Making Sense of Schooling, Identity, and Culture:
Experiences of Turkish Students and Their Parents

Dissertation

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By

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I look at the Turkish immigrant parents and their children at the intersection of schooling, culture, and identity. The study particularly emphasizes the ways Turkish children negotiate their cultural identity in schooling, Turkish parents’ experiences with their children’s schooling, and the ways Turkish parents and children negotiate their bilingual and bicultural identities. Sociocultural theories, specifically hybridity theory (Bhabha, 1994; Soja, 1996; Moje et al., 2004) and transnational studies (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 2008) framed this study. The findings suggest that Turkish parents and children collaborate to create a third-space in home and community contexts where hybrid American, Turkish, and Muslim identities and Turkish and American cultural and educational practices co-exist. The creation of these third spaces moves the parents and children beyond the limitations of Turkish and American geographical, cultural and educational contexts.
DEDICATION

To those teachers who never stopped believing in that child…
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I am so blessed to have beautiful people in my life that completed me in many different ways. This is an acknowledgement of how they stood by me through my dissertation process, as well as in my personal and professional life.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The changing portraits of immigrants recently captured the attention of educational scholars who realize that the cultural and linguistic diversity in schools reached a new peak in the United States. Unlike the immigration wave in 19th and early 20th century which mostly included immigrants from European countries, in the last couple of decades, smaller but more diverse immigrant communities, mostly from the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Southwest Asia, and North African countries increased in number in the United States, bringing diverse cultural knowledge and experiences. There are immigrants arriving as refugees from war-stricken countries, as well as immigrants with English proficiency, who arrive in the United States for professional jobs and higher education opportunities. This wide spectrum of immigrants created new challenges and unique issues for each immigrant community, as well as for the social and educational institutions in the United States in their effort to accommodate the needs of these immigrants. Obviously, the impact of immigration on public education has been dramatic. First, schools in the United States needed to address the language proficiency, then the academic knowledge and skills that immigrant children needed for their lives. It could be argued that schools also served as the source of cultural knowledge about the host society and the place of cultural transmission.

Unfortunately, however, many researchers traditionally have taken a simplistic understanding of immigrant experiences, reducing it to a matter of assimilation and
integration into the host society. This simplistic view often disregarded the wide range of sociocultural and educational experiences that immigrants bring with them.

Studies focusing on the schooling experiences of immigrant communities have emerged in the literature over the last decade (Smith, 1999). While discussing the issues immigrant student faced, scholars addressed language proficiency, school achievement, cultural discrepancies between home and school, and family participation in schooling. Growing bodies of scholarly work on Asian and Latino communities contributed to our understanding of these immigrant experiences (Delgato-Gaitan & Alexshat-Snider, 1992). Additionally, the educational implications of religious diversity in new forms began to interest scholars. Yet, there are only a few studies that focus on the experiences of numerically smaller communities (Appelbaum, 2002). For instance, the case of Muslim students and their families have just recently been the center of attention (Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007; Günel, 2007; Rida, 2004; Abu El-Haj, 2007; Sarroub, 2002). In the aftermath of September 11, both the curiosity and the hesitancies and reservation about Muslim communities in general have been reported in the United States. The negative media portrayal of Middle Eastern and Asian politics has stigmatized the portrayal of Muslim communities and perpetuated negative stereotypes (Rida, 2004; Kaya, 2004). The lack of knowledge about Islam and Muslims continues to challenge schools and the teachers serving these students.

Turks are a small but rapidly growing population among immigrant communities. According to the 2000 census, there are 117,000 people with Turkish ancestry in the United States (US Census, 2000). However, Turkish immigrants in the United States have a unique cultural position that is tied to both Western and Eastern cultural traditions.
Though carrying Islam as an important cultural identikit, Turkish immigrants also bring a heritage with the traces of over 10,000 years of history and culture. Turkey is located at the intersection of Asia, Europe, and Africa, and throughout the millennia, people from all of those countries have contributed to the Anatolian civilization, and its social and cultural foundations. Founded on the remnants of the Ottoman State—a multicultural, multilingual, and federated state itself (1299-1923)—the Turkish Republic was constructed in 1923 after World War I as a secular nation state: a monolingual, ethnically Turkish dominated and westernized country in the Anatolian peninsula where Europe and Asia come together.

With a population of over 70 million and a strong democracy, Turkey is developing economically and is among the top 17 economies around the world (World Bank, 2008). Political ties between the United States and Turkey, along with the prominence of English as the second language in Turkish schools and universities, have made the United States an appealing place for Turkish people who consider educational and professional opportunities abroad.

The first immigrant wave that arrived in the United States from the lands of Turks was in the late 19th century, a time when the Ottoman State was dealing with wars and economic turmoil. Of about 200,000 immigrants from Ottoman territories, the majority were Christians from today’s Lebanon and Jordan, and Armenians were from Istanbul and Anatolia (Karpat, 2006). About 20,000 of these Turkish-Muslim immigrants were assimilated into the American culture, with a small number returning to their homeland (Karpat, 2006).
The second wave of immigration from the newly-founded Turkish Republic peaked during the 1950s and 1960s. At that time, the majority of immigrants were highly skilled workers and professionals at the middle to upper income levels in Turkey, who were invited to the United States in the aftermath of World War II due to the lack of professionals in industry, military medicine, and academia (Karpat, 2006). These elite Turkish immigrants from 1950s represented Turkey in political and civil arenas, identified with the Turkish government and nationalism, and were without a strong Muslim identity due to the secular culture in Turkey.

The latest wave of immigration from Turkey began in the 1980s and marked a change in the characteristics of immigrants. At this time, a diverse pool of immigrant arrived in the United States (Karpat, 2006). One stream of immigrants from mainly low and middle economic backgrounds were encouraged to immigrate through the diversity lottery system, while others who had been educated in prestigious Turkish universities—whose curriculum and instruction are in English—sought further education, professional work appointments, or temporary training and education. In addition, each year a small group of students were in the United States through Turkish government scholarships. Because of the political stability in Turkey, almost none of the second and third wave of immigrants came to the United States involuntarily, such as refugees in the aftermath of a social trauma or a war. This historical process established the Turkish community in the United States as one small group with higher income and education levels than the average (Census, 2000). About 50% of Turkish immigrants who are 25 or older have an undergraduate or graduate degree. Among Turkish immigrants, the median family income is around $58,000.
At the same time, the influence of a stronger democracy, the globalization of the economies, and the increasing level of education in Turkey, has brought an increased interest in cultural and religious heritage, as reflected in some recent immigrants who identified with a stronger Turkish-Muslim identity (Karpat, 2006). Today, the children of Turkish immigrants who live in the United States on a temporary or permanent basis attend K-12 schools, as well as higher education institutions. Many of these immigrants can also be considered transnational because of their mobility between two countries.

The Purpose of the Study

The unique experiences of Turkish communities in the United States – especially with schooling – present interesting questions and considerations. As a Turkish woman, I found these issues to be even more compelling as I feel the issues that Turkish immigrant families face related to cultural diversity and education are understudied and not well understood. This study, therefore, was designed to explore the educational experiences of Turkish immigrant families and children in the United States in order to contribute to our understanding of the relationship between culture, identity and schooling in a number of ways.

First, understanding the perspectives and experiences of Turkish families regarding their children’s education will support teachers’ efforts in culturally responsive teaching. Second, learning about the experiences and perspectives of Turkish parents and children will inform researchers about how immigrant communities negotiate different cultural and educational contexts and identities. Third, this study supports an understanding of cultural diversity as an asset to the classroom and school community, as well as to broader society.
Research Questions

My purpose in this study was to explore Turkish parents’ and their children’s experiences with and their perspectives of schooling in the United States in relation to their cultural identities. As such, I formed three research questions:

1. How do the Turkish children negotiate their cultural identity in schooling?
2. What are the Turkish parents’ perspectives and experiences with their children’s schooling in the United States?
3. How do Turkish parents negotiate their children’s bilingual and bicultural identities?

Significance of the Study

Studying Turkish communities and children in relation to schooling and education was a heavy challenge to undertake because this particular research topic is so new within the context of the United States. Recently, there have been a few dissertation studies that focused on Turkish immigrants from the standpoint of various social science disciplines. For instance, through narratives of Turkish individuals, Angin (2003) examined the cultural and socio-economical experiences of a Turkish community in relation to assimilation. The research painted a portrayal of a diverse community that strove for adaptation and assimilation, while at the same time maintained strong ties with national and religious heritage through social organizations, religious groups and cultural centers. Angin found that the Turkish participants in the United States reported the least frequency of discrimination and stereotypes compared to their peers in German and
Canadian contexts, partly due to the overall socio-economic well-being of Turkish communities in the United States.

Uruk (2006) did a mixed methods study that focused on the psychological and sociocultural adaptation process of Turkish individuals in the United States. There have also been three cross-cultural educational studies conducted in United States that explored the Turkish undergraduate or graduate students’ experiences from a cognitive sciences perspective, and focused on learning styles, anxiety index, or life satisfaction (Aygun, Arslan, & Guney, 2007; Kaya, 2005; Seferoglu, 2001).

Although these few studies provided insight into the lives and perspectives of Turkish community in the United States by focusing on the issues of identity, cultural assimilation, and adaptation of Turks in the United States, almost no research on identity and culture has been done regarding the educational experiences of Turkish K-12 students and their families in the United States. For example, there is no scholarly knowledge about how Turkish immigrant children experience schooling and education, and how Turkish parents and their children negotiate their cultural identities within the United States schooling contexts. Therefore, this study addressed that empty space and was undertaken to learn about the educational experiences and perspectives of culturally diverse children and their families with the premise that such findings will help teachers to be more culturally responsive and competent in teaching these children. Therefore, I situate this work as a small contribution to the literature on cultural diversity and education. With the aspiration that Turkish children’s and their parents’ experiences will add to this literature, I am also hoping my study will be helpful for researchers and educators in understanding diversity among Muslim students and communities.
Theoretical Framework

In this study I drew from sociocultural theories to understand the experiences of Turkish parents and children. I was interested in the historical, social, and situative perspectives in education because I believe that institutional and social contexts play an important part in children’s learning and making meaning of their world.

In exploring Turkish parents and their children’s experiences, the three main theoretical constructs I utilized in this study were identity, culture, and schooling.

*Conceptualizing Identity, Culture, and Education.*

In using identity as one of my theoretical constructs, I drew from Bakhtinian views on the relationship between the individual and social world. Freedman and Ball (2004) emphasized the term, *ideological becoming*, which referred to the ways we see and sense the world, which is learned through social interactions. Just as in every part of life, shared language and discourses of schooling impact the political decisions individuals make, their belief systems, and the various point of views they carry on critical issues such as diversity and social classes (Freedman & Ball, 2004).

In using the terms immigrant Turkish parents or Turkish children, I refer to their *positional identities*, through which, the parents and children perceive themselves as juxtaposed to the how they are perceived by the institutional culture and schooling in the United States. Hull and Greeno (2006) described positional identities as “the variety of ways in which individuals are entitled, expected, and obligated (by themselves and others) to participate in the practices of a community” (p. 78). What I would like to illuminate in my study is participants’ voices, which are described as “the ways in which individuals present and represent themselves to others and to themselves, therefore,
authoring and co-authoring their identities in the social worlds in which they participate” (Hull & Greeno, 2006, p. 78).

A similar concept, identity development, was explored by Holland and her colleagues, in order to analyze how individuals reshape their identity in cultural settings (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, and Cain (1998) conceptualized this process by using the term agency, defining the way in which people become agents in the construction of their identities. As I highlight the voices of participants, agency was an important theoretical construct in how I demonstrate the ways Turkish parents and children made intentional choices and decisions to negotiate their identity within the cultural and schooling contexts in the United States.

Holland and colleagues argued that identity development process is a dialogic one, including tension and simultaneity, as well as agreement and reconciliation with other discourses present in the society (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998). I found their explanation on cultural self versus constructivist self very helpful in how I conceptualized the perspectives and experiences of Turkish families. As I looked at Turkish families’ experiences with schooling, I took into account the role of history and culture in influencing their identities, norms, behaviors, and beliefs. However, I also took into account the constructivist perspectives which emphasized agency and explored how subjects make active choices in different contexts.

The second theoretical construct I used was culture, which has traditionally been referred to “the pattern of knowledge, skills, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as material artifacts, produced by a human society and transmitted from one generation to
another” (Pai & Adler, 2001). At times, I employ the terms American culture and Turkish culture to describe how participants perceived the different contexts they were in.

However, my purpose was not to position American culture and Turkish culture as two contradictory and idealistic concepts. Also, it is important to note that each participant in my study brought different sociocultural and socioeconomic experiences and perspectives with them. By using these terms, I described how Turkish parents and children perceived and described the particular local contexts they have been surrounded by in various geographical and cultural spaces within both the United States and Turkey.

Figure 1 illustrates how I conceptualized the cultural identity of Turkish immigrants and their children. I perceived national and ethnic identity, religious identity, and shared norms and beliefs as dimensions of cultural identity. Thus, I took a broader perspective to address these components of Turkish children and parents’ cultural identity each time I used this term.
Figure 1. The conceptualization of Turkish cultural identity.

Hybridity Theory and Transnational Studies

To make sense of the perspectives and experiences of Turkish parents and children in the United States who could be described as transnational individuals, I also drew from hybridity and transnationalism, which are postmodern sociocultural theories. Because Turkish immigrant parents have experiences in at least two countries, they might realize the various discourses and identities available to them:
Hybridity theory posits that people in any given community draw on multiple resources or funds to make sense of the world...Being in-between different funds of knowledge and discourse can be both productive and constraining in terms of one’s literate, social, and cultural practices—and ultimately one’s identity development. (Moje et al., 2004, p. 42)

In addition, transnational studies helped me to understand the perspectives and experiences of families beyond the traditional assumptions about immigrants based upon the ideas of assimilation and acculturation. Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc further explained this new perspective:

It has become increasingly obvious that our present conceptions of “immigrant” and “migrant”, anchored in the circumstances of earlier historical moments, no longer suffice. Today, immigrants develop networks, activities, patterns of living, and ideologies that span their home and the host society. (2008, p. 262)

I built my study based on this theoretical premise which positions immigrants between global and local and in fluid spaces.

Definitions of Terms and the Use of Descriptors

The way we think about the notions of nationality, residency, and immigrants gained new forms and became more dynamic and fluid in the post-modern world (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 2008). As I describe the participants and depending upon the context, I used the terms Turkish students, Turkish-American students, Turkish-Muslim students, and Turkish immigrant children interchangeably to bring in situated meanings around different issues. The participants also referred to themselves by using a combination of these terms at times. However, these identity constructs do not imply a static and fixed understanding of these participants’ lives and experiences.
**Bilingualism.** The ability to use two languages fluently and naturally in daily life and in academic learning.

**Biculturalism.** Having the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experience to operate naturally within the dynamics, rituals, routines, and practices of two cultures.

**Culturally diverse students.** Students whose family values, cultures, or daily practices differs from those of mainstream communities centered on White-European cultural traditions (Howard, 1999). Although I take the very term diversity in the broadest meaning in my scholarly work, at the center of my inquiry for this particular study are the issues related to cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious diversity.

**Immigrants.** Individuals who migrate to another country to reside permanently. Because of their professions, some of my participants were not sure if the United States was a final destination for their residency. However, even though they may be described as “migrants,” I still described them as immigrants because of their current residency in the United States.

**Muslim.** A follower of the religion of Islam. Depending on the contexts and individual differences, I used this term in describing both individuals with a more secular understanding of faith, and individuals identifying strongly with religious concepts and practices.

**Mainstream.** Representing the prevalent attitudes, values, and practices of a society or group through media, educational institutions, and public discourses. I define these attitudes, values, and practices as belonging to Anglo-Saxon or European-American cultures.
**Multicultural.** Involving various cultural elements in one context. Schools, communities, texts, and cultural practices could be multicultural or monocultural.

**Monolingual.** The ability to use only one language. The lack of experience in contexts where other languages are spoken.

**Monocultural.** The ability to operate in one culture. The lack of knowledge, skills, dispositions and experience to operate within the dynamics, rituals, routines, and practices of more than one culture.

**School.** I describe schools as sites for Turkish children’s and their parents’ negotiation processes. There were two different schools in the Turkish children’s lives. One is the school they attended during the weekdays that might be public schools, private schools funded by parents or not-for-profit charter schools funded by the public. The other type of school was either Sunday school or Turkish language classes that many of these children attended.

**Space.** A theoretical construct or metaphor I used to represent a dimension, or contextual area where Turkish parents and their children negotiated their cultural identity in the United States.

**Transnationalism.** I define transnationalism as the new face of immigration, that is, the spatial mobility of an immigrant between host and home countries, and also as the preserving of the social space through networks and communities within both countries.

**Turkish.** A person who has ethnic roots in Turkey. I often used the term “Turkish” to describe children through the ethnic background of their two Turkish parents as well, regardless of the country of their birth.
Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Turkish parents and their children attending K-12 classrooms, as well as the perspectives of these individuals about schooling, identity, and culture in the United States. In this chapter, I provided a background on the history of Turkish immigrant communities in the United States. I then explained the rationale behind this dissertation study and described the significance of it. I also framed the theories, concepts, and constructs I have utilized in this study. After defining specific research questions, I listed my understanding of several key terms and descriptors used throughout the dissertation to help readers clearly see my theoretical stance and assumptions.

In Chapter 2, I discuss literature on immigrant families and education, how scholars examined identity and transnationalism, which is a post-modern shift in understanding immigration, culture and identity. Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of my research journey and methodological considerations. In Chapter 4, I present the unique case of Turkish students and their parents at the intersection of culture, identity, and schooling. In Chapter 5, I discuss and conceptualize the findings and the implications of this study for educational research on diversity, pedagogies and practices of schooling, and for teacher education.
CHAPTER 2: IMMIGRANTS, CULTURE, IDENTITY AND SCHOOLING

In this chapter, I review theories and empirical studies around the issues of immigrants, culture, and identity. I first look at the experiences of immigrant children and their families regarding education in the United States. I particularly focus on the issues related to education of immigrant children regarding English language proficiency, bilingualism, and the relationship between school and home. I then discuss the notion of identity and how educational researchers examine the cultural identity of immigrant children and families as it interacts with schooling, drawing from the literature on Muslim immigrants or Turkish immigrants whenever possible. I also explore the post-modern turn in the studies related to identity and education, with an emphasis on transnationalism and how it transforms our thinking on immigrant experiences with schooling and cultural identity.

Introduction

Researchers have argued that schooling these culturally diverse students poses challenges for educators in the United States (Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005; Taylor & Sobel, 2001). Today, 39% of all school-age students in the United States come from culturally or linguistically diverse communities (Howard, 2003). Therefore, American teachers are expected to serve a diverse population of students in schools whose cultural, linguistic, socio-economic backgrounds, interests, and prior experiences differ greatly.
Immigrants constitute many of these culturally diverse communities in the United States.

The most recent wave of mass migration took place in the context of global changes in the economy and society; these changes have both fed the movement of people and made the use of a much more ambitious approach to the integration of the children of migrants more critical than in any previous wave of migration. Unlike one hundred years ago, when first-generation migrants looked to the Fordist industrial expansion and floor-shop mobility as their ticket to the American Dream, in this current wave of immigration, education will be the path to a better tomorrow. (Surarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009)

In this statement, Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco emphasized the importance of the education of immigrants for America in the 21st century. Their call for the education of immigrant children was published in the *Harvard Educational Review* and was addressed to Obama administration. The statistics show that United States is becoming a pluralistic society that is almost unprecedented in world history (Sarason, 1990). It is estimated that by 2050, 24% of United States population will be composed of people of Hispanic or Latino origin. The Black population will consist of 14.6%, and the Asian population will constitute 8% of the total United States population. Other races will constitute 5.3% of the total population. Since the “White” category in the Census data also includes immigrants from Middle Eastern ancestry, as well as people from Southwest Asian, and North African origin, these ethnic categories do not even fully inform us about the complex and diverse nature of these changing demographics.

In this section, I look at the issues immigrant families and children face in relation to educational institutions, include the responses to immigration from schooling and scholarly work; examine how immigrant identities are theorized; and then investigate the
ways postmodern theories help us to better understand immigrant cultures and identities and how these interact with schooling.

Immigrants and Schooling

In United States’ schools, immigrants have many challenging experiences related to race, class, culture, and identity. Three major issues faced by immigrant parents and their children when attending school in the United States pertain to my research questions: second language learning and bi-literacy, connections between school and home, and negotiating cultural identities and cultural change (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Language Learning and Barriers

About three-fourths of immigrant children speak a language other than English at home (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2009). Therefore, the first challenge immigrant children encounter is learning a totally different language, along with its style, tone, implicit messages, and different genres. This also means that for immigrant children, all previous academic and informal knowledge is invisible to their teachers because they cannot communicate the complex thoughts with the limited vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation skills in English (Olneck, 2004). Portes and Rumbaut (2006) argued that although many immigrants in other countries could make a gradual shift from their language, the shift from their mother tongue to English has always been expected to happen very quickly in order to gain social acceptance and to belong to the collective American identity in the United States. However, immigrant families with young children are often disadvantaged in early language learning due to the lack of socio-economic resources. For example, although they strive to have better economic opportunities, it
may be a challenge for some immigrant families to afford early childhood education for their children (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2009).

Bilingualism of immigrant children is a widely researched topic, and research indicates that bilingualism is a resource but it needs to be deliberately fostered by families. Whether schools have been successful in supporting bilingualism is a hotly contested and debated question (Souto-Manning, 2007). Overall, immigrant families prefer their children to maintain their first language and often provide the means for first language instruction through informal classes. However, Gregory (2005) found that Bengali immigrant children take their school-based practices and English classes more seriously than they do their out-of-school literacies in their first language. Similarly, Sarroub (2002) also observed that Yemeni American girls often challenged and criticized their Arabic classes in the community, and preferred the English literacy practices in schooling contexts better.

It could be argued that second generation immigrants often prefer using of English over their mother tongue in home contexts as well. For instance, Gregory found that Bengali children in her study preferred speaking English at home (2005). Several factors affecting their preference for language use at home include siblings (Gregory, 2005), length of experience in the school context (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006), availability of English resources, and popular culture and artifacts. Teacher encouragement to use English in both home and school also play a role in younger immigrant children’s use of English at home (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2009).

Some researchers also explored the ways immigrant children use both languages in different contexts for different purposes (Pujolar, 2000; Zentella, 1997). Identity and
social context were found to be influential in children’s decision making for what language they would utilize. Jones (2006) examined hybrid discourses and language use as they relate to literacy practices, presenting what she called “attitude” or the use of home discourses by students who were marginalized because of their class, gender, and race in school and the larger society. It is crucial to explore the linguistic and social context of classrooms where immigrant children experience hybrid literacy practices at the intersection of their identity and culture, along with their cultural and linguistic practices in both home and community settings.

Home School Relationships

Families play a big part in the negotiation process of their children’s schooling. However, due to limited communication and collaboration opportunities, it is difficult to claim that schools are able to efficiently use parents as cultural mediators (Suarez-Orozco-Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Perez, Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005). It is interesting to note that immigrant parents’ experiences are not fully explored by mainstream research on family-school connections, or by curriculum in the teacher education programs. This disconnection brings many assumptions about immigrant communities. For instance, it is a widely held perception among some educators that because immigrant parents do not have a strong communication with teachers, they may not care as much about their children’s schooling (Howard, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). However, cultural differences such as the notion of respect and a teacher’s autonomy might be a barrier in parents’ engagement with schools and the ways their children are educated in schools. Therefore, in order to support these parents so that parents and teachers could mediate school experiences of the children in ways that are both aligned with the goals of
American schooling and the expectations of the parents, it is crucial to learn about the immigrant parents’ perspective and their own educational experiences.

Sohn and Wang (2006) examined the perspectives of Korean mothers about their involvement with their children’s schooling. They found that the participant mothers all had positive perspectives about schools in that they strived to be involved in school events and PTA organizations, and communicate the children’s needs and academic progress through conferences. The mothers also expressed the challenges they faced in communication with teachers due to language barriers. One parent noted that she did not know any of the cultural or technical terms used in the schools such as “time-out”, “substitute teacher”, and “curriculum”. Other parents mentioned the lack of interpretation or translation services for parents with limited English proficiencies. Korean mothers also had difficulties communicating with schools because of the cultural perspectives. They expressed that they felt hesitant to go to their children’s school because in Korea, the only time a parent gets an invitation from a school is when there is a problem with a child. Thus, visits at other times are avoided to implicitly indicate the support for and trust in the teachers. Lastly, the Korean mothers in the study mentioned that they needed extra support, and an invitation from the school to communicate more to help them understand the schools and educational system in the United States.

**Negotiating Cultural Changes and Dealing with Cultural Differences**

When the children of immigrants in the United States begin to attend school, they often feel and are perceived as culturally different than most of their peers. Many times they have difficulty negotiating social relationships so that they can become accepted
members of the classroom community. They often have to deal with the challenges related to their cultural identities, and at times, these challenges include dealing with prejudice and their different appearance (Watkins-Goffman, 2006).

Children from culturally diverse families come into the classroom with social or cultural tools, rules, and expectations for friendship different than those that mainstream American students have internalized since birth. From behavior patterns, to the perspectives on family, God, teaching and learning, responsibilities and rights, gender roles, community, peer relationships, relationships with teacher—are all new territories that immigrant children have to negotiate (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Being different than the rest of the class and trying to fit in is always a challenge for culturally diverse children in the classrooms.

Lewitt (2001), in her study with Dominican migrants in Boston area stated that frequent migration back and forth between the home country and the host country confused children and negatively affected the chances of school success for these children of migrant parents. Watkins-Goffman (2006) cautioned that immigrant children could become more reserved and dependent because of the trauma of the immigration experience, separation from the family, and negative responses they have from peers and teachers in regard to their cultural identity.

Immigrants and Cultural Identity

The scholarship surrounding immigrant children’s cultural identities is critical to supporting our understanding in different ways. This work inform our understanding of how immigrant children sustain their involvement in both academic and out-of-school contexts, how immigrant children develop a healthy sense of self, and how they respond
to the cultural and curricular dimensions of schooling. Therefore, both historical perspectives towards immigrant identities and how Muslim and/or Turkish immigrants perceived their cultural identities in different contexts are important to explore.

**Understanding Immigrants’ Journey: From Melting Pot to Multiculturalism**

Responses to immigration have dramatically shifted throughout the history of the United States. Therefore, the attitude of schooling towards immigrant students and families also reflected the perspectives of society towards immigration and immigrants.

From the 1870s through the 1920s, being American and democratic meant that immigrants were to leave their languages, cultural values, norms, moral beliefs, and public behaviors and conform to Anglo-Saxon values, thus, schooling served as the center of assimilation. From the 1920s through the 1960s, the idea of the melting pot created an illusionary society where all races and cultures should blend and melt together. Yet, educational institutions continued to serve children in order to assimilate children into the ethnocentric views of the European-American culture. From the 1960s on, schooling witnessed a gradual shift to incorporate and include multicultural ideas and bilingual practices to meet the needs of minority and immigrant children with the increasing awareness of civil rights and democracy in the society (Pai & Adler, 2001).

The United States at the turn of the twenty-first century is much more tolerant of ethnic diversity than it was at the beginning of the twentieth century. We acknowledge that there is no monolithic “American” culture that immigrants assimilate into. Migrants adopt some values and practices, but not others, and they do so at different rates. They gain access to some social and economic institutions and are blocked from integrating into others...They often use their identities symbolically and instrumentally, tailoring them to fit particular settings (Lewitt, 2001, p. 4)
It is only with the awareness of multiple discourses and the civil rights of minorities that immigrants were gradually included in the category of culturally diverse students. Rudolph asserted: “In recent decades multiculturalism has challenged the notion of Americanization and assimilationist homogeneity. Numerous movements recognize and celebrate religious as well as ethnic and racial identities and call for educational diversity” (2008, p. 311). Multiculturalism also called for a change in the way culturally diverse students and immigrants were depicted or defined in school curriculum. This was based on the premise that if students learned more about other cultures, this could help reduce prejudice (Olneck, 1993), ensure a fair representation of cultures in schools, and encourage students be aware of local and global issues as they are interrelated (Appelbaum, 2002). Curriculum makers often responded to the issues of diversity by including the components of other cultures in school curricula through social studies units on world cultures or equity struggles in the United States (Olneck, 1993).

