as Portes (1999), Baker and Hotek (2003), Rumbaut (2008) and Platt (2014). My research has also shown that the perceived denigration of ethnic culture

plays an important role in turning 'reactive ethnicity' into 'oppositional identity'. In that sense, my findings relate reactive ethnicity theory to oppositional identity theory; thus, they substantiate the arguments of Willis (1981), Waters (2001) and Nagra (2011) and complement those of Skrobanek and Jobst (2010) that the adoption of an adversarial stance against dominant society is not an intrinsic part of ethnic culture, but derives from interactions with the dominant culture.

Perceived discrimination causes adherence to ethnic culture, and the denigration of ethnic culture gives it oppositional characteristics, perhaps mainly because, different from subtle discriminations, the clear rejection and dislike in public debates and daily interactions deeply disappoint this youth and kill their last hope to establish ties with the dominant society. These youngsters probably do not oppose German culture per se, but the German ethno-religious hierarchy that relegates them to a lower position. I suggest that what Turkish second-generation youth in this study say may signal their profound anxiety about their subordinate position, which is displaced onto ethnic and religious markers. Given that today's labour market is transforming in a way that increasingly demands highly qualified people, these students may not be as 'advantageously' placed as their parents, who could integrate into the labour market through their manual labour. Therefore, while the male Turkish second-generation youth interviewed for this study challenge the degrading social categories in oppositional ways and drop out of school, this will direct them even more to a subordinate position and in the long term disable their mobility.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work supported by German Research Foundation [Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft; grant number 263/2].

Notes

1. The 2014 law enabled youth from migrant backgrounds to hold dual citizenship without renouncing their parents' nationality, if, at the age of twenty-one, they can prove that they have lived in Germany for at least eight years or that they have received schooling within the country for six years and gained the qualification to leave school (*Die Zeit*, July 3, 2014).
2. All names used in this study are pseudonyms.

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