Multicultural curriculum components depended greatly on the perspectives of particular districts, schools and teachers (Appelbaum, 2002). Banks and Banks (2004) found that the integration of a multicultural component in school curricula varied from a mere contribution, such as focusing on a special culture or an issue on designated days to introduce students to other cultures and racial diversity, to transformation, such as deliberate attempts and activities to transform students’ attitudes towards diverse cultures. On the other hand, Sleeter (2001) developed her analyses on how multicultural and diversity issues are communicated through all parts of teaching, not only curriculum.

Multicultural education also drew criticism from scholars. Some researchers criticized the often superficial understanding of multicultural curriculum in schools as
focusing only on holiday seasons, heroes, food, clothes and other external aspects of world cultures (Jackson, 2003; Olneck, 1993). They argued that these practices might divert attention from the real issues immigrant and minority students face, to the identification and further isolation of these students as the other or ethnic.

James (2005) argued that multicultural components of a curriculum are mainly filled with learning materials and books focusing on other cultures, but rarely do teachers examine the content and the author critically (Olneck, 1993). In the implementation of such programs, sometimes a student’s racial or ethnic background is seen as enough of a descriptor of student’s life, thoughts, and cultural identity. Lukose (2007) argued that traditional theories stemming from nation-state and national/ethnic based classification of immigrant communities encouraged a vision of immigrants mainly in relation to their national or ethnic identity. This vision could be easily seen as the multicultural components of curriculum, where diverse cultures are explored based on home countries, or nation-states.

Moreover, the perspectives, negotiation processes, rich experiences in both contexts, and cultural knowledge of immigrant children and their parents’ have been rarely considered as resources. Seldom thought about is that the notion of culture is not that basic and simple, and that we need to take into consideration that cultures play out differently in various individual, local, and national scales, and that cultures change, evolve, and integrate over time with other cultures (Appelbaum, 2002). Sarroub explained:

All too often most teachers remained ignorant of the girls’ community, their religion, and their struggle to be both American and Yemeni. They had no idea of how the hijabat (Yemeni-Arab high school girls) were positioned and how they
were positioning themselves within their various interactions and ritual performances in and out of school. (2002, p. 146)

**Muslim Immigrant Students in the United States**

The experiences of Muslim-Americans, especially Muslim-American students, are understudied in the education literature (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Kaya, 2005). Some scholars argue that the greatly diverse Muslim immigrant communities across different races, ethnicities, and sociocultural backgrounds have enjoyed the benefits that citizenship brings in the United States, while they were also able to sustain their culture and religion (McCloud, 2003). Yet, both before and after the catastrophe of September 11, some researchers pointed to the lack of curricular content exploring the ways Muslim and Arab communities were made outsiders to Western civilization through politicized historical and global conflicts (Abu El-Haj, 2007; Asher, 2008; Sabry & Bruna, 2007) and in ways that influence Muslim students’ identity construction. Public discourses fueled by the media and the lack of knowledge about Islam led many teaching practices to be “driven by such limited, skewed, or just plain incorrect information” (Asher, 2008). This, in turn, serves “to reify stereotypes, and us and them binaries, and continues to essentialize identities, denying multiplicities, and context-specific nuances”. Asher continues:

> In other words, when teachers rely on fixed, narrow concepts of identity and culture, they end up boxing students into preconceived categories. Such reliance on stereotypical representations serves to strengthen them, and shuts out the complex, dynamic identities that are actually in play in school and society. (2008, p. 13)

With the public interest in learning about Muslims in the United States after September 11, the experiences of Muslim students began to draw attention from researchers. At the
core of the interest were the public debates about whether Muslim-immigrant communities experienced a sense of belonging and identified themselves with the nation-states they resided in, or whether their Muslim identity created a conflict with nationalistic discourses in schools and in larger society (Abu El-Haj, 2007). Some researchers explored the experiences of communities that are most marginalized or positioned as outsiders such as Palestinian-American (Abu El-Haj, 2007), Yemeni-American girls with headscarves (Sarroub, 2002), and Arab-American youth in Midwestern schools (Sabry & Bruna, 2007).

In her groundbreaking work on Yemeni Arab-American girls, Sarroub (2002), vividly illustrated how these high school students were engaged in multiple literacy practices through which they re-constructed their identities as Muslim-Americans, and created a cultural space that was neither Yemeni nor American, but in between. Sarroub explained: “It is clear that hijabat (Yemeni-American girls with headscarves) negotiated their home and school lives in unique ways. They adapted to a given situation by creating or adopting in-between texts that helped them bridge two cultures” (2002, p. 146).

Other researchers were also interested in learning how Muslim identity and American identity interacted. Sirin et al. (2008) explored dual identification among Muslim-American adolescents of various immigrant origins. Constructing the young adult identities as fluid and constantly developing, the researchers found that the participant adolescents had positive identification with American identities, regardless of how much they identified with Muslim identities. Although Vertuyken and Yildiz (2007) argued that the level of discrimination participants felt contributed to negative associations with the host country’s culture, Sirin et al. (2008) demonstrated that the level
of discrimination Muslim adolescent participants faced did not affect their identification with American national identity. Overall, the participants identified with their Muslim identities slightly more significantly than they did with their American identities; however, the participants also carried dual identities in three ways. First, they either created a Muslim-American collective identity, or developed parallel identities, indicating a sign of biculturalism. Second, they were able to navigate between both their cultural and religious communities and practices, and mainstream American cultural practices. Third, they self-identified as both Muslim and American.

One of the factors influencing a more positive identification with American identity is the notion of citizenship (Abu El-Haj, 2007), which adds the meaning of permanency and legal acceptance to the immigration experience. On the other hand, the negative or discriminative experiences position Muslim students as outsiders, leading to the fracturing of American and Muslim identities (Abu El-Haj, 2007). For instance, in a study conducted in France, Moroccan and Algerian youth from marginalized and historically colonized communities were found to carry monocultural identities particularly in comparison to the Vietnamese immigrant adolescents who carried more bicultural identities (Sabatier, 2008). Therefore, as some researchers positioned the Muslim identity to be in conflict with the national identity of the host culture, they either perceived the issue as conflicting cultures, or assumed incompatibility of Muslim identities with European or American identities. Yet, the history of colonization, political conflicts, and the current level of discriminative practices that these immigrant youth are exposed to in their own local contexts may also influence their identity construction and add to their struggle.

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Researchers concluded that Turkish immigrants in the United States have less alienation and fewer negative experiences with how their cultural identity is perceived by the host society in the United States compared to Europe or Canada (Angin, 2003). Several studies focused on Turkish immigrants’ religious, cultural, or national identities and how they interacted with identification with the nation state they resided in (Angin, 2003; Faas, 2009; Kaya, 2005; Uruk, 2006; Vertuyken & Yildiz, 2007). In his research with immigrant high school students in England, Faas (2009) found that while Turkish children were perceived by peers as foreigners, they were often perceived as foreigners in Turkey or Turkish Cyprus, too. He further claimed that the pressure of peer group conflicts and fights led Turkish children to construct their Turkish identities in conflict with what he called regional identities, e.g. English or Swabian. Still, they identified with a German or English identity when they considered the political dimensions of their lives. Therefore, Faas conceptualized youth identities as a multidimensional construct that interacted with many factors such as migration history and immigration status, concepts of ethnicity and ethnic relations, social class positioning and culture, government policies, European citizenship and multiculturalism, community experience and dynamics, and school policy approaches and curriculum. He concluded that most of the students who participated in his research identified themselves in consideration of multiple identity constructs such as hybrid Turkish British/German, Swabian German, and German European identities.

Turkish immigrants face a particular dilemma related to their ethnicity, religion, and race when they come to the United States. Kaya (2005) explained how Turkish
immigrants in New York try to understand what the notions of White, Asian, European, Middle Eastern, American, Turkish, and Muslim meant for themselves in the new context. Kaya (2005) reported that coming to the United States; the participants were often labeled with fixed ethnic classifications that they have not experienced in Turkish contexts. One example is the way in which the census data classified people ethnically as “White” and others. Turkish people, although they are categorized under the White category, may choose the category of “other” or “Asian” because of the way they are perceived as different from the mainstream. Their negotiation of new identity positions varied by class, social and economic status, and religion. Kaya found that Turkish immigrants in the United States were usually disturbed by the negative portrayals of Islam and because of the stereotyping; many times they emphasize their Europeanness (Kaya, 2005), drawing a cultural divide between themselves and some other Muslim communities, who are under scrutiny for their cultural differences with Americans. Yet, often the religious identities of Turkish immigrants are found to be inextricably intertwined with Turkish ethnic identity, despite the secular nature of contemporary Turkish society (Karpat, 2006; Kaya, 2005). Therefore, it is a challenge for Turkish children to build their understanding of the multiple identity constructs they have.

Kaya (2005) also reported that Turkish immigrants in the New York City area assumed many blue collar jobs and existed along with other Turks who had higher educational and economic status. The neighborhoods marked the difference in class, as well as the degree of integration. For instance, Turkish individuals with professional jobs and upper-middle class privileges felt closer to American identities (Karpat, 2006). On the other hand, Turkish immigrants with limited language proficiency and limited
economic and educational resources were more inclined to construct their identity as different from Americans, and felt more secure in socializing mostly with fellow nationals. Networking with other Turkish people helped them to learn the culture, society, and how public life is organized in the United States by also keeping the safety and security. Kaya (2005) concluded that the market spaces, neighborhoods with Turkish population density, mosques, social clubs, and associations provided a medium where Turkish Americans can create their distinct bicultural identities.

Schooling and Immigrant Identities

Researchers began focusing on the experiences and identities of different immigrant communities when some immigrant communities performed well in schools, and others failed in many subjects. John Ogbu is one of these influential theorists on the education of immigrant children. In 1986, he proposed cultural ecological theory to explain how macro-conditions and motives that minorities carry could be important factors in school success. He claimed that immigrant communities could be classified under three categories: autonomous, caste-like, and immigrants. Autonomous minorities are those individuals who might be ethnically, linguistically or culturally diverse, yet they do not feel oppressed or subordinated in the mainstream society. Caste-like minorities are groups who were brought into United States through a force like slavery or colonization. Immigrant minorities are the ones who voluntarily moved to the country for better economic opportunities, and because they were driven by motivation for success, they could be highly academically oriented and it was less likely for them to experience struggles with schooling. Although an early attempt to understand the different outcomes in immigrant’s schooling, Ogbu’s theory was later criticized for creating fixed categories
and not accounting for ethnic, cultural, and social diversity within each community (Lukose, 2007). Lukose also argued that the approach became so influential in education that it encouraged a vision of immigrants mainly in relation to their national or ethnic identity in reconsidering school curriculum and policies.

Another way these early theories impacted the education of immigrants was that they linked the academic success of immigrant children in schools with the ability of these students and families to assimilate into mainstream society, just like the melting pot ideal. The coining of another term, acculturation, as an alternative to assimilation, still implied a soft version of that perspective towards immigrant identities (Guerra, 2007). Guerra (2007), citing Malinowski’s comments on what the term acculturation implied, argued that it gave the message to the immigrant that if he wanted to benefit from this culture, he should gradually leave his cultural roots. Today, many immigrants are still expected to unsubscribe from their cultural identity, so they would have a stronger voice in political and social membership in the United States (Lewitt, 2001). Therefore, assimilationist approaches continued to influence the perspectives of mainstream society and scholarly disciplines, although they lost their weight in defining the immigrant experiences with the influence of pluralism and democracy.

An improved version of the mainstream views on immigrant identity is segmented assimilation theory (Zhou, 2007), which has become widely accepted. For those immigrants who demonstrate segmented assimilation, Americanization may not be the final desired goal in host societies. Zhou argued that there was more than one way to become American (1997), and further explained that immigrants typically followed one of three paths: They either assimilated into mainstream American middle class culture,
stay in an enclaved ethnic or cultural space, or they took a more marginal path to stay in opposition to mainstream culture.

Another typology explaining the development of cultural identities was developed by Banks (2006). Although this typology was constructed with racial diversity in the United States in mind, it was still an important contribution to our understanding of cultural identity development of both mainstream individuals and immigrants. Banks’ typology included six stages. In the first stage, *cultural psychological captivity*, the individual internalized the negative perceptions about her culture, and as she is stigmatized, the level of psychological captivity increases. The effects might be heavier with groups that are historically discriminated against. In the second stage, *cultural encapsulation*, the individual does not interact with other cultural groups, and, as a result, perceives her own culture and cultural groups as superior to others. This escalates with the political and economic conditions that create opportunities for other groups. Some individuals who are socialized in all-White suburban communities and lead ethnocentric lives might stay at this stage. In the third stage, *cultural identity clarification*, the individual is capable of clarifying her identity, and as her self-acceptance improves, she becomes more prone to accepting and responding to other cultures well. In the fourth stage, *biculturalism*, the individual has developed a healthy cultural identity. She has the attributes, tools and skills to participate successfully in both her own community and in another community. The individual’s attitude towards both cultures is also positive. In the fifth stage, *multiculturalism and reflective nationalism*, the individual is hypothesized to distinguish personal, cultural, and national identities, and is at peace with her identity. She is able to operate within several cultural groups, yet she also has an appreciation of a
nation-state and its values. In the last stage, *globalism and global competency*, the individual absorbs universal values and ethics, and has the skills to operate within a world community in addition to the characteristics of the fifth stage. Although Banks (2006) argued that this typology was not fixed and individuals might experience it upward, downward, or in a zigzag pattern, he still maintained that these stages often follow each other in a developmental way.

These theories have a common premise that national/ethnic or cultural identities are fixed and static, and usually follow a linear path into assimilation, adaptation, or integration. A good example for this linear and static understanding was the study done by Vertuyken and Yildiz (2007) on how immigrants’ national identities interacted with the nationality in their host countries. By positioning Turkish identity and Dutch identity as static and mutually exclusive constructs, Vertuyken and Yildiz found that Turkish and Muslim identities of immigrants negatively related to identification as Dutch. However, they also concluded that an ethnic or Muslim identification does not necessarily imply that people cannot develop a sense of commitment to their new country.

The only study conceptualizing Turkish immigrant identities in relation to the cultural adaption was conducted by Uruk (2006). Through her dissertation study, Uruk attempted to create a framework illustrating the cultural adaptation process of Turkish individuals in the United States. According to this framework, the first step was becoming more aware of their own culture after seeing it through different lenses in another cultural setting. The second step was comparing and contrasting the two cultures, and through an internal assessment of the values and assets of both cultures, individuals identified their own values and priorities. The third and last step was seeking
confirmation for one’s Turkish identity, and if some acceptance was gained, individuals carried a dual identity as Turkish-American without hesitation. If the cultural context was not open and welcoming to cultural diversity and a Turkish identity, individuals felt disconnected and not accepted, and expressed a desire to go back to Turkey.

By reviewing the prominent work on immigrant identities, I conclude that although they shed light into some developmental and stage-like processes through which immigrants may construct identities, these theories cannot address the complexity of today’s immigrants, who come from many different sociocultural backgrounds, races, and ethnicities, and who still keep strong ties with their ethnic identities while at the same time operate within the host society culture with competence (Koehne, 2006).

The Post-modern Shift in Understanding Immigrant Identities

The ways researchers viewed identity took a dramatic turn with the influence of post-modern and non-essentialist arguments in educational research. Identity was recently conceptualized as a process itself (Lee & Park, 2008), and not an essential construct, or it was perceived as “discursive and in process produced in concrete situation and in talk” (Haugh, 2008, p. 210). Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) drew mainly from their anthropological research outside of the United States, and focused on the importance of locality in identity construction. They conceptualized identity in a broader but specific way: “We focus on the development of identities and agency specific practices and activities situated in historically contingent, socially enacted, culturally constructed ‘worlds’, [that are] recognized field or frames in social life” (p. 7).
The notion of hybrid identities has recently become important in identity studies. Hybridity theory (Bhabha, 1994; Soja, 1996) positions identities as fluid and dialectic and points to the importance of considering complex and multidimensional processes that occur in multiple social contexts in examining how individuals construct their identities. As Moje et al. (2007) assert, “Hybridity theory posits that people in any given community draw on multiple resources or funds to make sense of the world” (p. 42).

Koehn’s study (2006) on international students and how they re-construct their identities in flux is one example of research demonstrating hybridity in immigrant identities. She introduced two notions: flow and closure, the former to describe how international students developed new ways to think about themselves, and the latter to describe how they respond to the discursive identifications that others create about them. The international students in her study both constructed new and fluid identities and reacted to how they were perceived. Haugh (2008) described the discursive processes through which identities are constructed. These processes occur across daily life, in schooling contexts, community, and home contexts and are further influenced by researchers and interviewers making research itself a site in which identities are co-constructed. Bhabha (1994) critiqued the idea of national identities through his description of liminal or hybrid negotiation of cultural identity through the diverse locations of class, culture, race, ethnicity, and gender, and provided a link between the notion of hybridity and third space, a term that inspired many researchers in their understanding of identity between worlds (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Tejada, & Rivera, 1999; Moje et al., 2004; Soja, 1996). In an interview with Rutherford (1994), Bhabha stated:
The notion of hybridity comes from the two prior descriptions given for the genealogy of difference and the idea of translation, because if the act of cultural translation (both as representation and as reproduction) denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture, then we see that all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity. But for me, the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the third space which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (Rutherford, 1994, p. 211)

Bhabha’s notion of third space became an influential way for some researchers to make sense of immigrant identities. Sarroub (2002) utilized the notion of in-betweenness, drawing from Bhabha’s work on the hybrid or local spaces that offered a third context in which to construct identities. In addition, Moje et al. (2004) defined third space as a construct which “merges the ‘first space’ of people’s home, community, and peer networks with the ‘second space’ of the Discourses they encounter in more formalized institutions such as work, church, or school.” (p.41). Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Tejada and Rivera (1999) also used the terms hybrid or third spaces to describe the connection between literacies in and out of school.

Kostogriz and Tsolidis (2008), in their compelling synthesis of Baktinian theories and the construct of third space by Soja (1996) and Bhabha (1994), described how third space opened up many possibilities to think about the post-modern, transnational identities:

What was peculiar about this political stance, Soja continued, was that it commenced as taking sides with the marginal, in common with Marxist perspectives, but it also departs from the constrains of binary logic of either/or to produce a Thirdspace of resistance that would counter the authority of the center(s) through its spatial in-betweenness characterized by cultural dynamics and linguistic ambivalence (see also Bhabha, 1994). In this regard, the political strategy of thirding transcends dualism through an openness to “the both/and also,” where the opposite or antithesis of the process is contained within it and at the same time set against it (Soja, 1996).
The authors constructed third space as an escape from the binary logic of either/or through a resistance to essentialist authorities. However, as Moje et al. argued: “Being in-between different funds of knowledge and discourse can be both productive and constraining in terms of one’s literate, social, and cultural practices—and ultimately one’s identity development.” (2004, p. 42). For instance, Phelan, Davidson, and Yu (1998), in their research with adolescents who negotiated their culture and identity in schooling, found that only when students developed healthy immigrant identities were they able to successfully navigate through different sets of expectations, perspectives, and practices in school, community, home, and peer contexts. Hybridity theories of identity, specifically the idea of third space and liminality create the framework for this study and are used to understand the experiences of Turkish immigrants to negotiate and construct their identities, who by default engage in dialectical relationships with both the Turkish community in Turkey and in the United States.

Transnationalism

Literature on immigrants and immigrant education took a shift when the notions of time, space, identity, culture, and nation are rethought in the light of post-modern understandings. Traditional assumptions about immigrants rested upon the ideas of assimilation and acculturation. Recently, scholars moved to embrace new assumptions and fresh theoretical premises that position immigrants between global and local and in fluid spaces:

It has become increasingly obvious that our present conceptions of “immigrant” and “migrant”, anchored in the circumstances of earlier historic moments, no longer suffice. Today, immigrants develop networks, activities, patterns of living, and ideologies that span their home and the host country. (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 2008, p. 262)
Therefore, because immigrants develop more global connections and close relationships to their home countries, these definitions of immigrant and migrant do not sit well anymore (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 2008). The advances in technology in both transportation and communication, and understanding of language as a vehicle to extend the opportunities and connections created a new notion, *transnationalism*, to define the phenomenon of these people who do not fit into the category of immigrant or migrant. Therefore, while in the past, the experiences of people who belonged to their nation-state stayed in that state’s territories, now many people live around the world, but still claim their identity that is related to their nation, at the same time contributing to the nation-building process of the country where they reside.

Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc (2008) described transnationalism as “a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities and social, economic, and political relations, create social fields that cross nation boundaries” (p. 265).

Transnational studies informed this new turn in identity work, in that they complemented post-modern understanding of identities, particularly immigrant identities. Transnational studies provided the scholars with a new understanding of immigrant identities and the idea that cultures are not bound by space or nationality, but now cross and blur boundaries. Moreover, identities are constructed without the limits of nation, land, time, and physical migration (Ong, 1999). The dynamics loaded onto the notion of cultural identity may help us understand the complexity of the lives and perspectives of today’s immigrants. Paraphrasing Wolf’s ideas (1998, as cited in Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 2008), the authors deconstructed the notions of race,
culture, ethnicity, or nation, by asserting that the transnationalism of these migrant families helped us rethink these notions and how fluid and unfixed they actually are.

Transnationalism as a theoretical construct is under construction itself. Some researchers noticed the incompatibility of transnationalism with some sociological constructs such as class. Lee and Park (2008) drew our attention to how transnationalism played out differently for middle and upper class immigrants, and lower-class or undocumented immigrants. While immigrants with the financial and educational means could be mobile and be in transnational settings, blue-collar workers or undocumented immigrants were stuck with their local and specific contexts and did not have many transnational options. This was an interesting statement that needs further exploration by researchers. It might also mean that there is a danger of essentializing the very idea of transnationalism, and perceiving it as a process that only the privileged upper-middle class can fully experience. Although this is a legitimate statement, I also argue that looking at the immigrant experiences with the binaries of class and socio-economic status could hinder our ability to see how influences on culture and identity are experienced and negotiated by immigrants in many ways. Bhabha complemented this view with his metaphor of the stairwell:

A liminal space, in between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (1994, p. 4)
Summary

In this chapter, I presented a number of theories and relevant empirical research that are useful in understanding immigrant experiences with schooling, culture, and identity. I then explored some studies done with Turkish or Muslim students in the United States, as well as in Europe and Canada.

In examining this literature it becomes obvious that research that explores the experiences of highly skilled and educated immigrants who are mobile, and have the means to maintain cultural elements from both cultures and to also draw from others is missing. In particular, the research that explores the perspectives of Turkish children and parents on schooling, culture and identity as specific subsets of this population is scarce.

In addition, linear and static identity development theories within much of their work on immigrant experiences and identity do not take into account the multidimensional experiences and sociocultural backgrounds immigrant families and children like those from Turkish immigrant communities bring, nor do they consider the diversity within these communities or groups. On the other hand, thoughts on hybridity, non-static notions of identity and transnationalism open up possibilities for understanding Turkish children and their parents’ schooling experiences more holistically in relation to their sociocultural experiences, as well as their cultural identity.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe my epistemological and theoretical stance, and map out the qualitative research methodology I utilized. I situate myself in my research and delineate the ways my own sociocultural background interact with several phases of the study, including creating the research questions, gaining entrée, establishing trust and reciprocity with participants, the interview questions, and the analytical writing process. Then I discuss trustworthiness of this qualitative design.

Epistemological and Theoretical Stance

From the selection and focus of the issue or research problem, and the perspective taken to look at the phenomena, to the methods or ways to examine the phenomena and the frame of the results and presentation of findings, research is always linked with the personal reality (Greene, 1978) and interpretation of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Thus, as a beginning researcher, it is important for me to define my paradigmatic and epistemological stance since “research reflects the political and social context as well as the epistemological journeys of researchers and scholars” (Banks, 2006, p. 781).

The process of defining the epistemological and theoretical stance must be carried out in three different dimensions: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. On the ontological level, the researcher examines his or her own beliefs about the nature of human beings in the world (Jones & Somekh, 2005), the nature of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and the beliefs about how the world works. On the epistemological level,
the researcher examines his or her own beliefs about the nature of knowledge (Jones & Somekh, 2005), how it is created, how the researcher and the participant approach the concept of knowledge, and what knowledge is valuable. On the methodological level, the researcher systematizes his or her inquiry about a certain phenomenon and defines how the researcher came to know about the world, how he or she gained knowledge or reached the knowledge that defines the phenomena, whether it is the culture of a group of people, ideas, perspectives, or a learning process taking place (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). These three levels then form a framework for the researcher: a research paradigm (Kuhn, 1962) that is a worldview, a set of beliefs, a shared perspective that guides the actions in the research process. The researcher may locate her work within certain paradigms, and sometimes operates on them unintentionally.

On the ontological level, I believe that the notions of reality and truth are socially constructed, co-constructed in multiple worlds, and in different contexts. Nietzsche argued that the notion of truth—even the idea of rational truth—is a mere interpretation according to thought patterns or schemata (as cited in Greene, 1986). These realities in communities’ and individuals’ lives are also shaped in historical, spiritual, political, cultural and economic ways. Thus, as Palmer said: “Reality is no longer ‘out there’ but between us” (1993, p. 88).

On the epistemological level, I believe that the nature of knowledge is always subjective and embedded in multiple truths or realities (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Yet the meaning of this knowledge could be created and revealed in a transactional way between researcher and participants (Angrosino, 2005), and between communities. Knowledge that is co-created constantly shapes and changes the structure of society (Holstein &
Gubrium, 2005; Lather, 1986). Thus, my purpose of research is contextualization, understanding, and interpretation of the phenomena with the recognition that this process would and should change the society’s structure towards equality and peace. Based on this view, my methodological stance is both interpretive and dialectical, as both the knower and the known are interactively shaping the research process (Angrosino, 2005), as the researcher tries to understand the participants’ perspective and make meaning out of their world.

I also take consideration post-modern research perspectives that challenge the idea of the modernist project which initially hoped for a world culture and a single grand narrative or comprehensive philosophy around the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I agree that no theory, method, discourse, or tradition can claim universality or achieve an authoritative claim of truth. On the contrary, the understanding of pluralism and many voices (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) inspired my interest in the alternative and authentic practices, as well as perspectives of the agents in educational processes, specifically those from non-mainstream communities. This led me to make conscious methodological decisions to honor the voices of my participants in my research.

As a beginning researcher, I note that this is the paradigmatic and epistemological stance I find most valuable within the broadest definitions of descriptive terms, yet I am aware that paradigms or theoretical perspectives are not fixed and dogmatic, nor should they be subscribed to (Dillard, 2006) as needed. They are reshaped as the researcher learns more and develops other research interests and new philosophical accounts.
Qualitative Research Methodology

Smith defined methodology as “the skill of matching the problem with an ‘appropriate’ set of investigative strategies” (1999, p. 173). Based on my epistemological and theoretical stance and my research interests, qualitative research methodology was the most suitable for my research study. I find Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) description of this approach helpful.

Qualitative research as a methodology is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. (p. 3)

Due to its complex nature and open-endedness, qualitative research from an interpretive perspective is a very demanding process in itself (Agar, 2004). For instance, contrary to the tradition of positivist research with an emphasis on objectivity (Ladson-Billings, 2000), a qualitative researcher acknowledges the existence of subjectivity as a natural component, recognizes her own standpoint and paradigms of research, establishes the philosophical foundations to reflect on their own assumptions or paradigmatic stance, and constantly scrutinizes her own practices during the research process and while writing up the research. This awareness of the partial, historical and situative nature of knowledge is essential to a qualitative researcher in that:

It recognizes the situational limitations of the knower…Qualitative writers do not have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal and atemporal general knowledge. They can eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated
speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it. (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961)

Therefore, I in my research know that partial knowledge I create out of the analyses and interpretation of the stories of Turkish parents and their children could be still in-depth and significant. Thus my commitment was to understand and conceptualize the issues surrounding immigrant Turkish families in relation to culture, identity, and schooling, utilizing the cases of 10 families.

Situating myself as a woman researcher teacher with Turkish ancestry, I am both an insider and outsider to Turkish students and their parents. Given this, Smith cautions me that ethics, respect, reflexivity, and self-criticism should guide the researcher and bring humbleness to the attitude of the researcher (1999). It should bring humbleness because “the researcher belongs to the community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position. Smith argues that “ne of the difficult risks an insider researcher takes is to ‘test’ their own taken-for-granted views about their community” (Smith, 1999, p. 139).

Because it included a non-mainstream community, the research methodology I utilized had to address an important concern. Post-positivist research on indigenous communities requires the researcher to consider the benefits and possible negative effects of the study for the communities (Smith, 1999), and cautions the researcher about traditional research approaches that served “the interests, concerns, and methods of the researcher” and not those of the communities (Bishop, 2005, p. 111). Therefore, I began with the understanding that I am a learner and interpreter of the perspectives of my participants, I have to listen to the real concerns of the participants and present this to the

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field and that furthermore, I must attempt to step outside of the commonly held assumptions about children, families, and schooling that I carry as a result of my own socialization and learning, especially as a doctoral students receiving an education in a program that may often represent mainstream ways of knowing and being.

While I cannot, nor do I choose to eliminate my own subjectivity, I did seek to hold a critical awareness of the possibility of interpreting or reinterpreting from a mainstream stance. My commitment, instead, was to seek a contextual, cultural, personal holistic understanding which also includes a critical, interpretive stance. I utilized such an approach to pursue an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon (Yin, 2006) through individual cases in real life contexts (Stark & Torrance, 2005), from the participants’ perspective through a sociocultural theoretical framework in order to reach a fuller understanding of phenomena, or the big picture about the cases.

Trustworthiness

Contemporary perspectives of validity in educational research are not concerned about sample size, generalization, or about naught variables, but demand rigorous investigation of the research process and the interpretation (Green & Stinson, 1999; Seale, 1999). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the term trustworthiness and developed four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability, to explain it to address the issue of good research in naturalistic inquiry. The trustworthiness criteria by Lincoln and Guba (1985) are conventionally used by qualitative researchers (Jones, 2002) to address issues that are represented as validity, reliability, and objectivity in positivist research (Hoepfl, 1997).
Credibility

Credibility (initially a replacement for internal validity) deals with the adequate representation of multiple voices and realities in a study (Hoepfl, 1997) to ensure credible interpretations. I established credibility through reviews by peers, peer-debriefing (Green & Stinson, 1999), member checks (Jones, 2002), and a search for disconfirming data to increase the strength of the results (Seale, 1999). For peer reviews, I collaborated with faculty members and two colleagues. A colleague and I exchanged our research reports and engaged in conversations to make our reports more accessible, clear and legitimate.

Transferability

Transferability (for external validity or generalizability) refers to the use of a working theory from a study with similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997), and requires the researcher to give detailed and rich accounts of the context, participants, and methodology, so the readers might judge about its applicability to similar settings (Seale, 1999). I cannot generalize the results of this study to all Turkish families in the United States because the context, history, personalities, and conditions of people would be different. However, it is possible to transfer the ideas, the meaning and outcomes of this research, to understand the experiences of other Turkish families, or to use those experiences as a framework to begin new inquiries.

Dependability

Dependability involves an auditing procedure involving all documentation of research, and of the final research report for adequacy (Seale, 1999), as well as for the consistency of the process and the product (Hoepfl, 1997). Since this was a dissertation
study, my findings will be constantly scrutinized by the dissertation community and my academic advisors.

**Conformability**

The last criterion is conformability, which was initially established as a replacement for objectivity (Hoepfl, 1997; Seale, 1999). Conformability establishes—in a concrete way—that data and interpretations are not the researchers’ imagination through the auditing process and self-reflection (Schwandt, 2001). I depended on my database to confirm that my findings were legitimate and based on the data collected, and to demonstrate the relationship between the interpretation and the actual text. I also depended on the reflective journals as a way to scrutinize my findings.

While these four criteria demand vigorous critique of the research process by the researchers themselves, other researchers, the audience, and by the participants themselves, to ensure the trustworthiness of the researcher, I also address the notion of triangulation to increase the trustworthiness of the findings.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation is defined as the use of multiple methods and multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2006) to investigate the validity of the findings, and to examine the inferences made in the study (Schwandt, 2001), so that the researcher is able to arrive a stronger description and interpretation (Yin, 2006). Because qualitative research is conducted within a situated methodology, and to be able to ensure the credibility of a study for different audiences, triangulation is important on many levels and at many stages of the study. Although Erickson emphasized the triangulation of different kinds of sources and methods (1986), triangulation might also include employing multiple data
collectors and analyzers, and multiple conceptual frameworks or theories. I needed to ensure that triangulation brought multiple perspectives to elaborate on meanings and explanations that the observations and the interpretations revealed. In this study, I triangulated my data collection methods and sources. Besides interviews as my main data collection method, I also utilized documents and observations. My participants also varied by their ages, genders, cultural backgrounds, socio-economic status, and school districts, as well as their differing perspectives on culture, identity, and schooling.

**Disconfirming Data**

To study the anomalous data is essential in qualitative research because accounting for contradictions to findings and claims often increases the quality of research (Seale, 1999). Deviating patterns and disconfirming data that conflict with the researchers’ analyses should not be considered as casting a shadow over the success of a qualitative research study. Instead, Seale asserted that they contributed to the unique and diverse pictures of the phenomena that the researcher was trying to capture (1999). In my research findings and discussion section, I present disconfirming data and deviant patterns to illustrate the complexities of the participants’ views.

**Member Validation or Member Checks**

Chase (2005) suggested that the authoritative voice of the researcher over participant narrators’ voices appear many times in the analysis and interpretation. Therefore, researchers should seek ways to include diverse accounts, readings from different perspectives, and narrators’ responses in the interpretations and the research report. One way to ensure that the voices of participants are valued in the interpretations and included in the research report is through member checks or member validation. The
types of member checks vary from just sharing the raw data with the participants, such as the transcription of the interviews, to asking participants to review and to critique the analysis of the researcher and any other components of research report (Seale, 1999). To ensure the credibility of my study, I shared the transcriptions of the interviews and the research report with my participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When my participants challenged my representation, I reconsidered my understanding.

Participants

In this section, I describe my participants who are Turkish parents and children. Since qualitative research has a different approach to the position of the researcher, it is important to discuss myself as a subject in this research, as well as a researcher.

The Researcher as Subject

Being a Turkish-Muslim woman and teacher in the United States who has strong historical and cultural ties with both Asian and European civilizations, I occupy a unique socio-historical and philosophical space. Maybe—like the races of people in my country—I am an absolute cultural mix. My country, which is in the geographical and cultural center of the three oldest continents in the Mediterranean basin, has long been the crossing point of many civilizations, creating a rich cultural diversity. I am constantly in the process of understanding and making sense of my sociocultural background, and negotiating this within the Western philosophical and sociocultural heritage. My specialization in early childhood/elementary education, teacher education, and cultural diversity fits right into the intellectual dialogues that I have been engaged in to define my theoretical position.
Methodologically I saw myself as a researcher who was both an observer and a participant in this qualitative study and caught up in a complex web of connections and assumptions. As Erickson argued (1986), we never arrive in the field as a blank sheet and with a purely inductive mind; we always bring our assumptions and our ways of interpretation with us. Consequently, this complex web of connections defined my subjectivity and influenced the situated methodologies I chose to take up. This subjectivity meant holding a dual perspective as both an insider and outsider to the Turkish families in which I saw myself undertaking different roles and responsibilities of a researcher in this dual space.

Similar to other post-modern researchers I attempted to take both positions in an effort to more fully reveal the complex and messy nature of the representation of the participants’ worlds and in order not to pathologize or mythologize them (Lather & Smithies, 1997). Thus, my challenge, as an outsider, has been in being careful not to pathologize the notion of being a Turkish student/parent, or, as an insider, to mythologize by taking too much of an insider or indigenous perspective.

Though these were challenges at time, nevertheless, the dual space I occupied brought certain strengths to my study. First, because I am a Turkish language speaker, the Turkish parents and children were able to use the possibilities of both languages to make their points. As such, I was able to capture the semantics of the words my participants chose to use, since their wording choices also included nuanced meanings loaded with ideologies and histories. This helped me to achieve a level of accuracy in translating their communication that a non-speaking Turkish language speaker might miss. Additionally, they invested me with a degree of trust because I was Turkish and shared similar
sociohistorical experiences. This helped me to create reciprocal relationships with my participants and I was able to learn more as a result of their trust in me. Consequently, I believe I got a depth and breadth of information that they may not have felt comfortable sharing with someone who was not Turkish. This resulted in the very rich cases and narratives as illustrated in Chapter 4.

Second, I was able to act as a cultural translator in the concepts my participants tried to communicate. For instance, some of my participants shared their personal accounts of the negotiation of culture, identity, and schooling because they assumed that I also went through similar challenges or experiences as an international doctoral student. On the opposite side, there were also times that I needed to monitor my position as an insider/researcher. For instance, during the interviews, some parent participants assumed that I knew more than I did because of our shared sociocultural history. At these times I had to encourage them to voice perspectives and thoughts that would have otherwise gone unvoiced in a simple ‘you know what I mean’ response. Thus, I needed to ask my participants to clearly define what they meant by certain cultural ideas or identity constructs, such as Turkish, Muslim, or American, as these individuals had different personal experiences and histories.

Recruitment of Turkish Families

Selecting and contacting my participants was a challenging and time consuming process. Qualitative research allows for purposeful sampling in order to select the cases to best represent the research phenomenon. It also has a space for snowball sampling (Noy, 2008), where participants introduce another participant into the study (Glesne,
1999). I utilized both strategies in this study based on my research purposes and the availability of participants. My criteria for selection of participants were:

1. Including Turkish children in K-12 education whether in public, private, or charter schools. I preferred children of elementary and middle ages as this was my target population, due to the lack of voices of younger immigrant students in the literature. I kept the age range open for children because there were not many students in each grade-age level to narrow the age range. I also wanted to gain a broad understanding of students’ experiences in different grade levels and educational experiences.

2. Including the parents of these children who were both of Turkish background. It is true that including American and Turkish parents in one family would bring richness and complexity to the processes the children and the families used negotiate their cultural identity, but my goal in this study was to best illuminate Turkish parents’ and children’s immigration experience and the interaction among Turkish culture, identity, and schooling in the United States. Therefore, I made the decision to work with children who had parents from Turkish backgrounds.

3. Including parents who were first generation immigrants regardless of where their children were born.

4. When possible, having a diverse pool of participants in terms of socio-economic status, education, occupation, gender, and age.

Based on these criteria, I began recruiting my participants. I first contacted a few families I already knew through casual conversations, and explained my purpose of
voicing their perspectives in a research study. Some of these families agreed informally as I developed the details and went through the Institutional Review Board procedures. I asked these parents if they knew other families who might be interested in joining this project. The families I met through membership in the Turkish community introduced me to other families who were interested in participating in the study. I reached four of my participant families through snowball sampling, and I reached three of my participant families through recruitment via an email that I sent to the Turkish Student Association. Hence, between July 2008 and August 2008, I was able to reach a total of 33 participants from 10 families who consented to be a part of my study.

Parent Profiles

Participant parents were married couples and/or single parents with children. The mothers’ ages ranged from 29 to 48, and the fathers’ ages ranged from 34 to 50. All the families I included were nuclear families with one to four children, at least one of whom was school age. I was able to interview all the parents throughout the data collection, including 10 mothers and 8 fathers. Due to schedule conflicts, I could not meet with one father who was born in the United States and was not an immigrant.

Since I focused on the experiences of Turkish students and their parents, both the children and their parents participated in this study. I first asked the parents if they were willing to let their children participate in interviews with me. All parents who participated also gave permission for their children to participate. My initial contact happened with the mothers of children. The mothers communicated with me quickly, and being a woman, they felt most comfortable with working with me closely. The mothers made all the decisions for their children related to where we met and when I could work with them.
and their children. I then met with the fathers at their homes or offices, depending on where they liked to meet. In the first meeting with the parents and children, I collected consent forms and parental permission forms for the children. I also asked each child if they wanted to participate, after the parents gave parental permission. I also sent written information about the study to the parents’ email addresses.

My participants trusted me with their privacy and sincerely shared their perspectives with me; therefore, respecting their privacy and keeping their trust has been my priority. Respecting the participants’ privacy, I recorded all the participants’ names and identifying characteristics as pseudonyms. I stored the written data and artifacts at my home in a locked drawer with a separate key.

The reciprocal relationships with parents included me building rapport with them and their children through conversations, and getting together on cultural occasions. Since most children preferred talking in Turkish with me, this opened conversations in some houses about language use. For instance, Murat’s mother was very happy that she was able to hear a long conversation in Turkish from her son. Some other parents expressed their positive feelings that they were able to learn more from their children’s or their spouses’ schooling experiences, as well as perspectives and life accounts. They were hopeful that this study would include their voices as a part of the scholarly knowledge base in educating the children of immigrant communities. They opened their houses, offices, and gatherings to me, as well as their candid conversations. I also gave each child a gift card to thank them for their interviews. After the study, I kept contact with these families through casual gatherings and member checks for the study.

Table 1 below illustrates the profile of parents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family name</th>
<th>Mother’s education/profession</th>
<th>Father’s education/profession</th>
<th>Reason for moving</th>
<th>Arrival</th>
<th>Income level</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ada</td>
<td>BA/teaching</td>
<td>MA/administration</td>
<td>Graduate study &amp; teaching</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Suburban charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulut</td>
<td>BA/housewife</td>
<td>BA/non-profit</td>
<td>Green card</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Suburban charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deniz</td>
<td>PhD/professional</td>
<td>PhD/academic</td>
<td>Professional job</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Suburban affluent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gece</td>
<td>High school/housewife</td>
<td>MA/administration</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Suburban charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Güneş</td>
<td>Middle school/service</td>
<td>High school/service</td>
<td>Green card</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Low–Middle</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisar</td>
<td>BA/tutoring</td>
<td>PhD/academic</td>
<td>Academic job</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Middle-High</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>PhD/business</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Suburban affluent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tekin</td>
<td>PhD/academic</td>
<td>M.A./business</td>
<td>Academic job</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Middle-High</td>
<td>Suburban affluent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yapraç</td>
<td>High School/housewife</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Administration job</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yayla</td>
<td>High School/part-time retail</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Science job</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Middle-High</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Socio-economic, immigration and educational profiles of the Turkish parents.
As illustrated in Table 1, most of the families I worked with had higher educational and income levels than the average in the country. Working with such a group might be questioned in that issues immigrant children and families faced related to socio-economic status would not appear strongly. Yet, this portrait is somehow representative of Turkish communities in the United States as illustrated in Chapter 1. Moreover, I hoped that the participant profiles also provide a contribution to the literature on the experiences of immigrant parents and children who are educated and have limited language barriers, as much scholarly knowledge about immigrant individuals and communities focuses on the issues of language barriers, socio-economic challenges, low educational attainment, and so on (Hernandez, 2004).

*Children Profiles*

The ages of participant children ranged from 7 to 13. Table 2 illustrates some information about all the children who participated in the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Migrated</th>
<th>Age/Birth place</th>
<th>Classroom Composition</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merve Ada</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>11/Turkey</td>
<td>50% African American, 50% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ömer Ada</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>8/U.S.</td>
<td>50% African American, 50% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gizem Bulut</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>11/Turkey</td>
<td>50% African American, 50% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leyla Bulut</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>9/Turkey</td>
<td>60% African American, 40% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeki Deniz</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7/Turkey</td>
<td>75% White, 25% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban affluent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Başak Gece</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>11/Pakistan</td>
<td>60% African American, 40% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salih Gece</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>9/U.S.</td>
<td>50% African American, 50% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Şebnem Güneş</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>7/U.S.</td>
<td>70% White, 25% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murat Hisar</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>13/Turkey</td>
<td>75% White, 25% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban affluent public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buse Nil</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>13/U.S.</td>
<td>90% White, 10% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban affluent public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meriç Tekin</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>11/U.S.</td>
<td>80% White, 20% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban affluent public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onur Yaprak</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>13/Azerbaijan</td>
<td>80% White, 20% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasan Yaprak</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>9/U.S.</td>
<td>50% African American, 50% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umut Yayla</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>11/U.S.</td>
<td>85% White, 15% Multicultural</td>
<td>Suburban affluent public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Age, immigration, school and classroom information for the Turkish children.
The children in my study were either born in the United States, or came to the country as toddlers. As seen in the table, most of the participant children were placed in classrooms with some or much cultural diversity. There are two main reasons for these culturally diverse classrooms: Because the Midwestern city the participants reside in has been growing due to the business, health, and education sectors, it is attracting many immigrants from various countries for jobs their specialty areas, or as refugees, creating a more diverse cultural context that is open to people from different backgrounds. Second, some participants made intentional choices to place their children in schools or classrooms with much cultural diversity.

One school context that six of the children attended was a non-profit charter school located within a densely populated suburban-multicultural residential area with plentiful rental apartments for students, and service sector workers, or professionals, many of whom were from international or African American backgrounds. Other schools that eight of these children attended were various public schools, and a private school, all located in suburban and affluent neighborhoods, with records of academic success. These parents made intentional choices for residency, considering the academic level of the neighborhood schools. While there was racial and ethnic diversity in these schools, to some degree it was mainly composed of a few students with Asian and European-White backgrounds, with little diversity in terms of socio-economic status, race, or culture.

Timeline for the Study

I began this study in August 2008, and concluded it in August 2009. My timeline is illustrated in Table 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Analyses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2008 –</td>
<td>IRB Process and Recruitment</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2008</td>
<td>First interviews with children and families</td>
<td>Transcribing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>Interview with parents and children, observations of Sunday school</td>
<td>Transcribing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2008</td>
<td>Interviews with parents and children, observation of Sunday school</td>
<td>Transcribing and first round of coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2009</td>
<td>Interviews with parents and children</td>
<td>Transcribing and first round of coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2009</td>
<td>Interviews with parents and children</td>
<td>Transcribing and second round of coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2009</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>Transcribing and second round of coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2009</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>Finding the relationships, issues, themes, and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2009</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>Describing the cases through findings. Writing the findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Continuing analyzing and writing the findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Writing up the findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Study timeline

Particular Methods for Data Collection

The particular qualitative methods I utilized to collect data for this study were interviews, observations, and researcher journals.

*Interviews*

I conducted semi-structured and unstructured interviews, the purpose of which Spradley (1980) framed as understanding, rather than the classic ethnographic goal of
explaining. Within this approach, I strove to maintain a *deliberate naivete* (Kvale, 1996), that is, an openness to new phenomena, rather than starting with pre-assumptions and pre-determined categories.

I took notes during the interviews. I also recorded the interviews with a digital voice recorder and transcribed the interviews for analyses. All of the families I interviewed agreed on the use of digital recorder. I had two sets of interview questions prepared for the parents and students. Below is a detailed account for interviewing during the study.

*Interviews with Turkish Parents*

Interviews with Turkish parents were conducted at participants’ homes, offices, businesses, and in my office by the parents’ and children’s choices. To encourage different perspectives, and to be able to hear each participant’s voice in depth, I chose to interview mothers and fathers separately. At times, if I was visiting their homes to do interviews and found both parents, the other spouse would sit with us and listen to what their partner said. Other times I visited individual parents at places of their choice.

*Interviews with Individual Turkish Students of School Age (K-12)*

I conducted interviews with individual students at locations that the families designated. In all cases, the parents wanted me to visit their homes to talk with their children. The time varied from after school hours between 5:00 PM and 8:00 PM, to daytime hours during weekends. At times, parents sat with me and offered extra explanations; at other times, the children invited me to their rooms and showed me their favorite items or books in the room. In all cases, I interviewed the children under the same roof with their parents. If the parents had more than one school aged child and the
siblings preferred talking together, I conducted the interview in the way they felt most comfortable so sometimes we talked together. Table 4 below illustrates a sample from one interview translated into English.

R: How did you observe Zeki become aware of his own identity when he was attending preschool?

Mrs. Deniz: He was usually happy in school. For a while, though, when I went to pick him up, he would not like me to talk in Turkish, he would say “don’t talk like that.”

R: When did this happen?

Mrs. Deniz: While he went to that preschool. Ironically, there were many international families there, who would talk to their kids in their first languages. We would just start talking in Turkish and he did not like it. He also realized in the end of school year that he knew we had an accent, and he did not want us to speak his friends in English either.

R: Why?

Mrs. Deniz: Because we have an accent…

R: How did you know he really felt this?

Mrs. Deniz: You just notice, he would say “don’t say it,” “you should not say,” “don’t say it like that.” Anyway, when he was in preschool, there was something like that. We talked with his teachers.

R: What did you talk about?

Mrs. Deniz: I told her that I do not want my child to feel like that, I said: “you could help me by praising his culture and language at times.”

R: So you actually asked them…

Mrs. Deniz: I requested that, they are usually very open and supportive about that issue. There are many international kids there. Saying things like “Wow, this is a beautiful word, how do you know this?” I think for a while they asked him to teach a few Turkish words to other kids. I think each student taught something in their own language. I don’t remember in detail, but at least to honor the richness the children…

Table 4. A sample from interview with Mrs. Deniz - English translation
Dealing with Two Languages

Since all my participants came from Turkish backgrounds, it is important to discuss how I dealt with language differences and translation in the interviews. All participants were able to understand and speak English. While beginning the interviews, I gave my participants the option to speak English or Turkish. Most of my participants preferred talking to me in Turkish, except for a few children. Children and parents who were very fluent in English sometimes used English words, sentences, expressions, quotes, and such. Therefore, the majority of the interviews were recorded in Turkish and transcribed in Turkish. Memos, notes, analytical writing, and coding were in English, but by using Turkish documents. The data pieces that were significant and would be presented were also translated into English. Finally, the analytical writing was done in English.

During the interviews, most children preferred talking Turkish with me. Some of them were very fluent in Turkish; others preferred going back to English when they felt it would be easier. When I asked why they preferred talking in Turkish, some children expressed the idea that if they talked in Turkish, they talked slowly, so it was suitable for the interview as they needed to think about my questions. Others said that because I am Turkish, they preferred it. I also liked talking in Turkish with children, to be able to catch the casual and comfortable home atmosphere with them, without seeming like an authority or a school person.

Three interviews were spread over the data collection period, and were conducted in the months allocated in the previous section. One exception to this timeline was the parents’ busy schedules and the ways they preferred to arrange interview times.
Sometimes, by the parents’ request, I needed to postpone the second interview and conduct it along with the third (and last) interview. With younger children (aged 7 and 6), each interview length varied from 40 minutes to 1.5 hours. The total duration of three interviews with each participant varied from 2 hours to 5 hours, depending on the depth and the length of the conversations. The interviews totaled 56 hours. Table 5 below outlines interview timeline for each family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family name</th>
<th>Interview Dates</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Child 1</th>
<th>Child 2</th>
<th>Total Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ada</td>
<td>November 11</td>
<td>Mrs. Ada</td>
<td>Mr. Ada</td>
<td>Merve (11)</td>
<td>Ömer (8)</td>
<td>8.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January 13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January 22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulut</td>
<td>October 27</td>
<td>Mrs. Bulut</td>
<td>Mr. Bulut</td>
<td>Gizem (11)</td>
<td>Leyla (9)</td>
<td>6.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>February 8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deniz</td>
<td>November, 21</td>
<td>Mrs. Deniz</td>
<td>Mr. Deniz</td>
<td>Zeki (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January, 20</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January, 21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>February, 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gece</td>
<td>November 9</td>
<td>Mrs. Gece</td>
<td>Mr. Gece</td>
<td>Başak</td>
<td>Salih (9)</td>
<td>7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 19</td>
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<td>December 15</td>
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<td>February 3</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Table 5. Timeline and duration for interviews.
Table 5 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family name</th>
<th>Interview Dates</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Child 1</th>
<th>Child 2</th>
<th>Total Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Güneş</td>
<td>November 10</td>
<td>Mrs. Güneş</td>
<td>Mr. Güneş</td>
<td>Fatma</td>
<td>Şebnem</td>
<td>4.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 18</td>
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<td>(11)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January 20</td>
<td>Mrs. Hisar</td>
<td>Mr. Hisar</td>
<td>Murat</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February, 10</td>
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<td>(12)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>December 2</td>
<td>Mrs. Nil</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Buse</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 16</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>February 25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tekin</td>
<td>November, 27</td>
<td>Mrs. Tekin</td>
<td>Mr. Tekin</td>
<td>Meriç</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>December, 9</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(11)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Yaprak</td>
<td>November 11</td>
<td>Mrs. Yaprak</td>
<td>Mr. Yaprak</td>
<td>Onur</td>
<td>Hasan</td>
<td>5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>(9)</td>
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<td>February 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yayla</td>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>Mrs. Yayla</td>
<td>Mr. Yayla</td>
<td>Umut</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
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<td>February 26</td>
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</table>
Observations

I observed Turkish students and their parents on many occasions over five months: in their homes, in cultural gatherings, at important events, in Sunday community school that some parents and their children were involved with, and any other times where I was allowed to be present in their out-of-school lives. My observations took on multiple forms. During these observations, there were many informal interactions between my participants and I, most of which I recorded and took notes with their permission. I did not ask parents to be involved in any formal conversation or meetings besides the interviews.

Since I am also of Turkish background, I was able to interact with these families on various occasions and was present at some celebrations and cultural events where I could gain access to Turkish families and their cultural and educational practices. In order to understand the meaning of the cultural knowledge offered by the parents and children, when I was invited, I made observations at public places and cultural or community events of the families’ choice. Through spending time with children and their parents during daily activities, I observed the children with their parents and with their peers in their home settings or places where the parents wished to meet with me, such as the national and religious holidays where some of my participants met.

Observation Conducted in Sunday School

I employed unstructured observations (Jones & Somekh, 2005), where I let my prior knowledge, experiences, and theories inform my detailed observations. I rarely employed participant observation (Spradley, 1980), where I acted as the participating member in the research setting. Every Sunday between 11:00 AM and 3:00 PM, between
October 2008 and February 2009, I visited the Sunday school where Gizem, Leyla, Fatma, Şebnem, Salih, Hasan, Merve, and Ömer attended. Sunday school consisted of informal classes for children, where volunteer Turkish women were the teachers. In Sunday school, there were Turkish language classes, Qur’an recitation classes, religious education classes, and some history and cultural information for children. I would usually pick different classes and different age groups to observe each time I was there. The children got used to my presence in the Sunday school, but I could still see that the teachers—mothers who volunteered to teach—were overall a little tense with my presence, especially in the beginning, since they knew I was a doctoral student and a former teacher. I tried to make them feel comfortable by assisting them in their classes with anything they needed, and refrained from making any comments or suggestions about their teaching. I gradually became a person they could trust. To assist the teachers and other volunteer mothers, I would do some office tasks when they needed; for example, once they wanted me to type a letter to families, and another time I went shopping for some supplies they needed. I gradually became a natural observer and learned much from the interactions among children and teachers. I especially found the casual interactions among children during small recesses and free play times very interesting to understand the bilingual and bicultural competency among the children. A sample observation that I recorded in my researcher journal is in Table 6.
February 22 11.50 am Observed religious education class:

Observing Hasan, Merve, Gizem, Fatma, Şebnem and Leyla.

-Merve came to the class wearing a scarf, she had her jeans on, on top of it, she wore a denim mini dress. She wore a grey sweater on it.

-9 children in the classroom, 2 boys. The children are sitting in a row of individual chairs behind a row of tables. Everyone is facing the teacher.

The teacher is talking about giving charity. She is using Turkish exclusively. Students are interested in the topic and they are attentive when they can interact with the teacher. They are also chatty and engage in side conversations. The teacher, though, really likes it to be quiet expect questions and raises her voice to make them listen to her.

The teacher: “Sadaka (charity) means not only money but many nice things, such as smiling others. This is also helping people.”

Hasan: “My teacher, my mom saw a poor person on the street, and gave him some pastries, can this also be sadaka?“

Teacher: “Yes, that is also sadaka. It needs to be a bridge between poor and rich.

Gizem asked: “Some people give charity to make their money more, can this count?“

Teacher said: Your intentions are very important. You only do it for Allah’s sake. When people give charity to show off, other people would think he gives out so much and admires him, but actually it is only given to earn the love of God, not for other things.

Merve: “Can we give something for sadaka if we find something on the street?”

Teacher: “If you cannot find the person, you can give it out for charity and then pray that the good deeds for that sadaka go to that person who owned the thing.”

continued

Table 6. A sample of observation of religious education class in Sunday school
Table 6 continued

February 22 11.50 am Observed religious education class:

Observing Hasan, Merve, Gizem, Fatma, Şebnem and Leyla.

Merve took off her scarf in the second part of the lesson. Teacher then asked them to draw a picture of a time when they or their families gave out something to people in need. Şebnem drew a picture of street sellers in Turkey with their little booths and trays to sell balloons, candy, and Turkish sesame bagels. I wonder why she immediately imagined a Turkish context. Did she think about street beggars in Turkey in relation to charity? She only visited Turkey once. I wonder if she has seen what she pictured in Turkish TVs.

As I look at Hasan’s and his other friend’s drawing, they drew the very same picture! A taxi going fast on a one lane road and a young boy helping the older man cross the street. Hasan and the other boy giggled a lot during this drawing activity.

After the drawing, the students became very chatty and the teacher is now getting prepared to dismiss them. She asked them to learn about the types of other charities until next week. Students left the classroom by walking and chatting, and soon began playing on the main area.

Although my presence in Sunday school was in no way comprehensive enough to draw conclusions, I still utilized my observations to make sense of how students negotiated their identities in these cultural settings. Their questions and conversations, and how they used the language during these cultural occasions, provided glimpses about their bicultural identities.

Observations of Cultural Occasions

I also conducted informal observations during cultural occasions and at participants’ homes. This included two religious holiday celebrations, one women’s
party, and a national holiday celebration with the participants. Table 7 below illustrates my observation account.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Month/ Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation in the Turkish Community School</td>
<td>To gain understanding of out-of-school educational and cultural settings of students</td>
<td>Turkish Community Center – Sunday School (Weekly Observations)</td>
<td>October 2008–February 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of cultural and community events</td>
<td>To gain understanding of out-of-school educational and cultural settings of students</td>
<td>A rented recreation center to observe two holiday celebrations, one national holiday, a party, homes of the participants, parks and picnic areas</td>
<td>October-2008-February-2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Observation account.

These informal observations helped me to gain a perspective into the lives of the children and parents. I was better able to understand what some parents meant by supporting the children’s bilingual and bicultural identities. The observations gave me a glimpse of how children negotiated their identities in out-of-school contexts.

**Researcher Journals**

Utilizing researcher journals provided my perspective with a place to surface. It also made me, the researcher, an instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), subject to scrutiny along with other methods I utilized. First, I employed a research journal as a log to document dates, events, information about participants, and any other significant data. Second, researcher journals were a space for recording my observations. Third, my research journal became a folder to place any data I was not able to locate in the formal
recording of data during the data collection process, such as memos after any event, information about the background and conditions of an interview, and any artifacts that the children and parents chose to share with me. Since I used my research journal as data, it was also subject to qualitative analysis. My research journal included the following data:

1. All observational notes.
2. The notes on the informal observations and interactions with the families in daily life, i.e., during cultural events, celebrations, and any other occasion that I attended by the families’ choice.
3. Written records of the meetings, memos, information, email communications, information about date, time, participants, and significant events.
4. Documents and artifacts for analysis. I included cultural artifacts, symbols (Glesne, 1996), school assignments, letters, children’s drawings and other writings they preferred sharing, and the notes my participants chose to share with me. These documents and artifacts aided my understanding of the main data from interviews.

Analyses

Because this was a qualitative study on the perspectives and experiences of Turkish families with schooling, I employed the well-known constant comparative/grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to keep an open-ended and exploratory analyses process. Although some researchers choose to use software to
organize and help analyze data, I developed my own system of analysis that included manual and computerized coding, analytical writing, and writing up the research report.

Coding and Organizing

First, I transcribed all interview data verbatim and typed the interviews. Then I selected three families by choosing the ones that seemed to have different experiences. Aligned with this approach, I first manually free-coded and explored themes and main concepts in each of the cases, in the students’ and parents’ interviews, and in other data sources. In the meantime, I developed many tables to show the relationships among education level, language proficiencies, bicultural and bilingual practices, and school contexts of children.

In preparation for the second round of coding, I compared all of my codes within the three sets of families; and created my first codebook organized through eight umbrella concepts. The second step was mapping all the data from the 10 families with conceptually defined codes. As my codes became more clear and well-defined, I worked on reducing the data to include the issues represented in codes. At each step, I juxtaposed my codes against my research questions. At the same time, I began examining the differences among the perspectives of children, fathers, and mothers. Table 8 illustrates how part of my codebook looked after the second round of coding.
Table 8. A sample page from my code book developed after the second round of coding.

Some codes in this codebook collapsed when I did further analysis and joined several similar issues. As the third step, I entered interview data into the Microsoft Excel® program, and entered the codes into pieces of data to create my own database. At this point, I took marginal notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in side columns. The purpose of using the Excel program was the organizing, sorting, and filtering features that I used. With the help of Excel, I was able to sort the data by each category, and each code by
participant groups (i.e. children’s responses, mothers’, fathers’, or a particular family’s responses). This allowed me to systematically analyze the relationships, processes, concepts, ideas, tensions, and definitive narratives in the data through each category, and each participant. Table 9 illustrates a sample page from the database I developed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>m</th>
<th>s</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>Z. Iki farkli dunyayi nasil dengeliyorlar</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1.4</th>
<th>219</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>A. Dengeleyemeyince zaten problem oluyor, okula gittiklerinde oradaki beklentileri yapmak zorundalar, bir kere onlar gibi konusmak zorundalar, okulun kurallarina uymak zorundalar, arkadaslariyla konusurken, arkadaslariyla ortak birseyler bulmaya calisiyorlar, cunku cocuklar bazen garip degilsik birsey gorduklerinde hemen uzerine gidebiliyor, degilsik birsey yediginde, giydiginde mesela. Olumsuz bakiyolar, veya bunlar kendileri rahatsiz oluyorlar, cocuklarda dalga gecme veya asagilama olabiliyor.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>A. Cocuklarin bile oyle bir beklentisi yok yani, cunku herhalde cekingenlik, simdiye kadar oyle bir sey yapilmamis, devamli kendi kulturlerini gizlemek zorunda kalmslar, hic Boyle bir saygi gormemisler. Soylemiyorlar, sorulmadikca, biz de de soyledir diye, gizliyorlar, mesela bizim holidayimiz var diye, okula gelmiyorsa filan soylemiyor bizim holidayimiz var diye, veya biz mesela bunu yemiyoruz sunu yemiyoruz, onlar gibi davranmaya , mesela bir Ramazan da oruc tutuyorsa filan, soylemiyor bunu diger cocuklara, ozellikle ortaokulda falan.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>236</td>
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<td>m</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Z. Neden soylemiyor?</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>A. Onlardan farkli gozukmek istemiyor, single-out olacakini dusunuyor. Oncelarla uyum saglamaya calisiyor.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. A sample part from the database
With this database, I was able to locate all the data related to a single code, and analyze the relationships together. I was also able to see all the data from one single family, only fathers, or only mothers. This gave me a strength and easy access to all organized data.

I brought my coded and organized data to a more saturated form when I identified four categories of findings out of my analysis. The themes and ideas were refined more, and systematically compared considering the various elements, the individuals, children, mother and father, the different contexts of the experiences, and the histories and personal accounts in considering the perspectives.

Writing of the Research Report

I began engaging in free writing at the beginning of the data collection. After I conducted interviews, I would often take notes and write my reflections in my research log. As the interviews added up, I started to turn the writing process into an analytical one, by coding the data and making marginal notes in my database. Writing up the research process was no different from the analysis, it is the core of analysis, as Miles and Huberman (1994) clearly stated. Therefore, I moved the analysis to another level as I wrote the research report. Some of the sub-categories collapsed and I organized some themes differently as I looked at the data and my codes countless times. To give the audience a chance to better scrutinize my findings and inferences, I provided descriptions for cases (Yin, 2006), and group agreements on certain types of experiences the families had. This was the stage I was most challenged by, as the honest and clear representation of data is one of the most vital elements of qualitative research. Therefore, I constantly looked for alternative descriptions or interpretations, as I was concerned that my power
over my data and findings might shadow the true intentions of my participants (Lather, 1991). I provided quotes from the interviews and observational notes to make my assumptions and interpretations clear to the audience. As Glesne (1999) noted, the researcher should be a good translator of the participants’ experiences and narratives; consequently, I was a narrator, and at times a translator for my participants’ experiences. Therefore, ethical considerations were of the highest importance in reporting the research.

Summary

My purpose in this study was to explore the Turkish parents’ and their children’s perspectives and experiences with schooling in the United States, in relation to their cultural identities. I also explored how the Turkish children negotiated their cultural identity in schooling, what the Turkish parents’ perspectives and experiences with their children’s schooling in the United States were, and how the Turkish parents negotiated their children’s bilingual and bicultural identities. To be able to answer my research questions, I examined my own epistemological and theoretical orientation, and made my methodological decisions based on this framework. I designed my methodology as a qualitative case study, including 10 sets of families I reached through snowball sampling and community nominations. I collected three types of data through interviews, observations, and documents. My purpose of describing the participants’ experiences and narratives guided me to use grounded theory to analyze the data. I coded and organized my data both manually and through the use of the Microsoft Excel® program. To deepen the trustworthiness of the study, I employed triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checks, peer debriefing, and auditing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of Turkish parents’ and their children’s experiences with schooling. As I listened to the stories of Turkish children and their parents living in the United States, I was interested in understanding how Turkish children negotiated their cultural identity with schooling, the perspectives and experiences of their parents with their children’s schooling in the United States, and the ways in which Turkish parents negotiated their children’s bilingual and bicultural identities. In this chapter, I report my findings in three sections. First, the Turkish children in the study continuously negotiated their culture and identity in schooling contexts. This negotiation process carried different characteristics depending on the social context of their classrooms, family backgrounds, teacher-student relationships, and multicultural friendships. Second, the Turkish parents negotiated their cultural perspectives on schooling by reflecting on their children’s current schooling experiences and negotiating the relationships between home and school contexts. Third, the Turkish parents were instrumental in supporting their children’s bilingual and bicultural identities in home and community contexts.

Turkish Children Negotiating Culture, Identity, and Schooling

In this section, I explore three major findings and the characteristics that emerged as important to an understanding of how Turkish children in the study negotiated their culture and identity. First, the findings indicated that the social context of the classroom
involving friendships and teacher-student relationships was instrumental in the Turkish children’s negotiation of their cultural identities. Second, the Turkish children negotiated their religious identity by either making it invisible, or making it visible through the school curriculum and operating within a multicultural classroom culture. Finally, the Turkish children in the study negotiated their ethnic background and national identity through peer influences, the school curriculum, and through developing dual identities.

*Negotiating the Social Context of the Classroom*

As I examined the experiences of Turkish children in schooling over time through interviews with parents and children, I learned that the social and cultural context of the classroom makes a significant difference in the ways that Turkish children understand and negotiate their culture and identity.

Data analyses revealed four categories of findings: (a) the influence of monocultural and multicultural classroom contexts, (b) children’s efforts to create relationships and experience a sense of belonging, (c) the ways children built positive social interactions, and (d) perceptions of teacher-student relationships.

*Monocultural and Multicultural Classroom Contexts*

The factors of job, education, and financial considerations enable Turkish immigrant families to be very mobile. As a result, Turkish children over time may attend schools that are in different states, different cities, or in different neighborhoods of the same city. Even within the same school, the children get to experience various teachers and classroom compositions which may or may not be open to cultural diversity. This has a great impact on the ways that Turkish children come to learn and understand classroom cultures and gain the tools to make friends at different times in their lives.
Looking at the experiences of Turkish children in my study, one important influence on Turkish children’s social integration into American classrooms was whether the social and cultural context of the classroom was more monocultural or more multicultural. I described these two contexts as an introduction to the ways that Turkish children in American classrooms negotiated their identity and culture.

In the monocultural classroom contexts, dominant mainstream cultural practices and discourses were prevalent. These classrooms were often composed of students who come from middle to high socioeconomic backgrounds, or they were in affluent neighborhood schools where norms and assumptions were of White middle and upper class Americans. Obviously there often were a moderate number of children from international backgrounds; but they did not gain much cultural visibility except for occasional multicultural school events in social studies classes. In some cases, Turkish children in classrooms with all African-American students had similar experiences to Turkish children who attended these monocultural White classroom communities.

In these monocultural contexts, Turkish children were more easily detected through their names, clothing, dietary preferences, and physical features. It was easier for Turkish students to feel the “pressure” of not belonging, even if they do not have language difficulties, or any academic challenges. While cultural differences were often recognized, these values were usually not overtly talked about, because White-European culture created a context, in which Turkish students often found themselves without much awareness of multiple identities, discourses and cultures. This in turn influenced the ways they negotiated their culture and identity. For this reason, some parents intentionally made decisions as to what particular school they want their children to attend.
since they were aware of the impact of monocultural classroom contexts. These parents considered their school choices for their children to support their bicultural identities. For instance, Mr. Tekin explained:

One of the reasons we chose Meriç’s particular school is that there are lots of international families living around that area. We were hoping to have a more diverse student body. We wanted him to attend that school. Otherwise, there was another elementary school close by, whose neighborhood was wealthier, so the children were from upper class. I went to the school, it looked more polished and new, but I did not like it there, because the class division was so apparent. Meriç’s current school has a more genuine and warm environment.

In his current school, although Meriç’s parents recognized that there are international events and a general openness about diverse cultures that students bring to the classroom, they expressed that cultural diversity is not recognized as it should be. As Mr. Tekin explained, “Many teachers are from this state and they do not have any experience outside of this state. Without a global knowledge, helping children who live within two or three cultures is not very easy to do. I would prefer more teachers to be from international backgrounds.”

Multicultural classroom contexts were often located in urban or rather multicultural suburban communities and in various types of charter schools, public schools, or private schools. In these schools, there are students from many different backgrounds, so that belonging to the mainstream was not a cultural norm. In these settings, depending on the classroom composition, many cultures were visibly represented, including African American, Turkish, Ghanaian, Somalian, and Arab. For instance, Gizem (11) felt unique and different being a culturally diverse student in her multicultural classroom, “one of a kind” as she expressed to me in the interviews. These contexts seemed to privilege difference as cultural capital, and children seemed to have
multidimensional interactions with their peers from various backgrounds. It is true that popular culture was still a focal point of interactions with its impact on music, sports, computer games, and TV shows. Yet, children’s conversations were reshaped by the influence of multiple discourses, multiple voices, and cultural elements. Differences were discussed during lunchtime, or after school, and important dimensions of one’s background such as culture, identity, and religion often entered the conversations.

For example, Başak talked about the current social context of her classroom: “In my other school, even if they asked me, I would have been shy to say words in Turkish, but in this school, I feel proud to know and to speak Turkish because here there are people from different countries and they learn about Turkey.” How much a multicultural classroom context might transform children’s experiences could easily be seen in Salih’s case. Salih’s first elementary school experience for three years could be described as a monocultural classroom context in contrast to his current charter school classroom, which is a more multicultural context. As his father explained,

My son had difficulty in adjusting to the social environment in the classroom in the suburban school he attended. When he had language learning difficulty, his friends isolated him. He began stuttering. Visiting a Speech Therapist, we were told, it is nothing about disability. When he changed his school, his speech came along.

Some parents often considered social class and multiculturalism as two important factors in their decision making. For instance, the Yaprak family enrolled Onur in his current school because of its academic success, but also because he could be with his neighborhood friends in the same school, while they preferred Hasan to be with a more multicultural student body in a charter school. Mr. and Mrs. Gece wanted to create a multicultural environment for their daughter’s education by choosing an Islamic school,
yet, the cultural differences between them and teacher-student body led them to send their daughters to the current charter school she attends, where Başak’s father also works. These findings illustrate that parents also made deliberate choices considering the monocultural or multicultural nature of these school settings.

Understanding these two contexts in particular has been helpful for me to recognize the ways in which the Turkish children in my study negotiated who they were and how they operated within these contexts, as well as how they navigated through their home and school cultures. However, it is important to consider that social and cultural dynamics of each classroom depended on the guidance of the teacher, the demographics of classroom members, and particular sociocultural experiences each student has in these classrooms. Therefore, the notions of multicultural and monocultural classroom contexts are not two opposite and fixed constructs, but just one way to conceptualize participants’ experiences.

*Relationships and Belonging*

The findings of this study suggest that social relationships, friendships, and the sense of belonging were of central importance to the participant children in the study. Data analyses showed that regardless of their socioeconomic status, previous school experiences, or language proficiency, many Turkish children in the study had challenges in making friends and in feeling a sense of belonging in their school settings. Indeed, 11 out of 15 children who participated in the study attended preschool before they started kindergarten, with the exception of Leyla (9), Salih (9), Murat (12), and Hasan (9). Therefore, most of the children in the study had early experiences with schooling and English as a second language. All of the Turkish children and their parents who
participated in the study reported positive experiences with preschool, often referring to playful, warm and relaxed atmosphere of these early childhood settings. However, Onur, Buse, Meriç, Merve, Murat, Leyla and Fatma had some experiences with isolation when they first entered elementary school classroom contexts that were monocultural.

Language issues in making friends. Monocultural classroom contexts were spaces where the Turkish children reported feeling socially isolated. An example is Başak (11), who moved to the United States when she was 6. While she attended kindergarten in a suburban district in a metropolitan city, her family had to move to another suburban area around the same city. There, she attended first grade in another public school. The family had to move the next year to a Midwestern city, where they currently reside. Başak recalled her second and third grade:

I did not like that school, I had only two friends. I was a bit shy to talk. When my teacher asked something, I would only nod my head. The kids in the class would make fun of me, saying I don’t know how to talk. My two friends were speaking Spanish, and we were going to ESL (English as a Second Language Supplement) together. My grades were very good, the children knew that, but the girls were playing with kids who know English very well, they would not talk to us. The boys would treat us badly, the girls would behave nicely, but would not play with us. They would play among themselves. But, in the third grade, I was not shy anymore, I was talking really well. The kids in my class said: “Did you know how to talk? We thought you did not.”

Language proficiency issues also created challenges with social relationships for Hasan, Merve, Meriç, Şebnem, and Salih when they began kindergarten.

At times, the children used their friends to interpret the language of social interactions for them. Merve (11), who never had to use ESL services because she was proficient in English and was identified as “gifted,” still struggled to navigate conversations with her peers. In kindergarten, she had a White American friend from her
neighborhood who helped her interpret not only the language but also cultural aspects of the classroom. When she could not express what she wanted to say, her friend communicated it for her.

The challenges of language proficiency were often coupled with racial and cultural differences and intensified the social isolation for some children in the study. Salih (9) began kindergarten at a charter school in a metropolitan city in the Midwest, where his dad was also a teacher. In that multicultural school setting, he felt comfortable and liked the playful atmosphere of kindergarten. Yet, challenges began to surface when, in first grade, he moved to a school in the suburbs of the Midwestern city where he is currently living.

I did not like that school, nobody liked me there. I did not have any friends; the children would only like some students. I had only one friend in second grade. I could not talk English well at the time; they disliked me because of that. There was another child from Africa, they did not like him either.

Social isolation in the monocultural classroom context. Some Turkish children experienced social isolation when they moved from a classroom context that was operated by different social and cultural expectations into a monocultural classroom. This type of isolation was not necessarily related to language proficiency, as five out of 15 Turkish children never needed ESL services, and four other children only needed ESL services in kindergarten. In fact, among the participant children, only two of them needed ESL services beyond first grade. Therefore, the children were challenged by the cultural context of conversations, such as not sharing the same cultural celebrations, not looking like their friends, not knowing how to tease friends, or not sharing the same sports or extracurricular activities. For instance, Merve noticed that the tools needed to form and
process relationships among her peers were greatly different when she attended a charter school in the same city, a second-grade classroom with all African American children. The social obstacles followed the same pattern of “being different,” but this time in another context:

In second grade, there was one [popular] child in the classroom and everyone did whatever he or she did. In my other school, there was nothing like it. Everyone was doing whatever they want; we would be in groups or do things by ourselves. But in that charter school, everyone followed that girl, or this boy. I would ask them why they are following that girl and everyone would say, “I like her so much.”

When asked about her friendships in this school, Merve mentioned she and the other Turkish girl eventually became close friends because they felt isolated among a group of African-American students: “There were only two White students in my class, and [the African American children] were saying we were a bit weird because we were White.”

For some children, the level of social isolation escalated with the increasing visibility of White mainstream culture as the norm in the classroom contexts. Buse (13), now in eighth grade, constantly felt isolated and displaced during her school years in varying affluent White neighborhoods. When she began school in a Montessori-based preschool and kindergarten in an affluent neighborhood, she was one of the few culturally diverse children in the classroom. Buse recalled how she felt left out and had trouble identifying with her friends, who mostly “had blue eyes and light blonde hair.” She felt that those students often attracted more attention and warmth from their teacher than she did.

The first time I realized I was different from them was at the time of kindergarten, because there was an Indian girl who did a dance performance at the time of their holiday. I though she looked more like us compared to the other kids.
When Buse moved to a smaller suburban district in the same city, she entered another
monocultural classroom community, where she had difficulty making friends due to
feeling left out by her peers and teacher, although she was performing very well
academically. She recognized that she had only one close friend each year. When she was
in third grade, she made her first best friend, who is from Peru. She realized that she
eventually found herself seeking friends who are from diverse backgrounds because she
hoped they would find each other’s friendship valuable. In the affluent private school she
attended for the last three years, her current best friends were the only other two girls
from other cultures in her classroom: one African-American and one Egyptian-American.

Not only racial and cultural features in children’s lives, but also their outward
appearance and clothing played a role in their isolation. Fatma’s parents became
concerned when a group of girls constantly teased Fatma because she was close to her
teachers and because she wore modest clothes that were not name brands. Mrs. Güneş
described her daughter’s experience:

We had a meeting with her teacher, social worker, and the principal; they promised they would talk to those students and if that happens again, call their parents. They were very surprised at why these girls were involved in this. Then they asked Fatma to share anything with them if that happens again. They were sad that a student had this issue. Her teacher even blushed and regretted not to have realized this earlier.

Positive Social Interactions through Multicultural Friendships

The findings from interviews revealed that choosing friends from multicultural
backgrounds has been a common pattern in the social interactions of Turkish children in
American schools. In monocultural classroom communities, it was fairly often the case
that Turkish children in the study had most of their friends among children from diverse
backgrounds, although they had few White American friends. However, this did not necessarily imply that there is a great degree of multicultural influences in the interactions among children. This was only true in few cases. Indeed, as Turkish children in the study learned about the tools to build and negotiate their social relationships in different sociocultural contexts over time, they used two different processes in their interactions with peers: sharing the popular culture and exploring diversity and commonalities. Through these two processes as part of friendships and social interactions, the Turkish children who participated in the study negotiated their culture and identities in the classroom in both monocultural and multicultural classroom settings.

*Sharing popular culture space.* The challenges related to social isolation decreased as the children in the study learned how to negotiate social relationships over time in monocultural classroom communities. Turkish children who experienced challenges related to social relationships in the classroom had to negotiate this context by creating a common ground within pop cultural space for friendship using their knowledge and experiences in academic contents, music, books, video games, computer games, food, cartoons, sports, and some TV shows.

In sharing the popular culture, Turkish children learned and participated in mainstream cultural practices that are popular among their peers. Turkish children in both monocultural and multicultural classroom settings were engaged in the popular culture. Children in the study reported utilizing popular culture and extracurricular activities as vehicles of commonalities with their friends, so they could gain these mainstream cultural tools for gaining social acceptance. Although there were still subtle multicultural influences and exchanges in the process, Turkish students preferred to make the elements
of popular culture common ground among their peers. The diversity of participants coming from international backgrounds was obvious in these social interactions, but it may be difficult to claim that ethnic and cultural diversity played a significant role in these interactions.

Umut, who lived and went to school in an affluent neighborhood, described how he and his close friends, an American child and a Korean classmate, often met and played basketball, chatted on the messenger, played computer games and video games at each other’s houses and did not really talk about their cultures or any differences.

Fatma, in a monocultural suburban school, described how she and her American friends came together and held a lemonade sale last summer. As I asked her if there was any cultural exchange among her friends, she told me that they did not talk about each other’s cultures, although sometimes she wondered what state or city her friends were from. The commonalities Fatma emphasized with her friends included music, in Fatma’s case, Hannah Montana, and Ashley Tisdale. Murat, when I asked what he talks about with his best friends, who were German, Chinese, Korean, and Turkish, explained: “We don’t talk anything different, or anything about cultures, we talk about funny things we heard, sports, or video games we play.”

It was not only children from monocultural classroom contexts who employed this tool to build relationships; Turkish children in multicultural classroom settings also resorted to popular culture as a means of building relationships with their peers. For example, Merve, when her family moved to another city in the Midwest when she was in third grade, began to attend another charter school, this time with a greater multicultural
Merve was very cognizant of the cultural similarities and common zones that she shared with her friends. Since her current class composition is multicultural, with African American children as well as children from Ghana, Somalia, Egypt, and Turkey, she had quickly identified the commonalities on which to build her friendships. She mentioned how she and Gizem, one of her classmates, found common topics like classes, funny things they saw during the day, music, and common friends in their interactions with their peers. Mrs. Ada explained how Turkish children found commonalities very easily in popular culture: “They like the same things, same games, pizza, donuts, and ice cream. They like the same food. Maybe it is their age. They grew up in the same culture.”

*Exploring diversity and commonalities.* Turkish children also negotiated culture through exploring diversity and commonalities with their friends. The types of conversations in which they engaged were mainly devoted to getting to know each other’s culture, discovering cultural commonalities, talking about family practices, celebrations, and religious beliefs. Turkish students attending school in multicultural contexts were by default engaged in these types of conversations.

Turkish children who were placed in multicultural classroom settings expressed a sense of belonging and comfort in their classrooms. They also remarked that they noticed multicultural influences and commonalities in their friendships. Salih, now in fifth grade,
recalled how his friends from different cultures accepted him as a respected member in the classroom.

When I was in fourth grade [the charter school he now attends], all my classmates liked me. Once I was about to leave school to visit Turkey, my friends did their own prayers, they held their hands in a circle, said some sentences, and prayed in their own ways so nothing bad would happen to me in my flight. There were a few Muslims in my class, but at that moment, my Christian friends were in class and they prayed for me. I felt happy and weird at the same time.

In this example, Salih did not only feel comfortable being in a multicultural group of friends, but at the same time, felt happy and surprised at the opportunity for close friendships and sense of belonging, contrary to the monocultural classroom community he could not be a part of when he was in first, second, and third grades.

One of the unique multicultural contexts for Başak has been the private school that has an Islamic orientation through Arabic and Islam classes in the same Midwestern city where she currently lives. Başak expressed a strong feeling of belonging for the first time, because she felt most of her friends were celebrating the same holidays as she was, since a majority of the children was Muslim, though their national and cultural backgrounds were highly different. Talking about her school days, she commented on the value of multicultural exchanges:

I was riding the bus in that school, I had a lot of friends who rode the bus with me. I was having my friends listen to Turkish music from my IPod, and they would like it. Some of them even memorized a few songs. My three best friends were from Somalia, and I was friends with Arab girls, too. That year everyone was my friend, I felt like I belonged. My teacher was Christian and she was very warm toward us. She even organized gift exchanges in Ramadan.

Gizem explained how she and her friends were engaged in dialogue about their cultures and their religious beliefs.
Most of my classmates are Christian. Usually things about religion are not mentioned in school, but when it is after school, while waiting for the buses, we talk about religion. Once Merve asked a friend of hers, “Do you guys believe in one God, or do you think he has children or he is married?” Her friend answered, “We believe that Jesus is the son of God.” Then Merve said, “We don’t believe in this. She asked us why, and we told her it is in our book, and then we did not argue about that.

For these children in multicultural settings, the context for intercultural dialogue was often after school, while waiting for the bus, or during lunchtime. The children could learn about each other’s cultural practices and could openly discuss their differences.

Buse, after a few years of navigating through several affluent school districts, now appeared very comfortable navigating through daily social interactions with her classmates. She said she liked the social atmosphere in the classroom. However, she made the distinction that her best friends were not necessarily classmates with whom she interacted daily. She explained why she felt very close to her best friend who is from an Egyptian-American background:

I wasn’t close to her in seventh grade, we actually did not like each other, we used to fight. Then as soon as we started talked, they couldn’t stop us, since our cultures are similar. When I said something, she would understand me better. For instance, when you are talking about sports, since she is from another culture, she knows the sports around the world better. An American wouldn’t know that. We can talk about the soccer cup that will be held in 2010. She also tells me about Turkish TV shows that were translated into Arab televisions. I don’t know what they are. She tells me the stories of those shows. I also tell her about a few shows that I watch.

Buse, who was born in the United States, still preferred her friends to be ones with whom she can share common interests like TV shows, music and sports. However, their conversations carried strong multicultural influences.
Perceptions of Teacher-Student Relationships

All of the Turkish parents and children who participated in my study agreed that classroom teachers are instrumental in supporting the Turkish children to build positive social interactions within the classroom culture when they first stepped into schools.

In this study it was clear that Turkish children needed their teachers to provide another level of support and leadership that might be seen as going beyond the traditional teacher role. The Turkish children needed their teachers to act as cultural and social mediators when the children came into their classroom. The mediation varied from helping the children form social relationships, to honoring them as valuable members of the classroom community, to displaying personal affection and warmth toward them. The following examples illustrate that the teacher’s attitude made a difference in how children negotiated the school contexts. The participants perceived these teacher-student relationships at three distinct levels: Entrance into the school context, broken relationships, and positive and affirming relationships.

Entrance into the school context. Teachers’ decision-making becomes crucial when Turkish children and their parents arrive at school. Meriç, although he was born in the United States and attended preschool, went back to Turkey for a few years with his parents. Because he already attended kindergarten in Turkey, Mrs.Tekin wanted him to start first grade that year. However, Meriç had social-emotional needs and language challenges in the new cultural context. As they tried first grade for a week, his teacher pointed out that he needed a more playful environment and kindergarten would be more suitable for his emotional needs and language learning. Mrs.Tekin and Meriç’s teacher then made the decision to have him placed in the kindergarten. Mrs. Tekin explained:
He was used to more physical play, tapping on the shoulders, pushing while playing with friends. He needed to adjust to the cultural expectations for play. I felt bad as a mother, because I did not want him to lose a year, but his teachers’ point turned out to be very appropriate and as soon as we placed him in kindergarten, he began to play freely, and learned English through play. Then he was successful throughout first grade.

In this case, the leadership of the teacher benefited Meriç, and when he started first grade, he wanted to go back to that teacher’s classroom.

The following example clearly illustrates how critical a teacher’s attitude toward a newcomer immigrant student can be in supporting his negotiation process. This example is also striking as it demonstrates that one teacher’s practice is different from another.

When it was time for Murat’s first kindergarten day, his mother took him to the meeting, where they tested the children’s ability for kindergarten. His mother had already taught Murat his ABCs, and he could even write a few words. After a while, they told Murat’s mother that now, they would take the children to the classroom. Yet, Murat – maybe because he had never attended preschool – was absolutely adamant that he did not want to leave his mother. His mother explained to me:

I understood because it was his first day and he did not know anyone there. All other kids left the room laughing and smiling, and Murat stuck to me, terrified. Then a teacher came, and without saying anything to him or inviting me, pulled his arm harshly to take him away. And Murat began crying and screaming his lungs out. But, after all, we are foreigners and you do not know how [the teacher] would react. Being Turkish, we are used to being passive and to think that teachers know their jobs really well and I should keep quiet. There is absolute respect for teachers in my culture so I could not say anything at first. But when Murat cried so badly, I had so say, “What are you doing? Sorry, but can I come wherever you are going, so he can see where it is?” Then we went together to the room where they were measuring the children’s readiness for kindergarten.

Mrs. Hisar also expressed her disappointment over the same teacher’s assumption that maybe her son was not ready for kindergarten. She believed that the teacher first caused
her son to cry, then judged him for being upset and concluded he was not ready.

Eventually, they did not assign that teacher to be Murat’s kindergarten teacher. Mrs. Hisar told me in our last interview that the teacher chosen for Murat had a sweet, warm personality and was just like a grandmother figure in the eyes of the Hisar family.

She treated Murat so well that he was dying to go to school every day because it felt like he was not going to school; he was going to grandma’s play date. That made a world of difference. Also, our ESL teacher was great, she was so caring. She would thank me every day because I was taking Murat to school myself! I would thank her back because she was the one teaching him.

In this example, Murat’s mother expected a warm and welcoming approach from teachers in Murat’s first day of school. As a mother whose own educational experiences were not in the United States, she was clueless about what was going to happen during Murat’s first day in kindergarten. Thus, the teacher’s decision and behavior on that first day significantly influenced Murat’s negotiation of the new school context.

*Broken relationships.* The findings of this study showed that even after entering the school context, Turkish children and their parents needed the teachers as vehicles to establish bridges to form relationships between friends, and honor them as valuable members of the classroom community. Parents and children in the study at least expected fair treatment for the children. When a teacher lacked these qualities, the Turkish children often experienced a broken relationship with their teachers.

Murat (12), now in sixth grade in the same affluent school district he has been in since kindergarten, experienced a broken relationship with his first-grade teacher. He felt his teacher treated him differently, compared to how she treated the other kids:

I don’t even remember her name, it was a bad year, but she was very mean to me. She showed that she did not like me. She would get angry with me so easily. When I asked her something, she would often say nothing; she would not like
talking to me. I would feel like she did not value me, because she did not try to help me with my questions, and tried to avoid me. I did not learn much that year.

Salih had a similar experience with his teacher, feeling his relationship with her was broken:

I never liked my third-grade teacher, she would always yell at me. She would ask me, for example, “What do you use to connect sentences?” When I did not understand the question and asked her to explain, she got upset with me and yelled: “Why don’t you understand?” Then I asked the assistant teacher, and she explained the question. The teacher would not explain anything, just give the worksheet, and ask us to do it. But the assistant teacher was nice and polite, she would explain to me.

Buse also lamented that she received unfair treatment from her teacher in a very affluent school district in first, second and fourth grades:

In fourth grade, there were two teachers in my classroom. The female teacher never liked me. She was very racist, because there was another child from a different country and she would treat only the two of us badly. She would smile and be sweet to the other kids in class. Once she yelled at me when I could not solve a math problem correctly. She would be very playful with the other children and do the class in a fun way, but would often be angry with me. Once while I graded my friends’ worksheet, I mistakenly used a red pen and put stars next to my friend’s correct answers she yelled at me.

Parents and children felt that in these cases, discrimination turned into a subtle form of dislike, and is made implicit through the troubling personal relationship between the teacher and the child. The children usually recognized the unfairness through comparisons with other teachers and other students. In Buse’s case, she interpreted her teacher’s treatment of her as racist, or unfair at best. Teacher behaviors did not only lead to a broken personal relationship, but, these three children also perceived their teachers’ treatment of themselves as a sign of inequality because they are from culturally diverse backgrounds. This demonstrates how culturally diverse children strive to be held as
equals and as respected members of the classroom community by teachers. These three children felt that their teachers failed to support them in this regard.

**Affirming and positive relationships.** While a few children reported broken relationships with their teachers, many other children in the study reported very positive relationships with their teachers. Fifteen Turkish children who participated in my study were either born or grew up in the United States since they were toddlers. Therefore, most of them attended preschools where they learned about the dynamics of the classroom, teacher expectations, and peer relations. As they described their school life, the Turkish children in the study allocated much more time and detail to describing their friendships and classroom facilities and activities than talking about their relationships with their teachers. They still identified the connection between themselves and their teacher as being instrumental in their motivation to learn and be a part of their classrooms. Four concepts about the teachers emerged from the children’s accounts that seemed to support them as valued members and individuals in the classroom: Warmth, fairness, entertainment, and academic challenge. As a result, unlike their parents, who have their own philosophies and metaphors about student-teacher relationships, the children did not have a cross-cultural concept of the teacher’s role and the notion of an exemplary teacher. Thus, it is interesting how their ideas would differ from their parents’ expectations.

The children highlighted warmth and fairness as teacher qualities that help them negotiate their identities. Buse, as she described her teacher in fifth grade, used the term “like a grandma” to illustrate the warmth and care of her veteran teacher. She expressed feeling “being accepted and liked” by her teacher. Onur and Murat had similar
experiences with older and more experienced teachers who seemed to fulfill the caring and nurturing roles the children needed in their early years of schooling.

Another concept that was important for Turkish students in describing their best teachers was fairness. Buse described her favorite teacher in her current private school:

He is an African-American male. He always treated me very nicely. Once, when I was very sad, sitting in my desk in his class, he came to me after class and asked me what happened. Before that, nobody even noticed, but he sensed that. He was always so fair to all of his students. He would care for each and every student. Maybe because of that, I like him a lot. He was not only a good person, though; he was also a very successful teacher.

The last two concepts the Turkish children highlighted as important in their connections to school learning were entertaining and challenging instruction. When teachers put forth academic challenge through child-centered and interactive teaching methods, it helped the children feel a sense of belonging. Onur, Gizem, Umut, Zeki, Murat, and Hasan all agreed on the fun and interactive aspects of a lesson when asked what motivated them to participate in their teachers’ lessons. These children reported that they worked best when their teachers displayed a warm and fun attitude to form a positive classroom community and when their teachers led interactive lessons where the students learned by discussing or doing hands-on activities. Başak explained: “I like it when we can talk and be active with the teacher in class, and I like it when they are warm to us. My homeroom teacher is like that, and he is funny.”

Negotiating Religious Beliefs and Practices

As I analyzed the negotiation process for Turkish children in schools related to their religious beliefs and practices, I learned that Turkish children responded to particular sociocultural school contexts in three different ways. One of the ways that
Turkish children negotiated their religious beliefs and practices was minimizing the differences between themselves and the children of mainstream culture in terms of religious identity. At times, religion was made visible through curriculum events; other times, students needed to come out as Muslim through religious holidays, religious symbols, clothing, and food. The students negotiated their identities utilizing different tools at different times and occasions.

Minimizing the Differences

When I looked at how the Turkish children negotiated their religious identity, I noticed that the religious identity of the Turkish children is often invisible at first sight. How they negotiated their religious identity is bound by their sociocultural family contexts, the secular nature of Turkish contemporary culture, and the secular nature of American schools. Many times, the religious identity of Turkish children in my study was expressed only subtly, after their national identities of being Turkish and American. Other times, the Turkish children, who were pretty much aware that schools are secular institutions, reported that even if they are aware of their religious identities, they did not necessarily talk about their religion at school unless they are directly asked.

Although schools are designed to be, or thought of as secular, as an important dimension of White European identity, Christianity was apparent within the cultural patterns of schooling and calendar with its many symbols, holidays, and traditions. The findings of this study demonstrated that Turkish students in monocultural classroom settings were fragile and hesitant about coming out as Muslim at school, due to the lack of affirmation and validation of their religion by their teachers or peers. Furthermore, an emphasis on monocultural celebrations in schools silenced students from different
backgrounds. Therefore, some Turkish students reported that they preferred to keep their religious diversity invisible as much as possible.

Onur explained how he negotiated his religious tradition with the ones celebrated in schools: “When my friends ask me what I am doing for Christmas, I say, ‘I don’t celebrate it.’ When they ask me why, I usually say, ‘I just don’t feel like it.’”

Similarly, Fatma and her sister explained how they reacted as they were asked about Christmas: “I just ignore what they say,” said Fatma; and her sister Şebnem added, “Once my friend asked me how I feel about Christmas, and I just walked away.” If her friends asked why she did not celebrate Christmas, Fatma told them she did not like it.

While this is an issue with some children, many Turkish children participated in the school celebration of cultural or religious holidays. As they negotiated this context, their parents also created opportunities for them to celebrate two holidays together, such as celebrating the New Year in the Christmas season and exchanging presents. Murat, Umut, and Meriç shared similar experiences with celebrating many holidays together.

*Religion Made Visible through the School Curriculum*

Although some contexts provided Turkish children who participated in the study, an invisibility to escape “otherness,” there were many contexts in children’s schools that Muslim beliefs and practices are made visible. These included the introduction of multicultural social studies content and Islamic holidays. The findings of this study reveal that such contexts could be quite affirming for the Turkish children’s religious identity. The findings also suggest that the multicultural content in social studies classes plays a role in making visible Turkish children’s religious identities.
Among the children who participated in the study, Buse, Murat, Meriç, and Umut remember that Islam was explored as a topic of study among other major religions in their social study classes. Mrs. Yayla, Umut’s mother, noted that Umut once prepared a classroom presentation about Islam, which Mrs. Yayla attended and was pleased at her son’s knowledge and research on the topic. Mrs. Tekin also recalled how a classroom teacher addressed religious diversity:

It was about two years ago, Hanukkah, Christmas, and the Muslim Holiday of Sacrifice were celebrated at the same time. It was really nice, and the teacher explored all of them. I learned that some other Muslim families also participated. Meriç learned about the five daily prayers in Islam during that unit. Apparently, a Muslim student brought a prayer rug to class and demonstrated how to perform the Muslim prayers. When Meriç came home that day, we talked about it. This started conversations about religion at our home, too. I brought a Turkish translation of the Qur’an from Turkey, because his friends are already asking him questions, he needs to learn our religion, too.

In this case, learning about his own religion at school had a positive impact on and affirmed Meriç’s religious identity. In some elementary school districts, there were classes such as history of civilization, world culture, or history of religion as part of the social studies units. Yet, Islam as a religion or a cultural element was often not visible in the curriculum. Some parents raised the issue that Islam as a cultural element should be addressed besides other religions mentioned in the textbooks. Mrs. Deniz reported that although the multicultural content might be affirming to the children from certain religious communities such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism, the students need a representation of their own faith and culture, as well. Mrs. Deniz explained:

This year, Zeki’s classroom did a unit on four major holidays: Hanukkah, Diwali (an Indian holiday), the Chinese New Year, and Christmas. We read books about those holidays with Zeki, studied each of them. He now knows every one of these in detail, but the Muslim holidays were not mentioned.
Data analyses suggest that Turkish children’s religious identities were made visible through particular religious practices during the school year. The most visible practices were dietary preferences and modest dress. The Turkish students who participated in the study needed to negotiate the reactions from their peers or teachers about their identities.

*Dietary preferences.* Muslim children usually do not eat pork, which may be a challenge when they go on a field trip and they have to avoid hot dogs or pepperoni pizza. Some parents raised their children extra cautious about the food products they consume, and that might include meat, dairy, and processed foods. Many times, this was the first visibility a Turkish child gained with his or her religious identity. As Umut nicely put it, “I guess I am Muslim, I don’t eat pork, and you can’t do certain things.” The parents in my study shared that they usually made sure the teachers knew that preference and collaborated with them. Onur’s mother explained how she helped Onur negotiate his dietary preferences at school:

Onur and his friends sometimes go to lunch with friends, or have a field trip, where they will eat out together. Since he does not want to eat from those places, I try to prepare the same thing at home, whatever they would eat out, and he takes the food with him, so that he will not feel bad in front of his friends. I also give him pocket money, so he can buy whatever else he likes.

In this example, Onur and his mother still negotiated their religious practices skillfully, even though the differences were made visible through their dietary preferences.

Another example from the Turkish children’s experiences with diet was the Ramadan month, the holy month in Islamic religion, during which the older children would practice fasting for part of the month. Onur explained how six to seven Muslim
children who fasted during the month got together at the same table in the lunchroom, and chatted while the other students had lunch. The table conversations provided them an alternative space where they could negotiate being “the other,” and form social relationships based on another commonality with children who were not necessarily their classmates or close friends.

In the multicultural charter school she attended, Başak (12), now in sixth grade, discussed with her friends how she and her best friend, an Egyptian-American girl, experienced Ramadan.

I was fasting this year during Ramadan. We decided with my friend that we would fast (eating or drinking nothing) during the daytime for the whole month for the first time in our lives. Everyone asked me about this. They thought we would fast for 30 days without eating anything! There is a boy in class who thinks he knows everything, and he would say, “According to my research you cannot survive more than 18 hours without eating.” We explained that we eat every evening until the next morning. In my first days of fasting, my friends would ask me why we were fasting, and we would say, “Because Allah orders us to do, so we can understand the poor and those in need.” One friend was asking if she can prepare a list of foods we can eat because she was Christian, and they can eat something when they fast.

In these contexts, when the children were involved with a cultural-religious practice, it opened a space for dialogue among children in the class, and the Turkish children felt that their beliefs were respected in this multicultural community. These examples also illustrate that students from two different cultural contexts were able to navigate through the mainstream and multicultural classroom cultures and find support from other friends who shared the same cultural space to negotiate their religious beliefs and practices.

Modest dress. Wearing modest dress may increase the visibility of the Turkish children’s religious identities, creating challenges for them to negotiate. Turkish clothing style has been westernized for over a century, so it was often the case that Turkish boys
and girls wore the same styles of clothing as their American peers. This decreased the visibility of their culture and religion at school. However, Turkish children with strong religious identities, especially the girls, became the center of attention when they wore modest dress at school, such as headscarves. Buse, now in eighth grade, recalled that when she was in seventh grade she chose to wear the headscarf to practice further modesty. She made this choice consciously to make her religious identity visible, but it was a heavy responsibility to be that visible and to feel she represented her religion with her choice.

I wanted to wear the headscarf because when people looked at me, they didn’t know I am Muslim. I could not be open about myself. I love wearing my headscarf. People know I’m Muslim, and I like it, I’m proud of it. But since I began wearing the headscarf, I feel like I took on a heavy responsibility. For instance, let’s say I did something people do not like. They could immediately say, “So Muslims are like this. Because of that, I try to be more careful with my life, and my actions.

Although she likes to wear the headscarf, Buse was extra conscious about how it would be perceived by her peers and others. She explained this in our second interview:

When I first began wearing the headscarf, my friends asked me why. It’s hard for them to understand. I was trying to explain that it’s required, but if you don’t wear it, it isn’t a huge deal, because there are Muslim people who don’t wear the headscarf, and I don’t want my friends to think the headscarf is the core of my religion. Then my friends would say, “If you are still Muslim even if you don’t wear it, why do you wear it?”

Although girls who wore the headscarf seemed to carry the burden of being “different,” boys in the study also experienced a heightened visibility when their parents communicated their Muslim identity through dress and modesty. One example is Salih, who was challenged to negotiate his identity with the visibility of his mother’s different clothing. His mother told me the following:
I was visiting school often on occasions like Valentine’s Day and Salih’s birthday. Salih was a bit shy in his suburban school. He even didn’t want me to pick him up from school for some time. We later realized that he was a bit embarrassed that I was wearing a headscarf. My husband and I had a heart-to-heart discussion with Salih and explained that we are Muslims, and we practice this, and this isn’t something to be embarrassed about. Maybe my appearance made it clear to his friends that we were different, and it added to his isolation. But his attitude is totally different now. In this school he attends right now, there are some parents who are also Muslims and some wear the headscarf, so he doesn’t feel like an outsider.

Things were different for Gizem (11), who also chose to wear the headscarf when she was 8. She reported that she never felt her headscarf was an issue at her schools. She never felt different from her peers for being Muslim.

Turkish children’s access to some extracurricular activities because of their religious practices has not been an issue in this study although it was often discussed in the literature on Muslim immigrant students (Sarroub, 2002; Gunel, 2007). Especially in the case of Muslim girls related to physical education and swimming, the Turkish children and their parents did not report conflict in negotiating their religious identities. The reports from the parents of the older children, such as Buse (13) and Gizem (11), both of whom chose to dress in further modesty by wearing headscarves outside of their homes, reported all positive and enthusiastic experiences with extracurricular activities such as music and sports. Indeed, it was Mrs. Bulut, Gizem’s mother, who was initially worried that the school would block Gizem’s participation in social activities because she chose to wear the headscarf at the age of eight. Gizem was the only girl in the affluent school district she attended who wore the headscarf at school.

I wanted to raise them as self-confident individuals. I want Gizem to attend all activities possible in school. I want Gizem and Leyla to be very active socially. If there are talent contests, work towards science olympics, an opportunity for tutoring, musical instruments, sports. . . Gizem actively participated in all
extracurricular activities, she never felt any discrimination. For instance, both my girls were playing violin at school. That relieved us from worrying if she would be an accepted peer, or if she would be treated as inferior, and left behind.

Buse experienced a similar negotiation process when she wanted to play basketball in the school team in her private school. She was wearing modest dress, and she and her mother made an agreement with the coach that she could wear the team’s shorts with a pair of long pants underneath, and wear a long sleeve tee underneath the tank. They also made sure Buse was free to wear a longer stretch swimwear for swimming classes.

*Negative responses to religious identity.* Not all of the children felt that their teachers affirmed their religious identities. Therefore, it was not always easy for some children to negotiate their religious identities in the monocultural contexts of their schools. Contrary to all positive experiences she had with her religious identity in the private school she attended, the dominance of negative public opinion about Muslims post 9/11 silenced Buse in many class sessions in seventh grade. She described one class session where her social studies teacher spoke back against the stereotypes around Muslims by exploring the ways in which the few Muslims who committed terrorism were actually acting against the very principles of Islam that most Muslims value and embrace. This recognition affirmed Buse’s identity. However, in the following year, Buse had another social studies teacher, who showed them a video about an extreme case from Afghanistan, a country that has been troubled for decades with wars and violence, and corrupt with lack of education. In the video, some women were oppressed through tradition and tribal rules against them. In the class discussions, these were linked negatively to the religion of Islam. Buse explained:
The teacher then opened up a discussion by asking how students would feel if they were forced to wear headscarves. All girls said they would hate it. As the only girl in the class wearing a headscarf, I felt very uncomfortable because the resources the teacher brought did not fairly represent the majority of Muslim cases and cultures; instead, the teacher chose a very provocative example to show us. I couldn’t talk; I was very upset about the remarks about Islam, but didn’t say anything. Nobody asked me as a person wearing the headscarf, what my opinion was or how I felt about it.

Buse’s story illustrates how a Muslim child with the expressive religious sign of the headscarf, became marginalized and stereotyped. Buse felt alone and could not participate in the discussion although she did not agree with the teacher’s and her classmates’ remarks. A subtler, but still significant experience is how Merve came to understand that her identity may not necessarily be valued in every context. In the following conversation with me, Merve told me about her experience with “show and tell” at school where she talked about her religion.

Merve: On the day I brought my Qur’an to class in first grade, I wanted to wear a scarf. I was 7, at the time.

Zeynep: Why?

Merve: I don’t know, I wanted to try it [wearing the scarf], but I didn’t feel comfortable, the other kids were staring at me all the time.

Zeynep: Did you want to show them?

Merve: Yeah, but my teacher didn’t like that, she became silent and shy; I guess she thought I was trying to tell about my religion, and the parents [of the other kids] might not like that…

Zeynep: Did she say so?

Merve: No, she just kept quiet. . . She didn’t say anything, except to say “OK, go put this in your cubby.”

Zeynep: Did you want to tell about the Qur’an to your friends?
Merve: Yes, my dad said I could share it in “show and tell.” I said “This is our holy book, it is like Bible.” They asked if I can read it, and I said no. Then some of the kids tried to read it, but they couldn’t. [It is in Arabic script].

Zeynep: So your teacher actually let them look.

Merve: Yeah, they passed it around a bit, and then it was someone else’s turn. My teacher said: “You can put this in your cubby.” She didn’t want to comment about it. I felt a little sad that she wasn’t curious at all.

In this experience, although Merve began with enthusiasm to tell her peers about part of her identity, she sensed the teacher’s reservation. This led Merve to feel hesitant and insecure about her religious identity as a Muslim, because she felt it wasn’t honored.

Negotiating Ethnic Background and National Identities

In Chapter 1, I conceptualized children’s cultural identity as consisting of three elements: shared norms and beliefs, national and ethnic identity, and religious identity. Turkish children’s national and ethnic identity also interacted with schooling in different ways. In discussing national and ethnic identity, I describe them as racial backgrounds and Turkishness, as well as their feeling of belonging to a nation. The Turkish children in the study negotiated their ethnic backgrounds and Turkish identities in the classroom through various dynamics which included the following: (a) minimizing visibility, (b) peer influences, (c) drawing upon parents as cultural mediators, (d) developing dual identities, (e) school curriculum and global events, and (f) Muslim identity.

Minimizing Visibility in Monocultural Contexts

Similar to the findings concerning religious identity, the data suggest that the Turkish children in more monocultural classroom contexts preferred to be less visible with their Turkish identity if possible, especially if there was a possibility of social isolation or teasing among their peers. As I explained in this chapter, often fair skin color,
similar facial features to those of American kids, and high language proficiency
decreased the visibility of the children’s Turkish identity. In one example, Onur described
how he negotiated his Turkish identity at school:

Nobody knows that I am from Turkey. Just a few friends know. The others think I
was born here. Even if they know, this does not make any difference. In our social
study lesson, we were talking about Greek history, and I pointed to some places
and said: “These cities are in Turkey now.” My teacher asked how I know, and I
said “I’m from there.” Last year we were talking about Istanbul [a city in Turkey],
and Sultanahmet Mosque [an Islamic mosque in Istanbul]. The teacher told us that
she liked it. Apparently, she had visited Turkey. She said, “One of you knows this
place well; it is Onur.” Everyone learned it then, because she explained it.

Another example is Fatma, who did not like to talk about where she was from:

I don’t really talk about Turkey. That is a No No, because, since I’m from Turkey,
people would pick on me during social studies, and I wouldn’t like it if they asked
me questions about what food you have and what the culture is like. I don’t like to
say stuff in front of the class. Sometimes I might want to say something about
Turkey when they talk about cultures close to Turkey, but they usually don’t ask.

The awareness of difference might lead children as young as preschool age to be cautious
about their Turkish identities. Zeki was in preschool when he noticed his mother’s accent.
He gradually became uneasy when his mother interacted with his friends. Mrs. Deniz
explained:

I talked to his teacher and told her that I don’t want my child to be embarrassed
by his mother’s language. I asked her if she can honor the Turkish language by
praising his knowledge of two languages in front of the other kids. She later asked
Zeki to teach a few words in Turkish to the class, and this issue disappeared.

Peer Influences

Social interactions in the classroom and the influence of peer culture are
important to understanding how Turkish children negotiated their national identities. For
instance, when the children begin the school year, their peers usually notice that their
names are different. This may create a challenge for the Turkish children in negotiating
their identities. It was commonly reported in this study that peers and teachers had difficulty pronouncing the participant Turkish children’s names. Mr. Hisar and Mrs. Yayla reported that they even considered whether their children’s names could be pronounced easily when they picked names for their children at birth. However, the Turkish parents in the study noted that the classmates and their teachers still had difficulty with the correct pronunciation of their children’s names.

As the children grow older, they sometimes developed their own ways of negotiating their different names in the peer culture. Murat talked in between laughing about how his sense of humor supports him:

I challenge my friends to pronounce my last name correctly. I announce that I will give out $50 to whoever can say it correctly. But to this day, nobody was able to say it. They beg me to repeat it each time, but when I do, they still can’t pronounce it. This happens every day, and now it spread to the whole school.

Another challenge the Turkish students in my study faced in relation to their background was about the name of the country they come from. The children reported that they suffered from the jokes and teasing about Turkey, pointing to the bird, turkey. Mrs. Hisar told the story of Murat, and his teacher in negotiating his Turkish identity in third grade.

Some of the kids were making fun of the word “Turkey” and making “gobble gobble” sounds. Because of this, Murat wouldn’t say where he was from, what his last name was. This happened a few times, and he stopped writing anything about Turkey. He was describing it as: I’m from this city, this part of the world, but not the name of the country. He didn’t mention anything to me, and then I went to school to talk to his teacher, and asked Murat about this in front of his teacher. Murat began to explain the jokes. I said, “But the kids just don’t know where you’re from, they don’t mean this.” I was waiting for any response, some reaction from the teacher, something like: “Don’t worry; we’ll explain it to the kids.” But she didn’t react and said nothing. Murat began to cry. “The teacher could at least have said: “Don’t worry, when we talk about geography, we’ll show Turkey.”
Merve reported the same jokes on Turkey, the country. She also expressed how she became shy to talk about Turkey in her previous monocultural school context.

Although the majority of the children were uneasy with joking or teasing about their culture, Murat (12), who constantly faced the teasing of his friends over the word “turkey,” now often jokes back. He said, “Sometimes the kids are mean. They go “Oooh, turkey... Gobble, gobble!” Then I say, “Oooh, American... Deep fried cookie! There is nothing more American! So I make fun of them, too.”

*Parents as Cultural Mediators*

The findings suggest that the parents’ initiative to support their children in communicating their Turkish identities to the teacher and their peers was instrumental in their negotiation of their Turkish identities. Mrs. Hisar explained how Murat’s second-grade teacher invited her over to talk about Turkey to introduce Murat’s background to the class.

We briefly talked about Turkey, showed it on the map, and the children’s reactions were totally different once they knew more about the country. I’m sorry, but there are many people here who have no idea that there is a whole world of people besides themselves. You have the student list, just take a look at who you have and their backgrounds. In the first parent-teacher conference, ask where we are from, you see I have a different last name, and an accent. They need to ask this, they never asked and I tell them each time. Murat’s first-grade teacher didn’t even realize that he had ESL supplement in kindergarten even though it was in his file.

In compliance with their cultural code “respect for the teacher’s autonomy,” many of the parents mentioned how they wavered over taking the initiative to introduce their culture to the classroom. At times, the teacher asked the parents to do a brief presentation about their family or their culture for class-wide or school-wide events. Mrs. Tekin, Mrs. Yayla, Mrs. Ada, Mrs. Hisar, Mrs. Güneş, and Mrs. Gece reported that they took the chance to
give a presentation about Turkish culture. Mrs. Deniz introduced the Ramadan holiday to Zeki’s class; Mrs. Ada, Mrs. Bulut, Mrs. Güneş, and Mrs. Tekin attended international culture events to represent Turkey.

Dual Identities

It is a significant finding from the interviews that all of the parents and children who participated in this study were accepting of and positive about the idea of dual identity as being American Turkish or Turkish American. Their remarks indicated that these children constructed their dual identities within the sociohistorical experiences they had in their lives.

The order of these identities mattered for some children, depending on where they were born, or to which country they felt they belong the most. Hasan spoke of his experience with self-identification: “When they ask me where I am from, I tell them I was born here, I am from this city. I feel like I am an American because I was born here, or maybe 50% American, 50% Turkish.” I observed that some of the children made remarks about where they were born as an indicator of their identities along with their parents’ background. Fatma explained: “If my friends ask me, I am not sure, I would say just Turkish, because I was not born here; I think Şebnem [her sister] is a little more American, but still Turkish because of our parents.” Umut, Şebnem, and Meriç made similar comments. Leyla (9) recalled how she responded to her friends who asked about her background:

Leyla: They usually ask where I am from, and I say I am from that state.

Zeynep: Do you tell them you are from Turkey?

Leyla: I don’t, because I did not come from Turkey.
Zeynep: Were you born here?

Leyla: I was born in Turkey.

Zeynep: But you lived in another state [in the U.S.] before you moved here, right?

Leyla: Yes.

A sense of belonging and acceptance was an indicator of dual identity construction for the children. Gizem was still undecided between living in Turkey or in the United States in the future: “Actually, since I only lived in Turkey for one and a half years, I feel more American than Turkish, but I still want to live in Turkey because the rest of my family is there.” On the other hand, Buse, like some of the other children, equally valued her American and Turkish identities but did not feel a full sense of belonging and acceptance in either country:

I am not sure which identity comes first. I don’t like to be regarded as a foreigner by both Turkish and American people. I don’t like it when Americans call me a “foreigner,” because I was born here and I am a citizen. But I don’t want Turkish people to call me a “foreigner” either, because I am a Turkish citizen, too. I think many people in Turkey think of me as an American. Even here, some Turkish people think I am more American. I wish I was accepted 100% by both sides. I don’t feel I fully belong [to either side].

Mrs. Yayla described her son Umut’s similar experience of having a dual identity with his immersion into his American identity through education.

What I observed in both countries was that Umut is an advocate for one country when he was in the other country. For instance, when we go to Turkey, he realizes that he belongs to two countries. Recently, when there was a small conflict between Turkish soldiers and American soldiers in Northern Iraq [in Sulaimania], Umut argued back with anyone who criticized American soldiers in Turkey.

Although most of the Turkish students in multicultural school contexts felt their national identity was validated in these contexts, the data also illustrated how much teacher
attitudes could support children with diverse backgrounds when they validate both Turkish and American influences. Mrs. Yayla explained: “His teacher finds Umut very lucky because he is able to see cultures in a broader perspective by carrying both Turkish and American identities.” Umut also perceived carrying his Turkish identity as “cool – You are different than other people.”

School Curriculum and Global Events in Relation to National Identities

School curriculum and its coverage of national and global events emerged as important in influencing the children’s negotiation of their national identities. Among many influences, social studies courses stood out as important. It is often the only context in which students are introduced to other cultures. A few of the Turkish children in the study reported that sometimes it is their social studies teachers who ask them where they are from and affirm their identity by having them briefly introduce Turkey. Murat, Onur, and Buse reported this experience.

As part of their sense of national identity, the children’s perceptions of social studies lessons varied from full amazement to seeing it as bulk information. Zeki’s mother talked about how she was amazed at Zeki’s level of engagement with his American identity regarding patriotism:

Just recently, they had a guest soldier in their classroom for a social studies lesson. Zeki told me that he asked them to turn and face the American flag, place their hands on their chests, and feel the flag as they take the oath of allegiance. After that, Zeki wrote a piece on “How to keep our country safe.” With the education he is getting here, he feels he belongs here.

During the presidential elections of 2008, many parents reported that their children supported either one of the candidates. For instance, as Başak was rooting for Barack Obama, Zeki and his classmates were supporting John McCain.
The significant finding from the interviews is that while the majority of the Turkish children in the study had a good opinion of their social studies lessons, some of the children felt the content of social studies related to history and geography fell short of addressing the children’s more global interests. Başak explained how her interests are broader than national history:

I don’t find American history alone so interesting. I would love to learn more world history. The Ottoman Empire or Ancient Egypt attracts me more. I know almost every little thing about the United States. Most of them are details about wars or important decisions or how the country was founded. But things like China’s great wall, I am interested in learning about more of those things.

Murat expressed his interest in learning about Turkish history, too. He mentioned a few books he read about the Ottoman Empire (1299-1924).

In addition to social studies classes, Turkish language classes were offered to all students at the two charter schools that Merve, Salih, Başak, Hasan, Gizem, Leyla, and Ömer attend. This context privileged the knowledge of Turkish and Turkey as a cultural capital. There were cultural symbols and signs, posters that illustrate pictures from Turkey. Students sometimes took on the role of cultural ambassadors to tell their friends about Turkey. Gizem said she felt like she can be herself, and communicate with her friends about Turkey: “In the spring, there are Turkey tours for children; they put up posters around the school. I show these to my friends and say: ‘Look, there is Pamukkale [white natural rock formations in Turkey]’. They say, ‘What beautiful places, let’s go!’ Then we all want to visit Turkey.”

**Muslim Identity in Relation to National Identities**

Through the interviews, I asked all of the children who participated in this study to talk about three identity constructs I listed for them: Turkish, American, and Muslim.
In their responses, all of the children identified themselves as Turkish, American, and Muslim through differing rankings. None of the children rejected any of these three identities. However, their emphases were different depending on their sociocultural experiences.

An interesting finding was that as the children talked about these different identity constructs, most children placed Turkish identity in opposition to American identity. Most of them made selective choices between Turkish identity and American identity, ranking on top the one they feel closer to than the other. As they talked about their religious identities, they did not feel the need to place it in contrast to either one of these national identities. Not contrasting Turkish identity with Muslim identity might have been natural because historically, they are so inextricably intertwined. Interestingly though, none of the children with strong Muslim identities perceived being American in conflict with being Muslim. It is interesting how the Turkish children described two national identities in conflict with each other, but they did not necessarily view being American as belonging to a Christian culture. Their understanding of being American was through love of their country, the enjoyment of school and home life in the United States, the ties of citizenship, and language and academic proficiency.

One striking example is Buse (13), who has a strong Muslim identity, particularly identified with the Constitution of the United States, and referred to her knowledge of civil rights and freedom of religion and freedom of speech. Similarly, Gizem (11), who also has a strong Muslim identity, identified herself as being more American than Turkish, and as she talked about her background, she expressed that she lived in another state instead of the fact that she was born in Turkey.
The complexities of the political and social climate in their home countries sometimes haunted the Turkish children by adding to their quest for identity and belonging. In alignment with many parents with strong Muslim identities, Buse agreed that the overall democratic climate and freedom of expression in the United States offered a comfort zone for the Turkish children and their families to practice their religion freely. Turkish bureaucracy had a long history of marginalizing and banning any religious symbols from civic life and official places. Buse, with the new realization that she now wanted to stay in the United States, explained the irony:

Before I wore the headscarf, I wanted to live in Turkey; but now, I want to stay here. In Turkey, even when people don't notice my accent, they treat women with headscarves differently. I feel like they look down on me. Some people think they are a minority in the United States, but I don't see myself as a minority in the U.S. I actually feel more like a minority in Turkey. Because here, even if people don't like you, they would not do anything negative. But in Turkey, after I began wearing the headscarf, once I entered an upscale boutique, and the saleswomen looked at me as if I was there by mistake. They made me feel like I didn't belong there. I feel more like a minority there, and I don't feel like that in the U.S. I know the laws very well, I know the Constitution, I can say whatever I want, and I can wear whatever I want.

Explaining the children’s understanding of their Muslim identities in agreement with their American identities is not fully possible with the limited data that I had. However, in consideration of many of the parents’ perspectives from the interview, it could be concluded that the Turkish children and their parents’ understanding of their religious identities were not in conflict with their American identities.

Turkish Parents’ Experiences with their Children’s Schooling

In this second category of findings, I explore Turkish parents’ perspectives on their children’s schooling and parents’ experiences with their children’s schooling to answer my second research question. Two main findings emerged as important to
understand the process through which parents participating in this study perceived their children’s schooling in relation to their cultural identities. First, Turkish parents were in the process of negotiating their perspectives on education and schooling in the United States, and they particularly focus on the curriculum, on instruction, and on the teacher’s role. Second, as Turkish parents negotiated the relationship between school and home, they had challenges and needed support in understanding the school culture and curriculum. The parents negotiated their access to the schools through communication with teachers and by being present in schools.

*Turkish Parents Negotiating their Perspectives on Schooling*

The Turkish parents’ views on teachers and education influenced their relationship with schools and the ways the parents negotiated their children’s school experiences. Therefore, it was important to learn about the parents’ perceptions of the roles that the teachers play in the children’s lives to understand their sociocultural view of teachers and schools.

I found that Turkish parents framed their early experiences with schooling in Turkey as a basis to make sense of their children’s current experiences, although they realized the ways that education and schooling operates have changed over time in both Turkish and American contexts. Two themes defined the Turkish parents’ perspectives on schooling: The Turkish parents negotiated the ways curriculum and instruction is constructed, and the Turkish parents negotiated the role of the teacher through their cultural perspectives.
Parents Negotiating the Ways that Curriculum and Instruction are Constructed

The parents who participated in the study had their K-16 education in Turkey. Therefore, they were able to look at the curriculum and instruction in multiple ways, including through their own experiences. There were several perspectives that emerged as important to the families in their negotiations with the ways that curriculum and instruction are constructed. First, some parents pointed to the depth of content knowledge and teacher expectations as not matching their children’s ability. Second, the parents emphasized homework as an important dimension of learning in the form of practice and application. Third, the parents felt that pedagogies and instructional techniques were sound with the children’s interests, although they conflicted with their cultural upbringing.

Perspectives on content knowledge and academic rigor. Parents of the Turkish children in the study had advanced academic goals for their children that sometimes conflicted with the goals set up for Turkish immigrant children by the school curriculum and teachers. All of the parents who participated in the study expressed that they needed their children to be followed closely in their academic skills. The interviews with the parents indicated that they felt there is a wide gap in what their children are capable of learning and what has been offered to them in terms of content knowledge, especially in math and science. For these parents, academic rigor meant that their children could be provided with challenging content either by raising the instruction one grade level up, or providing heavier content knowledge. For instance, the Bulut family perceived the use of calculators in early grades as intimidating because they both were strong in math and
wanted their children to excel in math skills by memorizing the multiplication table so they can use their practical skills efficiently with math.

All of the parents agreed that the curriculum they experienced in Turkey was heavier on content knowledge and abstract understanding, at times loading too much information on the children; however, they also thought their children were not challenged enough academically in the schools they are currently attending. Mrs. Hisar explained this perspective with an analogy: “They [the teachers] would feed your mind with a soup ladle in Turkey and the soup comes out of your ears and nose, whereas here, they barely feed you with a little teaspoon and it is not filling.”

Some parents expressed the need for a “push” to bring forth the academic abilities of their children. Mrs. Bulut expanded the discussion:

The attitude I would expect from school besides family support would be to encourage and compliment the students, but also give them a higher goal than what they achieved. For instance, if they get 90 points, the teacher should say, “If you got 90, you can do 95, you can even do 100 points.” Without pressuring, but saying, “You are doing very well, and these are the ways you can do even better.” So don’t just leave them where they are if they are performing well, but encourage them to do better.

Mrs. Ada also reported that she finds the curriculum not challenging for her children. She perceived that since her children passed state achievement tests successfully, there was no further challenge available for them. She argued that advanced programs that give their children a purpose, and an ideal such as math league programs and state-wide subject area competition are not on the teachers’ agenda. Yet, Mr. Gece mentioned special programs that her daughter’s school organizes, such as science fairs and math clubs as being helpful in motivating the children to stretch themselves.
Mr. Hisar, Mrs. Hisar, Mrs. Tekin, Mr. Bulut, and Mrs. Bulut had similar perspectives on academic rigor. They all experienced a need for academic rigor for their children to succeed. They also felt frustrated by the idea that the school needs to make all activities "fun" in order to reach the children. Mrs. Gece gave an example from Başak’s third grade in the suburbs of the same city:

I observed that the here children are guided through less rigorous, more fun activities. It is amazing that Başak’s third-grade teacher once told her students: “I know you come to school for fun, but let’s learn a little while we are having fun. When Başak told me that, I got worried about my children. If they still can’t take initiative in learning, how will they take heavy responsibilities in the future? It’s okay to play around in first and second grades, but by third grade, some study habits and discipline should gradually sink in.

Some of the parents were also concerned about the organizational skills and study skills they felt their children were missing. Mrs. Gece furthered the discussion:

Many of the writing assignments my children get are composed of a few sentences. Their writing materials and papers are disorganized; they don’t have notebooks where they collect their learning practices in one place. I guess Turkey is becoming like that, too. Probably because the way I was educated, I was extra organized with my notebook which I neatly wrapped with a cover, put a label with my name on it. We were diligent with our writing; we would write neatly using different pens and pencils, there was an aesthetic dimension to it. My son’s writing is real ugly and he is in fifth grade. I think knowledge is important, but doing your work diligently is also very important. I feel that children do lousy work at times.

Another way parents felt a difference between their children can do and what they are assigned to do could be understood through the parents’ perspective about assessments and homework. Most parents expressed that the children’s grades as a learning indicator do not provide an advanced goal for the children who are already achieving at the expected level. Some parents discussed how grade indicators may prevent the children from growing and excelling in learning. Mr. Ada explained that he understands the
rationale behind praising when grading students, yet, as a parent, he observed that sometimes the balance is missing:

Whatever the children do, in order to boost their self-esteem, sometimes I see that the teachers overpraise my children. So, the kids don’t see the need to correct their mistakes and deepen their knowledge. During my own education in Turkish school culture, the mistakes students made were immediately addressed. I admit though, at times it was done too bluntly.

Mr. Hisar further explained how this sociocultural understanding of achievement indicators influences the way some Turkish parents perceive grading:

We have this joke in Turkey, if there is full 10 points for an assignment, 10 belongs to God, 9 belongs to the Messenger, 8 belongs to your teacher, and if you do really well, you can get a 7. Since they looked at the grades with this kind of logic, we did not get a full grade on many projects.

Although Mrs. Güneş’s opinions matched with Mr. Hisar and Mr. Ada that the grading was usually generous in her children’s schooling, she also pointed out how the assessments are considered as formative in Şebnem’s school where she was often given the chance to correct her assignments and was encouraged to do a better job: “Şebnem really likes math. When she got a lower grade in one math test, her teacher asked her to prepare for an additional test the following week, and encouraged her to work harder to raise her grade.”

*The importance of homework.* For many Turkish parents, the little amount of homework meant a lack of opportunity for the children to practice what they had learned in school. The depth and amount of homework were at the center of the discussion for the parents to negotiate the ways that the curriculum and instruction were organized. The parents identified the amount of time their children spend on homework as between 10 to 30 minutes each day, some days going with no homework. Mr. Ada explained:
I can’t see a high expectation of the teachers for homework. I would like my children’s teacher to push them to practice more. For instance, spelling activities we have this year have very basic level words. I saw the same words when Merve learned them in the gifted program in first grade, and we were given the same words when she was in third grade in the charter school she attended.

As this example illustrates, some of the parents’ perspectives reveal how teacher expectations depended on the particular classroom context. It also indicated that parents related high expectations for their children’s academic skills with the amount and quality of homework the children were assigned. Mr. Hisar and Mrs. Tekin had similar views about the amount of homework. While this was an important perspective for the parents in some cases, Buse’s case emerged as an exception with her private middle school providing homework and projects that may last for hours depending on the day.

Similarly, the Güneş family reported satisfaction with the amount of homework their children were assigned.

*Parents embracing sound pedagogies and instructional techniques.* Although most of the parents expressed the need for more rigorous practice on what is learned, and highlighted the need for more content knowledge, they also perceived the types of pedagogies and instructional techniques as aligning with their children’s needs and interests in becoming independent learners. These parents recognized and reported an appreciation of the different approaches to the curriculum and instruction in the classrooms. Mr. Tekin explained how he observed teachers approaching content knowledge and pedagogies:

There is an overall dissatisfaction with the amount of knowledge students gain here in elementary schools, but I like their style of teaching and the system. They guide the children to internalize knowledge, not only pour some information into them. They help the students play with the information. They do it through working with computers and through assigning projects. For instance, in math, I
see that they go really slow with the units. But my son sees how every concept is thought through. For instance, before moving to fractions, they learn about the pieces and parts. In this way, my son understands where the idea of a fraction comes from. They approach it conceptually. We never had this. We always first memorized what was given to us.

All of the parents in the study expressed their understanding that the curriculum and instruction are organized around the children’s interests and needs. The parents observed that the children learned by doing; they learned by understanding the rationale behind a math problem. The classroom was designed to be interactive, and the concept of “fun” was important for the children to be motivated to learn. Mr. Güneş explained his opinion: “I think the education system is ideal, in that it leads children to read, inquire, work their minds, and produce. It does not include memorization, but it emphasizes comprehension. You digest this system and this way you learn.” Mrs. Yayla thought similarly: “Children are buried in books in Turkey, but here in the U.S. I feel Umut relates his classes to his everyday life better.” Mr. Gece also perceived the curriculum and instruction to be “pedagogically appropriate and engaging, but not dense. It offers no deeper level of knowledge.”

Another perspective all parents agreed on was their observation that there is a heavy focus on reading at schools. The parents perceived the ways their children are encouraged and required to read at home very positively. Mrs. Bulut pointed out the existence of so many free resources around in addition to the books and materials at school. Mrs. Güneş also added that Fatma loved reading with her teachers’ encouragement.

Yet another dimension of the curriculum and instruction that the parents observed was related to a particular type of learner that schools are promoting. This helped some
parents balance their concerns over the content knowledge with the skills and disposition the children are gaining as a result of the educational approaches in schools. Mr. Hisar explained: “Although Murat always had weak instruction in Math and science, the focus of the curriculum and instruction is the child who will be able to express his ideas confidently.” Mrs. Ada further explained:

I have observed that none of Ömer’s teachers pushed him to have beautiful handwriting, or to hold the notebook or pen correctly. I think their point was not to introduce so many rules and editing so the children would be more relaxed and would write however they liked. When Ömer was in first grade, I noticed that as much as we encouraged him to correct his grammar and punctuation in his writing assignments, his teachers would do nothing. Instead, she kept praising him, since he was just beginning to read and write. She wanted him to love reading and writing first. She would always say, “Superb job.” So, I think she avoided imposing her authority on him.

The type of learners that schools promoted, for some parents, was a source of appreciation. Although Mr. Yaprak perceived the curriculum to be weak, he appreciated how the schools promoted the children’s social skills and freedom of speech: “My wife and I could not be that comfortable in front of our own teachers.” Mrs. Deniz further elaborated on how this particular approach also provided space for the families in their children’s education:

We don’t have an insider’s view on schooling, but as far as we can observe, [the teachers] leave room for the children’s will and choice. They don’t try to push the students to align with certain requirements; they don’t try to mould the children in a certain way. Especially when they have learners from a different culture, they are flexible in the way their parents want to raise them.

A few parents particularly pointed that extracurricular activities supported this learner type. These parents perceived the types of extracurricular activities offered in schools as an important asset to their children’s social and emotional development. Some of the parents expressed the idea that activities such as music, sports, and various content clubs
are one of the main ways that schools supported their children’s development as competent individuals. Mrs. Güneş and Mrs. Bulut specifically emphasized that it meant so much for them that schools provided these opportunities because the families were not able to do it with the limited resources that they had. Mr. Tekin concluded: “Extracurricular activities and after-school programs impress me, Murat now can play instruments, and he makes casting, mosaic, and art activities.”

Understanding and Negotiation of the Teacher’s Role

All of the parents who participated in this study thought that teachers’ role in schooling was very important in helping children construct knowledge and the skills. The parents in the study understood the teacher’s role in the classroom in two ways. First, their understanding of the teacher’s role included the Turkish cultural understanding of the teacher as a third parent; therefore, the parents emphasized that teachers need to view their children as the whole child. The parents negotiated these cultural beliefs as they discussed the teacher’s role in contemporary schooling.

The teacher as a third parent. The Turkish parents in the study reported they had to negotiate their cultural understanding of the teacher’s role as they experienced schooling in the United States. According to their sociocultural understanding, the teachers needed to have a strong presence in the children’s lives, like a third parent, through prolonged relationships. Some of the parents reflected back on the strong relationships they had with particular teachers when they were in school, as well as on their children’s exemplary teachers in the United States. When they described their children’s best experiences with their teachers in the American context, Mrs. Gece, Mrs.
Güneş, and Mr. Hisar emphasized the teacher’s warm and positive attitude and smiles as important indicators of the connection between the teacher and the students.

In order to create a stronger connection between the students and the teacher, another concept the parents raised in the interviews was the length of the relationship between the teacher and the students. In Turkish educational contexts, most of these parents had a continuum of the same teacher in their elementary school education, moving to first grade through fifth grade with their teachers. Mrs. Gece explained the historical understanding of the teacher’s role in Turkish tradition:

The relationship between teacher and student is like a mother/father and child relationship which lasts for a few years in the same class. The teachers are the third authority figure in the children’s worlds. The children love their teachers and see them as role models, even exceeding the authority of their parents.

This holistic and personal understanding of the role that teachers play, as Mrs. Deniz explained, should bring “affection and care for the child that is sincere and from the heart.” Mr. Ada reported that Merve’s kindergarten teacher, who was a veteran teacher, had this quality; and with her help, Merve was able to strive both academically and emotionally to qualify for the gifted education program in first grade. This Turkish poem Murat (12) learned through his Turkish tutoring was illustrative of these parents’ perspective:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Öğretmenim</th>
<th>My teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gözyaşımı silmeyi, tatlı tatlı gülmeyi</td>
<td>You taught us to wipe away our tears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>İnsanları sevmeyi, öğrettin öğretmenim</td>
<td>To smile sweetly, and to love people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Açıık sözlü olmayı, doğruyu aramayı</td>
<td>You taught us to be honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatır gönül sormayı, öğrettin öğretmenim</td>
<td>To seek the truth, to look after people,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kardeşliği barışı, iyilike yarışı,</td>
<td>Taught us about friendship, peace,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Güzelliğe varışı, öğrettin öğretmenim,</td>
<td>To compete kindly, To reach the goodness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For these parents, understanding teacher-student relationships holistically meant that the teacher’s role could be a life guide or mentor for the child. Nevertheless, the parents were aware that contemporary social relations limit this ideal. Mrs. Bulut explained:

The teacher should consider not only the students’ lives in class, but outside of class, as well. This person is a human being outside, a citizen. She is the child of her family, and the teacher needs to consider these other dimensions. They need to be in closer contact with the parents through following up on the child closely. Sometimes, they need to go beyond being teachers, and be a compassionate mom, or an older sister or brother. I understand that it’s different in this culture. Even when you go to a park, you can’t touch someone’s child.

Like some other parents, Mrs. Gece and Mrs. Bulut were challenged by the idea of limited connections that teachers and students have in contemporary life. Mrs. Bulut elaborated:

If we imagine each family as a box, there are boxes adjacent to each other, but none of these boxes really interact, everyone has their own little world; when you close your door, you never know what’s happening outside. Since it is an individualized, self-centered life style, teachers are only reflecting this within this trend of life. The child listens to her teacher in class, and then the teacher turns her back and gets lost in her computer, and the child leaves to ride the bus home. So, outside of class, teachers carry the understanding that they are just two separate individuals in society with no personal connection. I would love to see a closer connection.

Although this was one of the prevalent themes in the teacher-student relationships, other parents were hesitant for a continuum of elementary school teacher relations due to the negative experiences they had in both Turkish and American school contexts. Mr. Hisar explained that giving teachers too much of an authority and power may cause personal judgments that are unfair for the students: “My teacher failed me in Physical Education class by using his judgment points to reduce my point average.” Mr. Gece, Mrs. Güneş, Mr. Tekin, and Mr. Güneş also cautioned about the strong authority that teachers in
Turkey have, which can backfire when there is a teacher who suppresses the students’ opinions, not allowing their individuality to grow. Mr. and Mrs. Hisar, although they thought that a prolonged relationship with a teacher can foster certain skills, felt weary about a prolonged stay in one teacher’s classroom in case there is a mismatch between the teacher and a student, as they experienced such broken relationships with Murat’s teachers when Murat was in first and third grades. While Mr. Yaprak reported that having the same teacher for a few years could promote a stronger emotional connection, he also argued, “in terms of educational benefits, being with different teachers who are specialized in one grade level could be more beneficial for the students. I am happy with the way this system is constructed here in the United States.” Mr. Tekin and Mr. Güneş also mentioned that switching teachers each year enabled students to work with different teachers who had different strengths and different teaching styles.

*Seeing the whole child.* For some Turkish parents in the study, seeing the whole child in their student meant that teachers need to be guiding students as a mentor beyond academics. During the interviews, some parents expressed that schools needed to give children character traits, future ideals, and a vision in their education because of their sociohistorical understanding of the role of schooling. Therefore, they expressed their challenge in negotiating their children’s current classroom contexts, where the focus is heavily on academic competence. Many parents raised concerns over the teachers who approached students only academically. Mrs. Ada elaborated:

Teachers could think about helping the children develop character and providing them with the social skills and abilities they need in the workforce in the future. I am observing in many students that they don’t think about their future careers at an early age. They do not have ideals and a focus for their future. Teachers can step in and give them a vision and display trust in their abilities.
For Mrs. Bulut, Mr. Gece, and Mrs. Ada, teacher’s role could extend to supporting the child’s emotional and social development, as well as providing character education beyond academics. These parents observed that the teachers they worked with expressed little interest in the whole child as they taught. Mrs. Bulut explained:

If a child did her homework and adhered to the rules in the classroom, the teachers I worked with often found it satisfactory. In addition to these responsibilities, if they observed any habits that needed to be changed, they did not mention it to the family; they left it up to them. I have observed that my children’s teachers focused on the child only in connection with their academic goals. In terms of attitudes or behaviors, it was left to the parents to take responsibility.

Mr. Gece and Mrs. Ada had similar perspectives about teachers being guides in developing social skills and practicing them in the classroom community. Mrs. Yayla gave further examples for the mentorship her teachers in Turkey provided for her when she was in school:

My elementary school teacher in the village would go to the parents and talk to them about the behaviors she observed in her students. She understood child development and psychology well and approached us in a way that we could understand. She would help us learn about etiquette and social relationships to participate as a member of society; she also helped us understand gender roles and relations, and gave suggestions for job prospects and vocations. We wanted to be like her when we grew up. She was a problem solver.

These findings indicated that although Turkish parents had the metaphors of “teacher as a third parent” and “seeing the whole child” in describing teacher-student relationships, they also recognized the different contexts and academic-oriented teaching as being the current trend. They negotiated their sociocultural values and perspectives and modified their expectations accordingly.
The relationship between home and school emerged as important in order to understand how the Turkish parents mediated the interaction between their children’s cultural identities and schooling. I found that as the Turkish parents who participated in this study negotiated the relationships between home and school contexts, two important findings emerged related to home-school relationships: (a) the Turkish parents reported they had challenges and need support in understanding the school culture and curriculum, and (b) the Turkish parents negotiated their access to the school culture through communication with teachers and being present in schools through volunteering and other occasions.

Challenges in Understanding the School Culture and Curriculum

As the Turkish children in the study had challenges in negotiating school as a new cultural context, so did their parents. The findings indicated that although the parents collaborated in monitoring homework, attending parent-teacher conferences, and following what the children are learning in school, each family still had one parent who naturally assumed the responsibility of closely following the children’s schooling. Weighing on the time commitments for each parent, this person was the mother in the case of eight families. The person who took the primary responsibility for the child’s academics was the father in the case of the Gece Family and the Yaprak family.

Data from interviews suggested that the Turkish parents in the study had difficulty in understanding school culture and routines even when they did not have language barriers. Part of this difficulty was related to the lack of cultural knowledge and contextual language utilized within schools. Mrs. Hisar recalled Murat’s first day in
kindergarten: “A teacher came to me and asked, ‘Is he a walker?’ I became visibly upset and said: ‘Yes, he can walk.’ I did not know she was talking about the bus system until I later learned that phrase.” This example illustrates how schools can become strange places for immigrant parents who are not familiar with the specific language used to refer to school routines, the structure of school activities, or the organization of the teaching practices. Yet, in another instance, Mrs. Hisar gladly mentioned how Murat’s school notified her about regular tornado drills at school with flyers considering that immigrant parents or out-of-state students might not have experienced that.

Another barrier for Turkish parents in establishing closer connections with schools was professional careers that both parents of the children have. In 5 out of 10 families, all parents worked full time. Mrs. Deniz described mainstream parents, especially mothers who can be at school for long hours as the ones “within the system,” and admitted that she felt left out due to the lack of knowledge about how school is structured because her job put a time strain on her visitation to school: “There are some parents who spend most of the day in school. Compared to them, I don’t have any idea about how they decide on who will be in each class and how it will be next year.” Therefore, Zeki’s mother did not have a clear idea of how certain decisions are made in schools such as how classroom composition is determined for each year.

Participants were also challenged in accessing curriculum resources and understanding teaching methods in school subjects to support their children. Mr. Tekin emphasized the importance of homework as a link between school and home.

One of the reasons I insist on having more homework for Meriç in every parent-teacher conference is that the homework shows me where my son is. When he discusses it with me, I can follow how they are learning that concept in school and
where he is in his understanding it. When they don’t assign any homework, I have no idea what he’s doing that day in school.

The challenges Mrs. Tekin experienced were echoed by Mr. Hisar, who, although he has a science-related profession, felt uncomfortable because he did not have the tools and resources to guide his son in math and science:

He doesn’t bring home any books or notes, he brings a few sheets for homework. When I ask where we can find the explanation of a concept in his homework, he can’t access anything. For instance, even when we do simple division problems, I don’t know about different symbols and systems that they learned to use in school.

Mrs. Güneş also mentioned about her unfamiliarity with the concepts in the curriculum, but she noted how Fatma and Şebnem’s teachers provided extra support by tutoring them.

*Negotiating Access to Schools through Communication with Teachers*

The Turkish parents in the study utilized communication with teachers and being physically present at schools as a way to understand schooling and communicate their cultural needs. Teacher-parent communication emerged as essential for the parents to understand the school culture; but at times, the parents felt hesitant to voice their ideas or to establish personal connections with the teachers. Mrs. Hisar explained how she approached the teachers:

I go to the teacher in the beginning of each year and say: “I am a foreigner here; you might need to teach me some of the routines and help me understand the curriculum.” With his dad, we can handle math at home, but in language arts class, I have no experience in helping my son. The teachers also react differently. When Murat was in first grade, his teacher would make me feel bad because I asked a simple thing, but his second-grade teacher would explain things and suggest some books I could read to understand the curriculum.

Parents talked about how the style of communication could challenge the teacher-parent relationships. The explicit and clear nature of communication patterns that teachers
displayed in schools sometimes challenged Turkish parents as they were culturally used to a broader system of communications which included body language, facial features, and implied but not orally communicated feelings. Mrs. Hisar explained: “Sometimes when I communicate with teachers, I become shy raising our concerns or communicating our expectations for Murat’s academic development. There are many things that go unmentioned. Sometimes you just don’t say anything and wait.” Mrs. Deniz also said that she felt a disconnection in her communication with teachers.

I feel like our relationship could be a little closer with the teacher. As a Turkish parent, it is difficult for me to approach the teacher to create these personal relationships in the school setting. I say, ‘Hi, how are you?’ Then what should I say? Americans can talk just about anything very comfortably. I can’t initiate conversations easily. If I don’t volunteer, there is no chance to talk and get to know the teachers on a personal level.

As they communicated with the teachers, the parents were more able to recognize the cultural differences that children unintentionally displayed. Mrs. Hisar illustrated this well when relating Murat’s experience with presentations:

The teachers taught my child how to present and introduce himself confidently. He couldn’t have learned this in Turkey. As he presents any project, the teachers also pay attention to how he is communicating his ideas. Once Murat got a lower grade from a presentation because the teachers noticed he was not making much eye contact. They don’t know that it is culturally difficult for males to make eye contact with females. We were raised this way. Murat could be influenced by this. Maybe he didn’t intentionally do this. Here, it’s just the opposite. People think they are better understood if we make eye contact.

Although the parents needed to mediate cultural differences between home and school through conversations with teachers, they often waited for a hint or inquiry from the classroom teachers because of Turkish traditional understanding of the teacher as the host in the classroom and the single authority. As part of hospitality and as an indicator of the teacher’s care and affection for the students, some parents expected the teachers to be
curious about the students’ home lives and cultures. Therefore, some of the parents in the study expressed that they expected teachers to approach and inquire about cultural and linguistic practices the parents have established in their homes. Mrs. Ada explained: “Maybe during special holidays or occasions, I would like the teachers to indicate an interest and acceptance of their students’ culture.” Mrs. Hisar voiced a similar expectation related to the parents’ perspectives on academic rigor:

I wish the teachers asked where we come from, and how the educational system is run in Turkey. They have no idea about education or culture in other countries. When I ask my son to study harder, he would easily say, “My teacher thinks this is sufficient.” It helps if the teachers know my cultural expectations.

Although the parents culturally acted hesitant on voicing their ideas and expectations about their children’s schooling and cultural differences, they acknowledged that overall, they had positive relationships with the teachers and reported that they were never discriminated because of their cultural differences. For instance, Mr. Gece recalled how he requested more reading assignments for Salih, and this requirement was met by his teacher. On another occasion, Mr. Gece asked the teacher to change his seating arrangement so he could be separated from a few students who distracted Salih from concentrating on his work, and the teacher also honored that. Similarly, Mrs. Bulut praised the sensitivity of teachers over their children’s dietary requests. Mrs. Deniz explained: “As Turkish parents, we sometimes feel shy about approaching the teachers with our needs. We assume that we would be offered things and opportunities by default to mediate cultural differences, but we need to create the environment for these exchanges ourselves.”

Another way Turkish parents, particularly mothers, negotiated their access to their children’s school is through physically being in school. Mrs. Hisar, Mrs. Bulut, Mrs. Yayla,
Mrs. Gece, and Mrs. Deniz utilized volunteering and presentations on Turkey as a way to negotiate access to school culture and curriculum. Mrs. Deniz recalled how she offered her help in computer programs and graphic design if the teacher needed any help with projects. Mrs. Tekin explained that she could not commit to volunteering because of her full-time job, but she helped organize activities by providing food and materials. Mr. Hisar and Mrs. Tekin talked about the role the Parent Teacher Association plays by organizing get-togethers among international families.

**Negotiating Bilingualism and Bicultural Identities**

In this section I explore my third question, concerning how the Turkish parents in the study negotiated their children’s bilingualism and bicultural identities. All of the Turkish parents in the study observed that their children were growing as bilingual and bicultural individuals in school and home contexts and they perceived this phenomenon very positively. However, the processes by which each Turkish parent came to understand and foster their children’s bilingualism and bicultural identities were multidimensional and complex. These processes included (a) negotiating multicultural influences, (b) negotiating their children’s bilingualism through supporting language learning and use in both English and Turkish, and (c) negotiating their children’s biculturalism through mediating their cultural perspectives, negotiating cultural expectations in Turkey, and through supporting bilingualism and bicultural identities in home and in the communities.

**Negotiating Multicultural Influences**

The Turkish parents and their children who participated in the study live in a medium-large Midwestern city with increasing cultural diversity in schools and in
communities. All of the Turkish parents in the study reported having friends from diverse backgrounds besides having friends from mainstream communities. This brought multicultural influences in their lives. In addition, the Ada family, Gece family, Mrs. Tekin, Mrs. Hisar, and the Yaprak family had lived in other countries besides Turkey before they came to the United States. Therefore, while thinking about identity and culture in relation to their children’s schooling, the parents observed the influence of multiple cultures in their and their children’s identity along with the influence of American and Turkish cultures. Data analysis suggests that these multicultural contexts provided an affirmation for these parents and their children to negotiate their culture and identities in American school contexts. Mrs. Ada predicted how their children would respond to these influences:

In my children’s school, there are children who come from different countries; they have different cultures, and religions. Their styles of speaking are different. These children live together and when they grow up, they wouldn’t necessarily identify themselves with only one nation. They won’t be extremely nationalistic, they will be more global.

Mr. Gece echoed these thoughts: “We have friends at work and in the neighborhood; they come from different cultures. We see cultural differences as richness and try to teach this to our children.” All of the parents in the study mentioned that their family friends extend to people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Some parents particularly talked about how their children get together with their school and neighborhood friends from diverse backgrounds. This suggested a multicultural interaction among the children. Mrs. Tekin mentioned how Meriç brings his friends presents from Turkey, invites them over to his house, and tells his friends about Turkey. Mrs. Hisar explained how multicultural influences extend to home contexts for their family: “His best friend is German, and I’m happy for that, they are also our close family friends. Our cultures are not similar, but we
are familiar with each other’s cultures and we try to maintain our own cultures. So when they go to each other’s houses, they adjust to those cultures.”

Mrs. Gece pointed that since their children lived in different countries, they were exposed to different languages, as well. She mentioned how Başak learned Russian very easily in preschool when they lived in Moldova: “She learned to speak Russian in a short time, and she began to sing Russian songs in school programs. She recited Russian poems so fluently to the surprise of many Russian people.”

The Turkish parents overall revealed a positive experience in the United States with cultural diversity. Since the charter school Başak attends had Turkish classes available for all students, Mr. Gece commented on how this influenced her identity: “The multicultural environment really opens up children’s eyes. My daughter learns different things from her friends. The students also learn about Turkey along with other countries. The school provides a good environment.” There were a few parents who specifically talked about how religious diversity interacted with their children’s school experiences. Mrs. Ada referred to the charter school Merve and Ömer attend: “My children live in a multicultural school setting. There are children from different countries.” She continued:

Especially in Merve’s class, there are quite a few Muslim children. Their environment is very nice; the children grow up learning each other’s cultural characteristics. For instance, they know when the Muslim Holy Days are. I overheard a Christian kid say to one of his peers: “You can eat this, it’s halal (permissible to eat).” They hear those words. Sometimes they talk with their friends and ask them what they do when they go to church.

Freedom of religion and speech in the United States provided an affirmation of religious diversity for some parents who have strong religious identities. Mr. Gece explained:

I never had any problems. Actually, we are more comfortable than we were in Turkey. Even in Turkey, there were places where my wife couldn’t enter wearing
her headscarf. When she attended the language school here, she asked for a place to pray, and that was honored. People around us have been comforting.

Mr. Deniz also had similar views. Some of the parents pointed to the freedom of religion as a positive in their children’s school lives. Mrs. Güneş explained:

During the month of fasting, at lunchtime they send the children to the library in Fatma’s school. I like this understanding. The social worker made an announcement about Ramadan, explained how people fast, and she cautioned students about teasing friends who fast. Everyone is free in what they do here.

These examples indicate that most parents reported contentment over religious diversity and they felt that different beliefs and practices were respected in schools and within society.

Although the parents made positive statements over the increasing cultural diversity in schools, especially apparent in peer culture, they also admitted that they have yet to see a reflection of this diversity in the teacher’s agenda, in the curriculum, and in society at large. Some of the parents raised the issue that schools reflect the local society’s concerns, which at times leads them to stay away from discussing global issues. Mrs. Ada explained:

When you look at the TV, most of the news is local. What’s happening around the world never comes up. So the children don’t know the world outside the United States. It’s as if they don’t feel the need to learn about other countries. If the children don’t have friends from other cultures, they wouldn’t even know about different countries, not even their names.

These parents, with their experiences in another culture, seemed to frame their interests more globally. Mr. Hisar emphasized the mobility of the majority of people around the world with increased communication and transportation:

It’s very odd that the children don’t learn enough about the world. The world now got so small that every place is near. People are active and they travel to many places. So the children should know more about the world; but in America, people’s lives are so localized, and the TV news is so localized. For instance, a cat climbing on the roof becomes more important news than what’s happening in
Africa or the Middle East. You don’t know anything about them, but hear about trivial things in your neighborhood.

Mrs. Hisar added to the discussion by explaining that she feels they need to raise their children for a future that is more global in case they return to Turkey or go to another country where Murat can study or work. Therefore, schools, for these parents, fall short of providing more global experiences for children who will be more mobile than their parents.

*Parents and Children Negotiating Bilingualism*

I found that all of the Turkish parents in the study perceived their children’s bilingualism very positively and all of the children in the study also made positive remarks about being bilingual. Some parents even wanted their children to learn a third language. However, the ways that the parents responded to ensure the healthy development of both languages varied. The children and their parents negotiated: (a) language learning in both English and Turkish, (b) language use at home, and (c) fostering bilingual skills through the Turkish language.

*Language Learning in both Languages*

A central discussion in the education of immigrant children has been language competency in English. Contrary to the idea that immigrant children don’t have access to resources in learning English, and often fall short academically, all parents in this study indicated satisfaction with their children’s English skills and academic successes.

Through my interviews and my observation on Turkish children’s lives, I learned that the Turkish children in the study learned English easily since birth through communication tools such as the TV, computers and the internet, multicultural environments their parents are a part of, friendships in their neighborhoods, library books
and leisure reading, and through head-start and ESL programs. All the parents in the study expressed that it is natural for their children to learn English language in daily settings including home, and that they did not have any concerns over competency in English. Mrs. Deniz explained: “My son goes to school for 7-8 hours a day. He talks, learns, and thinks in English, non-stop. It is unavoidable that his knowledge in English is better than Turkish.”

Cartoons and TV shows played an important role in the children’s emergent English knowledge even before their pre-K education. Merve, Ömer, Fatma, Murat, Meriç, Onur, and Umut reported that they could understand English moderately by the time they started preschool or kindergarten even tough their parents talked in Turkish at home. In addition, Merve, Ömer, Gizem, Zeki, Fatma, Şebnem, Buse, Onur, and Umut attended preschool in the United States, which helped them improve their English skills before they began kindergarten. Parents, especially mothers, also mentioned the use of libraries and local programs as means to foster their children’s English skills.

Another vehicle that helped children with their English skills was their siblings. Ömer, Salih, Leyla, Salih, Şebnem, and Hasan expressed in the interviews that their older siblings played a big part in helping them learn spoken English. A few participant families in the study currently have infants or toddlers at home. I observed in the homes that the Turkish children who participated in the study already are involved with their younger siblings who are infants and toddlers, and they help them learn how to speak English.

The findings suggest that for many parents, maintaining Turkish language directly meant maintaining Turkish identity for children. Since all of the participants reported that the Turkish children participating in this study are fluent in English, some of the parents
cautioned that Turkish language learning needed to be fostered equally with the children’s English language acquisition. Mr. Ada explained that it was their struggle as a family to ensure that the children learn the language and culture of both countries at the same time:

It’s not easy. Their first language becomes English. They think in English, they express their thoughts and feelings in English. My children like reading books in English better. Their main language is the language they use in their education. Even though we assume they know Turkish, their knowledge of Turkish isn’t deep. When they listen to a talk or a book, they understand it only partially. To teach them both languages well takes so much work. I think we need to spend equal time to teach them the Turkish language. Only that way can they be really fluent in both languages. They also need to practice more, read, write, and do text analysis to excel in two languages. Many Turks don’t realize that. If a child speaks Turkish, they assume s/he knows Turkish and they don’t think about reading and writing.

Mrs. Deniz also added that she was surprised to discover her children did not know the Turkish words for many household items, animals and things in nature, and that these words can only come up if the parents are regularly reading with their children. While all of the parents agreed that Turkish skills also needed to be fostered, some especially focused on the importance of learning Turkish with its grammar, writing, and literature. The parents also reported that they realize they need to supplement Turkish language education for their children especially when they visit Turkey. Mrs. Deniz explained:

If we don’t supplement our son’s Turkish skills, his Turkish will stay at the 6-7 age level even when he is 10 or 12. Relatives and close family respond well, but when he goes out and says words differently in a peer environment, they could tease him, and this complicates peer conversations in Turkey because the kids can be cruel. Then he may not want to be a part of any social group.

Therefore, while all of the Turkish parents expressed their satisfaction with their children’s English language level, some of the parents emphasized that their children also needed to learn and use the Turkish language fluently, including reading and writing practices.
Language Use at Home

Although the parents and the children in the study were all able to speak and understand English, most of the participants preferred to use Turkish with me during the interviews at their homes and offices. Their reasons varied and illustrated how rich and complex language use has become within their bicultural home contexts. One reason they preferred to speak with me in Turkish was the fact that they can better communicate the terms and notions in Turkish culture. For instance, Murat preferred to speak Turkish with me because the interview questions required him to think, and thus, speaking slowly in Turkish during the interviews fit better with his need. Some of the children like Meriç, Fatma, and Umut code switched between two languages during the interviews. Other children used a few words in English to help me understand what they were trying to say. All of the parents used Turkish in the interviews, at times switching to English when they explained a notion better in English or recalled a conversation with classmates or friends. This observation gave me clues about the diverse ways the parents and children negotiated the communication patterns and bilingualism in the Turkish immigrant households.

As the Turkish parents in the study reflected on their cultural identities and constructed home contexts to foster their children’s bilingual and bicultural identities, the children’s language use in their home contexts became a focal point of negotiation. Just like language learning, many parents thought that using Turkish at home was one of the most important vehicles to maintain Turkish identity. They felt that wide use of English through TV, multimedia, schools obscured children’s chance to develop competency in Turkish. While most of the parents preferred to speak Turkish with their children, all of
the children who participated in the study told me that they were equally or more proficient in English. Therefore, they all stated that they preferred talking in English at home as well, even though some of them felt they are equally competent in both languages. Murat, Meriç, Onur, and Umut especially preferred talking to their parents in English, with their parents’ reactions differing from disapproval to compliance.

Mr. Gece explained why it was important for children to speak Turkish at home to sustain their bilingualism:

We are sensitive about using Turkish at home. Because I know that it’s impossible for my children to be behind in English, even when they get together with Turkish friends, they are inclined to speak in English. So, home is the only place for them to continue in Turkish.

Gizem described her family’s language use at home in my first interview with her:

When we speak English, Leyla and I can talk pretty fast. My mom and dad can’t follow what we are talking about. But sometimes they ask, “Why do you speak English at home? It’s okay to use English at school all day, but home is the place for Turkish.” But when you are used to it, it’s difficult to switch.

Among the Turkish children who participated, Başak, Salih, Merve, Ömer, Gizem, Leyla, Fatma, and Şebnem were expected to speak only Turkish at home. Mrs. Tekin also said that speaking Turkish at home has recently become an important expectation for Meriç, and she and her husband often discussed and negotiated this issue with him. Some of the parents were also challenged by the idea that some teachers at school expected them to speak English with their children at home. Mrs. Ada explained:

I encourage my children to be bilingual and use both languages proficiently, but I’ve had some teachers who would ask me to speak to Merve and Ömer in English, and to read only English books at home. We have another language at home and when the teachers expect that we use English at home, it doesn’t validate our culture. We know the tests are important, and we monitor the children’s school work closely, but the teachers need to be careful not to give our children the impression that their culture and language aren’t legitimate.
Mrs. Deniz had similar views about the equal encouragement of both languages, and reported that she explained to Zeki’s classroom teacher that Zeki has readings in Turkish that he was doing in addition to his reading assignments at school. As for Mr. Yaprak, he believed that if the parents could balance two languages, the children would learn both languages well. He compared his approach with his older son, Onur (13), and his younger brother Hasan. He explained how they exposed Onur to English as early possible and how they changed their strategy with Hasan (9). Mr. Yaprak told me:

We never taught him anything in English until Hasan went to kindergarten. He also went to Turkey in the summertime for three consecutive years and stayed there for two months each time. His Turkish improved greatly. Now he’s very fluent in Turkish. But then, he began kindergarten with zero English. We kept in close touch with his teacher. She was worried in the beginning; she even suggested that we hold him back for a year. I wanted to wait because I knew he would learn English easily during the year. In the last quarter, Hasan caught up with his classmates’ language level. Right now, Hasan is among top students in his class. So I think, if a child learns his mother tongue really well, it becomes easier to learn a second language.

*Fostering Bilingual Skills through Turkish Language Education*

An important discussion around the children’s bilinguality was how to improve children’s Turkish skills to provide children the opportunity to excel in both languages. Parents employed several strategies to foster the development of Turkish language skills at home. Some parents individually taught their children how to read and write in Turkish at home. Mrs. Gece mentioned that she taught her son Salih how to read and write in Turkish during a winter break. Besides individual efforts, parents also utilized community resources with other families to create Turkish language instruction for their children. A few years ago the Tekin and Hisar families benefitted from a Turkish language instructor hired by a Turkish association in the city through a grant to teach
children about Turkish national symbols and important holidays along with Turkish language. Another example is Sunday school, which is organized in a community center through volunteer mothers. Gizem, Leyla, Merve, Ömer, Hasan, Zeki, Fatma, and Şebnem currently attend Turkish language classes along with other cultural and religious education classes in Sunday school. Mrs. Gece and Mr. Gece also mentioned that they often get together with a few families to go to summer camps or winter retreats for their children to practice Turkish language and learn about Turkish culture.

These educational contexts also provided writing practice for Turkish children. Although Turkish and English alphabets are in Latin script, and the letters are quite similar, a few children expressed that they had difficulty in writing in Turkish. The children mentioned that especially vowels in Turkish alphabet confuse them because they are pronounced differently. For instance, Mrs. Hisar pointed that preschool and kindergarten education Meriş had in Turkey might have affected his confusion over some of the letters and how they are written versus how they are pronounced.

Parents also encouraged reading activities in Turkish for their children. Mrs. Deniz, Mrs. Yaprak, Mr. Ada, and Mr. Gece had regular Turkish book reading time as a family or one-on-one with their children at home. The Tekin and Gece families often met with their children to go over school subjects with Turkish textbooks to both supplement academics and Turkish language. Throughout the interviews, the parents expressed the scarcity of engaging and attractive Turkish children’s books to capture children’s interests. Başak, Murat, Salih, Gizem, and Leyla, whose parents encouraged Turkish books, responded by describing most Turkish books they read as “educative,” while they described English books they read as “fun and engaging.” Their book choices included
mostly science-fiction, mystery, or adventure books. On the other hand, their parents also pointed that they preferred their children to read in both languages, but school assignments ensure that they read their English chapter books first, so usually English books take the priority if the time is limited.

The physical visits and audio-visual communication with Turkey were other means Turkish parents utilized to encourage their children to use Turkish language. Most of the Turkish parents who participated in the study had the financial means for their children to visit Turkey almost every summer. Many parents all agreed that Turkey visits helped their children’s bilingual skills so they had fluency in Turkish as well. Yet, even with parents’ efforts for children to learn the fluent use of Turkish, the children still had challenges in understanding the cultural context of conversations. Mrs. Ada explained how she feels that children were in between two languages when they go to Turkey:

They are different than Turkish children. They cannot completely understand what people mean. For instance, if they make a joke, or there is a phrase only used in daily life conversations, you can only understand these if you live in Turkey. My children have American sense of humor, such as knock-knock jokes. When I tell them the jokes in Turkish context, for instance, Nasreddin Hodja [a man of humor and wisdom in 13th century Turkey] jokes, they do not find it funny.

In another example, Mrs. Nil recalled that her daughter had challenges in communication in Turkey: “Buse has challenges in understanding Turkish sarcasm such as when people in Turkey use exaggerated numbers or amounts to describe something, or the time when they answer questions with a ‘no,’ while they mean ‘obviously, yes.’”

All families regularly contacted with their relatives in Turkey through internet and phone. The Turkish TV channels they accessed through satellite and internet also provided their children the opportunity to watch them. Başak, Salih, Fatma, Şebnem,
Onur, Hasan, Gizem and Leyla had their favorite Turkish TV series that they watched. Sometimes during their conversations within home and community contexts, they discussed weekly episodes of these series. Other parents allowed their children to listen to Turkish music. Buse, Başak, Gizem, and Leyla mentioned that they particularly liked Turkish music, which may have fostered the comprehension of Turkish language.

Parents and Children Negotiating Biculturalism

All parents in the study predicted that their children will be bicultural, and different than they are. They anticipated that their children will carry some of the characteristics of both American and Turkish cultures in their lives. Although home and community contexts became such negotiation spaces for these families that multiple cultural identities and multiple cultural elements exist, during the interviews, the parents often focused on the notions of biculturalism and bilingualism. Therefore, the findings from data suggest that (a) Turkish parents negotiated their perspectives on their children’s biculturalism, (b) Turkish parents and children negotiated bicultural identities with the cultural expectations in Turkey, (c) Turkish parents supported bicultural identities at home, (d) Turkish parents supported bicultural identities in the community, and (e) Turkish parents negotiated the celebration of American and Turkish holidays.

Negotiating Perspectives on Their Children’s Biculturalism

Of great interest in this study were the ways in which the Turkish parents came to understand and foster their children’s bilingual and bicultural identities through negotiating their perspectives on cultural identities. Mrs. Tekin lamented that their son was navigating between two cultures by growing up within both: “He can benefit from the richness in both cultures, and see the negatives in two cultures. Even at this age, he
can compare what is good or bad for him.” During the interviews, Mr. Tekin, Mr. Ada, Mrs. Deniz, Mr. Gece, and Mrs. Yaprak specifically stated that they see their children’s biculturalism as a positive influence in their lives. For Mr. Tekin, his son experienced the similar transformation he has had upon moving into a bigger city in Turkey as a child:

That different life style and different language helped me to get to know people, understand the language and the people. It broadened my horizon. When we came here, I thought that Meriç also will have this chance; he’ll have two cultures because he won’t lose connection to Turkey partly because of us, and this would make a good affect on his personality.

Turkish parents and children in the study did not report much conflict between lifestyles and cultural identities of parents and that of children partly due to westernized contemporary culture they experienced in Turkey and in the United States. Yet, Turkish parents in the study also negotiated their home contexts to provide a space for their children’s biculturalism. I observed that although parents and children have different opinions on some issues, those could be freely talked about at home. For instance, I asked Mrs. Ada where she would like their children to live in the future, and she mentioned Turkey because that is where she and her husband would like to return in their retirement. When she asked Merve, she mentioned California as the place she would like to live, making her mother smile. Data from the observations and interviews suggest that the children’s home lives in the United States seemed to provide a balanced medium between the expectations from American culture and Turkish culture. Mrs. Hisar explained how they created space for Murat to be able to carry multiple identities through negotiating cultural practices:

Being bicultural is a very positive thing, but maybe if you ask Murat, it is also very hard. Once he went to a friends’ house, he learned about PB&J (Peanut Butter and Jelly) as lunch. I had no idea what that was until he taught me that. There is a
different life out there. When he goes to his friends’ house, he adjusts to whatever they do, when he comes home, he sees our life. We adjust our food and culture depending on his friends who come to our place. If that friend isn’t a close friend and doesn’t know about our culture, we act like normal Americans in every way because the child isn’t familiar with it. If it’s a close friend, we invite him/her over and we can talk about our cultures.

These statements illustrate how Mrs. Hisar, although she strived to maintain their cultural elements at home, realized that it is a negotiation process for their child. Therefore, they needed to be flexible and negotiate their cultural environments and expectations so Murat did not have difficulty interacting with his friends and in experiencing various cultures.

Parents also mediated their cultural expectations for children through discussions among spouses. Mrs. Bulut recalled a conversation with her husband, who saw Gizem lying on the classroom floor and playing games with her friends in school. Sitting or lying on the floor in public places concerned Mr. Bulut about sanitation and the public demeanor of their children. Mrs. Bulut discussed this with her husband:

I told him that it’s very normal for their school lives, but they change their clothes and shoes for outside when they get home because we need to keep inside the home very clean. If we get really picky about each small thing, or ask them not to sit on the floors, however we try, we can’t avoid these things. Even if it doesn’t match with our ways, we just need to let certain things go.

This way, spouses negotiated their cultural expectations with each other and they did it in such a way that it did not cause friction between themselves and their daughters.

In the interviews with parents, almost all parents raised the notions of “independence” and “confidence” as they described how their children were growing up bicultural. As I discussed in the section on parents’ perspectives regarding curriculum and instruction, the parents mentioned that with the encouragement from society and schools,
American culture influences their children’s upbringing to reflect these two characteristics.

Mr. Tekin had already seen this bicultural effect on his son, Meriç:

I think he’s growing up as a free spirit, which is nice. I mean, certainly much more creative than my childhood. I wouldn’t write or say anything without looking at somebody’s eyes, getting an approval or something. In a way, they’re confident and independent.

Mrs. Deniz echoed Mr. Tekin's thoughts on the type of individual schools and society promoted in the United States.

They encourage children to be more independent, more confident. If a challenge comes up, they think: “I can do it.” In our Turkish family style, parents would worry: “How can they do it themselves?” In this way, they become more protective of their kids. It’s also very protective here, too, but the limits are on different things, they leave the children free in a defined space.

Mr. Ada, however, emphasized the idea that differences in cultural values needed to be well-thought and balanced by families:

There is a thin line between self-esteem and respect. There are positives and negatives in both cultures. American educational system teaches children to question things. In Turkey, we never see that. In Turkish cultural and educational settings, it is taught that the citizen exists for the state and nation, in here, state exists for the citizen. It is true that self-esteem gets exaggerated a little.

Some parents discussed how they perceived the notion of respect and decency as sometimes the opposite of the relaxed, easy going, and care free attitudes of their children who grow up in the United States. This was a negotiation point for many parents as their children brought home the kinds of attitude and behavior that they culturally perceived to be too laid-back or casual. Mrs. Bulut focused on how they negotiated and mediated these at home and community contexts.

For instance, the teachers suggest children to relax and loosen up while reading books. In this way, they encourage children to read books however they like. Now, with our understanding of respect, if I say to my children: “Sit up, don’t stretch your legs against me, don’t lie down,” they will not understand anything
they read, how can they concentrate? They’d possibly drop reading it altogether. If I don’t want them to lay down against me, I could just ask them to read the books in their rooms, in however way they like.

This is an example of how the parents in the study needed to mediate their cultural expectations and perspectives to allow space for their children’s bicultural identities.

Children in the study also needed to negotiate their cultural values at school when they wanted to apply the traditions they were taught in home contexts. In our second interview, Mrs. Bulut explained how she and her daughters discussed the different practices on sharing food in schools:

> When they take some food to school for lunch, they often want to share it. We have this tradition that if someone looks at your food, you are obliged to share it because now that they glanced at it, they might like to try it, and have a right on your food. Yet, it is not allowed here, no matter how much you want to share. Gizem told me that once they were eating lahmacun [a Turkish pizza] and her friends liked its appearance and smell. She wanted to share it, but it was not allowed.

*Negotiating Cultural Expectations in Turkey*

Another way the Turkish parents in the study fostered their children’s bicultural identity was through navigating between their hybrid home culture that allowed biculturalism and the local cultural context in Turkey where their children go and visit almost each year.

The Turkish children who participated in my study were either born in the United States, or arrived in the country when they were infants or toddlers. Through conversations with the Turkish children in the study, I learned that they did not have a conception of “homeland” and a deep relationship with Turkey in the same way their parents did. Their understanding of Turkey as their parents’ country was composed of their parents’ memories and their own experiences with the physical environment in
Turkey, along with their experiences with extended family and friends in Turkey. Most children viewed the United States as their homes although Hasan, Onur, Ömer, Zeki, Leyla, Başak and Gizem expressed their desire to live in Turkey at some point of their lives, partly due to their relatives and extended family that they miss. Yet, many of them imagined living and studying in the United States or in another European country.

In the interviews, the children usually contrasted the traffic system in Turkey that was more chaotic to the one they have in the United States. They also compared metropolitan living with crowded downtowns and city centers in Turkey to the somewhat more suburban lifestyle they had in United States. Most parents mentioned that they needed to support their children in their experiences in Turkey because the lifestyle they have here was different than what Turkish children experience. Mrs. Tekin explained how she mediates two cultural environments for her son, Meriç:

I warn my son when we go to Turkey. “My son, you cannot cross the road slowly, the cars will not stop for you, you have to be careful. If children you play with learn you do not live in Turkey, they might make fun of you.” In here, they are growing up somewhat naïve. In Turkey a child same age as Meriç can be as sly as a fox. Those children can learn everything from TVs, newspapers, streets, they are more aware of sexuality. There is not much censorship over TVs in Turkey.

Umut recalled his own impressions about Turkey: “They don’t have much technology and it is expensive, but I hear Math is better than here.” Gizem and Leyla expressed that they are affected by Turkish TV news and action TV series that have scenes with speeding, accidents and so on. Some children liked the fact that the streets in the neighborhoods were available for them to play freely with friends in Turkey. Hasan explained: “We go to Istanbul and we play there in the streets, the apartments are cramped there, very crowded. The crowded city centers are full of apartments in
Turkey.” In the same way, Zeki enjoyed his time in Turkey with many opportunities to play in balconies, and visit farms in smaller towns.

The parents reported that their children had challenges with relationships with relatives when they visited Turkey. Mrs. Hisar noted that not only did they need to mediate the relationship between school and home for their children, but they also needed to mediate cultural differences with their children in the United States, and the life in Turkey and the people there. Mr. Hisar gave an example:

Turkey is not Murat’s home country. Even when I visit Turkey, it looks different each time. For Murat, everything is different. The food, water, sea, there are things he likes. Sometimes he is uncomfortable with much attention. He is not used to all the attention and affection our relatives display, so he sometimes does not think it is sincere. He does not have a notion of extended family, so he cannot understand that warmth which automatically comes because of family membership.

The parents supported their children by helping them understand the life style and cultural expectations in Turkey. Mrs. Ada explained how her children were perceived as different in Turkish contexts and how she mediated this environment for them:

Sometimes when my family in Turkey has guests at their homes, they want my children to introduce themselves and have the host etiquette in Turkey. My children do not know the guests, so they are not eager to talk with them. Or, my mom has cultural expectations: In the dinner table, there are certain expectations, such as, sitting straight, using forks, knives and spoons properly and finishing one’s plate. My children are challenged with the idea of speaking less than adults and conforming to the older family members’ ideas. My children do not have those notions. They do not find it reasonable just because a family member says something; they need to accept it, maybe because they do not know those people.

Similarly, Mrs. Bulut also mentioned how her relatives in Turkey found her children to be spoiled kids when they insisted on having the things they were used to playing with in the United States. Therefore, parents strove to balance and interpret children’s experiences in Turkey so they could have a positive experience and they become aware of different sides
of each culture. Mrs. Tekin commented: “I try to explain differences in a nice way without bad mouthing either countries, so Meriç would be happy in either place, but it is not easy.”

**Supporting Bicultural Identities at Homes**

The parents in the study recognized that American culture and language heavily influenced their children’s personality, habits, and lifestyles. For their children to be able to carry true bicultural identities, they felt the need to support Turkish culture and language learning for their children.

In terms of their children’s cultural identity, Mrs. Ada, Mrs. Gece, and Mrs. Yaprak, reported that they worried about teen culture in the United States because of cultural and religious considerations. For instance, going to parties which included dancing and mixing with opposite sex, or dating before marriage are among things these Turkish parents wanted to avoid for their children. They expressed a certain degree of apprehension that their children would have a desire to engage in the popular culture practices which conflicted with their religion and culture. Mrs. Güneş explained what she expected from her children:

> My children will live in the same way I live. My traditions and customs does not change because I am in the United States. We talk about everything with them. My children know about boyfriends, marriage, and chastity. For instance, kissing with boys is not allowed, they know this cannot happen before marriage. I am not nervous because I trust my children. They know that I need to hear any negative or positive thing in their lives.

Mrs. Ada, and Mrs. Yaprak also reported a little concern about popular teen culture and its effect on their children. Mrs. Ada mentioned she might consider sending her children to Turkey to attend a high school if she gets more concerned over time. However, Mrs. Bulut,
Mr. Deniz, and Mr. Gece looked at the issue from a different perspective. Mrs. Bulut explained:

If we were in Turkey, we would not have difficulty in reflecting our culture on children because they would see it naturally everywhere. Physical environment help because there are so many cultural artifacts like mosques, historical sites and fountains that reflect on our historical values. Yet, here, we are making extra effort in helping them learn our cultural values. They live in a carefully woven cultural life here and maybe it has higher quality than how their life would have been in Turkey.

These considerations, coupled with the cultural expectations from children, led parents to make intentional decisions to create a bicultural space for their children in different contexts. Parents often worked on alternative routes instead of banning specific things they want to avoid for their children. The parents carefully constructed their home environments to support their children’s bicultural identities.

One way parents supported their children’s bicultural identities was through encouraging the practice of Turkish culture along with the cultural knowledge that the children gained from schools and popular culture, so that they did not have conflicts with their own children. Mr. Gece, Mrs. Bulut, and Mr. Yaprak talked about their way of providing bicultural experiences for their children by finding a mentor, usually a young Turkish woman for girls, or a young Turkish man for boys, who would spend time with their children and serve as their role model. Mr. Yaprak mentioned that this model of finding a third party to serve as a mentor helped the relationship between parents and children by not putting parents in an authoritative position to teach the children cultural values.

Mrs. Gece, while describing how she supported Başak’s bicultural identity through artifacts and clothing, explained: “I bought my daughter traditional Turkish clothes to wear
on occasions besides her jeans, pants and shirts. She loves to wear it. I was inspired by an international program in her public school, where parents and their children wore their traditional clothes.” Mrs. Yaprak also mentioned how she bought her son traditional clothing to wear on important events.

Mrs. Bulut explained that she supported her children’s bicultural identities by participating in their English book reading time. She mentioned that she always accompanied her children by reading the same book with them and went to the libraries to find books of good quality and to get to know children’s authors. She often recommended books to her children that she thought were very supportive of their character and moral development: “Those books have been also very helpful for me to understand American culture and system besides language learning purposes.” Mrs. Bulut cautioned her daughters about books she came across that included slang use, violence, or sexual elements. She also explained how they tried to sustain the reading of Turkish books that had cultural and religious content: “Their father usually recommends their Turkish books; I also prefer to read with them about Prophet Muhammad’s life since He is our guide in life.” It was striking that a mother learning English through participation in her daughter’s reading times, was very selective and a cultural critic on the children’s literature. In the same way, Mr. Ada, Mr. Gece, Mrs. Yaprak, Mrs. Ada also mentioned that they taught their children about religious knowledge through children’s story books.

One way some of the parents tried to sustain their children’s bicultural identities was through bringing Turkish children together for family occasions. Mrs. Ada explained that through gathering children together for family occasions, summer camps and winter retreats, children might realize that they also had a community of friends who culturally
understood them better, and shared the same lifestyle. “While their school friends celebrate Thanksgiving, they could not share their own experiences with them, but my children realized that they also have commonalities with their Turkish friends.” Mr. Deniz also mentioned that through family gatherings, he was able provide his son, Zeki, with a positive cultural environment with his friends that they did not even have in Turkey.

Data from the interviews and observations with Turkish children indicated that the children responded to their parents’ guidance in supporting bicultural identities positively. Throughout the interviews, the children were able to articulate their own ideas which may have conflicted with their parents’ ideas. One aspect of the findings from the interviews was children’s choices in food, music and TV. These choices taught me a lot about their bicultural identities. For instance, Merve realized that her parents found her a bit odd because of her unusual food choices at home, such as making a peanut butter, lettuce and grape sandwich. She thought she was a spoiled girl at home who made lots of jokes.

Children, being exposed to different TV programs in two cultures, seemed to be selective about what they watched. Başak mentioned that she preferred TV series with real life problems, which was why she preferred to watch her favorite Turkish TV series instead of fiction stories such as Hannah Montana. Merve, distinguishing the types of TV programs that were not appropriate, made informed choices in what she would like to watch: “I pick and choose which programs I like to watch. Some of the TV series and shows are not appropriate. I do not like to watch them. I only like to watch America’s funniest home videos.” Hasan liked both “Knight Rider” and Turkish TV shows. Children’s choices of
music also reflected their rich and complex identities. Umut liked Rihanna and Katy Perry, but he did not like the music in the background of Turkish songs. On the other hand, Başak did not like English music where there was a beat in the background. She liked the rhythm of Turkish songs to dance with. Mrs. Nil did not allow Buse to listen to English pop music, but she allowed a space for her to enjoy several Turkish music artists like Serdar Ortac and Hande Yener, along with religious music. Buse mentioned she also enjoyed classic music, particularly Bach and Beethoven.

Supporting Bicultural Identities in the Community

Data reveal that some Turkish parents created bicultural community spaces for their children to learn about Turkish culture. The cultural education focus of families ranged from providing children with nationalistic knowledge and Turkish language, to experiencing Turkish history, language, nationalistic and Islamic knowledge. Therefore, besides the informal cultural knowledge they gained through daily life with their families, some of the participant children were attending language and cultural education classes. These intentional education contexts for children were created through various literacy activities. I will explore two of these contexts—Sunday school, and Turkish language education.

Sunday school. One of these bicultural contexts was Sunday School, which Başak, Gizem, Leyla, Ömer, Hasan, Zeki, Fatma, and Şebnem attended in a community center. Sunday school consisted of informal classes for children, where volunteer Turkish women were the teachers. Of my participants, only Mrs. Gece served in the center as a teacher. One volunteer mother served as the coordinator and arranged snack schedule for families, and kept class and recess time during the Sunday School. Costs for materials
were covered by parent donations. Children, as a mixed gender group, were assigned to three groups in small classrooms designed for eight or nine students each. The walls were covered with colorful laminated pictures, posters, poems and stories from popular children’s magazines. There were also Turkish and American flags and pictures from Turkey on the walls. I mainly observed classes with the older group since there were four children in that group who participated in my study.

As the only participant teaching in Sunday school, Mrs. Gece explained that they were doing Turkish courses, Qur’an courses, religious education courses, and an activity time, where students did arts and crafts activities, sang songs, learned stories about Turkish history and played group games. The daily schedule started at 11:00 AM, and ended at 3:00 PM with small class period and a recess after each period. Mrs. Güneş mentioned that having a recess in between each class period was a practice Turkish parents had in their education. Children who attended Sunday school found these recesses very attractive because they could get together and play with their Turkish friends.

Throughout my observations, during recess time and lunch, rich interactions and literacy practices happened. Students socialized and chatted without classroom expectations. They sat at the tables and chatted with their age level friends, as volunteer mothers in other tables sat with the younger kids to chat with them. I often sat with the older group where the 11 year-old girls, Merve, Gizem, Fatma, and Leyla, sat together. The conversations among them were usually in English. They joked, poked fun at each other, told each other funny or exciting things that happened in their school, and they shared clapping games, where they introduced each other to some rhymes they came up with along with clapping hands and stomping feet. Right after lunch, they usually freely
roamed around the community center, ran and played games. This was also a time for them to share the TV series episodes they watched. These girls who participated in my study usually preferred to play and chat together, whereas the boys would hang out together. During lunch breaks, girls also played a traditional American kids game called “tag.” I have only once seen students engage in the formal written Turkish game called “Isim-Sehir” (Name-City) with the encouragement from their teacher. The game involved challenging the players to do a table for some letters of Turkish alphabet and several columns of categories where they were supposed to find names, cities, animals, plants and objects starting with a particular letter.

Although the parents introduced the cultural education classes to foster Turkish language and culture during class time, they still negotiated this space to allow their children to talk, joke, and play in English during short recesses after each class and during lunch. Volunteer parents’ choices of food they prepared for the kids could be classified as American style as well.

It was interesting to observe how children used both languages in appropriate contexts during Sunday school. In one particular observation of Quran class, and during a Qur’an recitation practice, rich interactions went on between two kids. Gizem (11) was trying to help Merve (11) practice memorizing a short chapter. “She said ezberle (memorize) five sentences!” she reminded. As I observed children’s interactions in this bilingual context, I observed that the Turkish children were using the contextual terms intentionally in Turkish. In this case, Gizem preferred to use the Turkish word “ezberle” instead of just “memorize.” Later, when I asked her why she chose to use that word in Turkish, she said it was because she kept hearing it from her teacher as “ezberle,” almost
making it a contextual choice and important term in her Qur’an instruction. She said she was more comfortable using the word “ezberle” because it made more sense when she explained. Because of this particular context, she did not feel memorize was a proper replacement and that this word seemed too detached from her focus in the context of learning Qur’an verses.

Similar to the mentorship idea that a few parents had on order to foster their children’s identity development, some parents whose children attended Sunday school perceived Sunday school as an environment where children came together with their own peers and learned cultural knowledge in this engaging social atmosphere. Mrs. Ada explained: “After a certain age, they like to be with their peers to learn. I began to teach my children religious information and Qur’an, but I noticed when they begin attending Sunday school, they are more eager to learn.” Similarly, Mr. Yaprak was happy that Hasan was learning much from Sunday school. Mrs. Deniz also pointed to the social aspect of learning, and sense of belonging Sunday school provided for Zeki.

As I interviewed the children (Zeki, Gizem, Merve, Salih, Leyla, Hasan, Fatma, and Şebnem) who attended Sunday school, they reported they had challenges in reading and writing in Turkish class. Zeki, Ömer and Fatma reported that they like Qur’an classes the most. Some of these children are challenged with the traditional Turkish teaching style that they experienced in Sunday school, especially in Turkish and religious education courses, which often included lecturing, questions and answers, test practice, and dictating information on children’s notebooks. Merve stated that although she loved religious information class, she wanted to see more discussion and classroom conversations with teachers to make it more interactive for her. Gizem especially mentioned how she liked to
learn the meaning of daily prayers in this class. In addition, Salih mentioned that he finds his teachers in Sunday school a bit strict.

These conversations illustrated how Turkish children negotiated their own opinions about how they needed to learn, and they communicated their needs to their parents comfortably.

*Turkish language education.* Another context for hybrid cultural practices was Turkish language tutoring, which Murat and Meriç participated in a few years ago. They learned how to write in Turkish, with Turkish national symbols and national knowledge incorporated into language learning. Murat shared with me the journal he kept during his Turkish language classes a few years ago. He had learned some poems and some knowledge on Turkish national history and culture. Teaching children about important figures in Turkish history such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the new Turkish Republic, the national flag, and national holidays were important focuses in the tutoring sessions. For instance, in Murat’s journal, I was able to see the “student oath” that Turkish students take in the early morning in Turkish schools, is very similar to the “Pledge of Allegiance.” (I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all)

**Öğrenci Andı:** “Türküm, doğruyum, çalışıkım. İlkem; küçüklerimi korumak, büyüklerimi saymak, yurdumu, milletimi özümden çok sevme.Ülküm; yükselmek, ileri gitmek.Ey Büyük Atatürk! Açığın yolda, gösterdiğiniz hedefe durmadan yürüyeceğime ant içerm. Varlığım Türk varlığına armağan olsun. Ne mutlu Türküm diyene!”

**Student Oath:** “I am Turk, I am trustworthy, I am hard working. My principle is to protect my younger ones, to respect my elders, and to love my homeland and my people more than my own soul. My mission is to rise above, and to go beyond. O,
noble Ataturk! I take my oath to walk endlessly on the path you opened and to the
goals you showed us. May my entity be devoted to Turkish nation. One who says
‘I am Turk’ is fortunate!”

Although these nationalistic discourses seemingly contrasted with the children’s
American identities, I did not observe a conflict in either conversations with parents or
children that they were uncomfortable with either nationalistic discourse the children
were exposed to.

_Negotiating American and Turkish Holidays_

One of the central discussions around biculturalism for children was how parents
perceived the cultural elements in American holidays and how they negotiated this
context for their children. The Turkish parents participated in the study dealt with each
holiday differently. Some holidays, such as Christmas, provided the parents with the
opportunity to talk with their children about the differences in cultures and religions. The
parents usually let students participate in classroom activities for Halloween,
Thanksgiving and Valentine’s Day. For home and community contexts, they either
modified these celebrations in a culturally acceptable form so their children could still be
part of it, or they created alternative holiday celebrations which reflected Turkish national
and religious traditions. Mr. Gece explained:

_We try to help our children be conscious about the differences in holidays. We tried
to explain that we do not have notion of “witch” or “ghost” in our culture, or a
holiday named “Thanksgiving” without reacting negatively to them. After all, they
need to accept these holidays as part of the culture here. Yet, we try to make our
special holidays very attractive to them so they also accept and enjoy those._

Mrs. Gece, Mr. Gece, Mr. Yaprak, Mrs. Yaprak, Mr. Bulut, and Mrs. Bulut did not want
their children to celebrate Halloween in home settings due to their fear over losing their
cultural elements. Parents in this case negotiated with their children by discussing the type
and the style of celebration. Mrs. Bulut mentioned that she allowed her children to celebrate those holidays in school, but she asked them not to go out in costumes and collect candy. Yet, she mentioned they still allowed them to go out and collect candy during the previous Halloween at the children’s insistence. She explained:

> Children think that if we live in the United States, we need to celebrate all their holidays. We approach it like that: If we keep compromising this and that, after some time, there is a danger of losing identity. We do not follow Thanksgiving and Christmas traditions, the symbols and But, let’s say it is 4th of July, we go to see fireworks together. We offer entertainment in different times and different ways, so we are not blocking children’s desires to have fun. We tell them, “see we are offering you this possibility, but you also need to understand us. We have these characteristics in our culture, and we want to raise you this way.” We try to provide this understanding to children by always talking to them, never banning things.

In a similar negotiation process, although they did not consider it necessary, Mrs. Güneş, Mr. Güneş, Mr. Deniz, and Mrs. Deniz allowed their children to wear costumes due to the possibility that their children could be singled out in the classroom.

> Since he began kindergarten, he has much exposure to American holidays, specifically Halloween, when their teachers do many activities to celebrate it. We have to consider what will leave him with the most subtle cultural effect. If we ban it, maybe the effect of the holiday would be bigger on him. Then we decided to modify the holiday and explained to him that it is a simple thing just like someone’s birthday. He should not feel bad in front of his peers who all wear costumes for the day. So we are getting him costumes without exaggerating it as a big cultural event.

Mr. Ada, Mrs. Hisar, and Mrs. Ada noted that they allowed their children to go out and collect candy on Halloween. During the interviews, the children reported that they liked the social occasion and activities such as collecting candy around Halloween, but did not really care about the meaning of it.

> Mrs. Tekin expressed that she took a softer side in explaining the holidays, especially Christmas, as different traditions each culture and religion has, so her son can still accept that as a valid holiday as the ones they experienced in Turkey. Mrs. Güneş
also mentioned that it was compulsory school work in music class for Fatma to learn Christmas songs. Mr. Deniz admitted that Christian culture was and will be influential on kids, and the only way to balance it and provide children with bicultural experiences was focusing on Turkish and Islamic holidays and make them interesting for their kids. Mr. Gece and Mr. Yaprak mentioned that they had alternative religious holidays to celebrate, so they did not have any conflict with their children about Christmas holiday. Mrs. Deniz explained:

We try to feel our holidays well because since he started school, he is well aware of American holidays. We arranged a costume and trick-or-treat for Halloween, but we will not do anything for Christmas. Instead, in Ramadan and Kurban holidays, we try to do more things. We decorate the house, we surprise him. If he wants something much, we often buy it around these two holidays.

As an alternative to the holidays the children participated in within school contexts, parents made an effort to introduce children to national and religious Turkish holidays. The parents, carrying on the tradition from Turkey, celebrated two religious holidays (Ramadan and Kurban or Sacrifice) by buying clothing and toys for their children, and giving pocket money. At times, some parents got together and celebrated these holidays on a bigger scale with clowns, cotton candy, inflatable toys, and programs where children read poems and sang songs. Yet, in the United States, these holidays are not celebrated officially as they are in Turkey. Especially if the holidays corresponded to school and work days, parents often did not even have the day off, and it might be challenging for parents to give the children the holiday excitement.

The parents also introduced their children to Turkish national holidays. One of the most important holidays for children was the Children’s Festival on April 23rd, to celebrate the opening of the Turkish Grand Assembly in 1920 by the founder of the
Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. The parents arranged picnics and special programs where children acted, sang songs, and had treats. Indeed, in one of my observations in Sunday school, some children were rehearsing the Turkish National Anthem for their celebration of Children’s Festival. Mrs. Yaprak explained how she introduced her children to this festival:

They both like Turkish holidays. They especially like April 23 Children’s holiday. In one program in another city we lived in, they did a role-play on different occupations and recited poems. Onur was a policeman. Hasan also did a Turkish traditional dance.

Mrs. Güneş mentioned how she introduced her children to another national holiday, The Republic Day, on each October 28th: “I turn on the TV and show them the festival celebrations in Turkey. I say: ‘Look, this is our 4th of July!’”. These statements illustrated how parents constructed Turkish and Islamic holidays as alternative fun occasions for their children to enjoy, and got together with other Turkish children to realize their bicultural identities.

Summary

In this chapter, I reported findings related to three research questions I posed when I began this study. The first question was aimed at learning about the ways the Turkish children in the study negotiated their cultural identities in school and there were several important findings. First, the social context of the classroom involving friendships and teacher-student relationships was instrumental in the Turkish children’s negotiation of their culture and identity. Second, the Turkish children negotiated their religious identity by either making it invisible, or making it visible through the school curriculum and operating within a multicultural classroom culture. Finally, the Turkish children in
the study negotiated their ethnic background and national identity through peer influences, the school curriculum, and through developing dual identities.

The second research question explored Turkish parents’ experiences with and perspectives on their children’s schooling. I found that Turkish parents were in the process of negotiating their perspectives on education and schooling in the United States. In addition, Turkish parents negotiated the relationship between school and home.

The last research question focused on how the Turkish parents participating in the study negotiated their children’s bilingual and bicultural identities. The findings suggested that Turkish parents negotiated their perspectives on their children’s biculturalism, and Turkish parents and children negotiated bicultural identities with the cultural expectations in Turkey. Additionally, the findings indicated that Turkish parents supported bicultural identities at home and in the community, and they negotiated the celebration of American and Turkish holidays.
CHAPTER 5: MAKING SENSE OF SCHOOLING, IDENTITY, AND CULTURE

In this chapter, I discuss the findings that I presented in Chapter 4. In doing so, I attempt to go beyond summarizing the findings and to, instead, discuss the important concepts that emerged from the findings through a theoretical framework and literature review in order to make meaning out of the experiences and perspectives of Turkish parents and their children in relation to culture, identity, and schooling. I first focus on the concepts of hybridity and a new twist on the idea of Third Space which I call ThirdSpace and outline the principles of ThirdSpaces that the parents and children had created. Then I discuss the educational implications of the findings, and concluded my research report by identifying the limitations of my research.

Gutierrez (2007) emphasizes the importance of cultural-historical perspectives are important when studying the educational experiences of culturally diverse children:

From a cultural-historical perspective, the central role of cultural artifacts in mediating human activity makes it impossible to understand the individual without his or her cultural means, and thus, as Engestrom has argued, resolves the Cartesian individual and societal divide. Rethinking culture in this way takes us beyond challenging deficit and essentialist views about students from nondominant groups, their practices, and communities. A sociocultural approach provides a way to understand what is cultural about learning. (Gutierrez, 2007, p. 116)

Therefore, I used as my foundation various sociocultural theories (Freedman & Ball, 2004; Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998) to help me understand the experiences of 10 Turkish families in the Midwestern United States. Postmodern
sociocultural studies of hybridity and third space (Bhabha, 1994; Moje, 2004; Soja, 1996), and transnationalism (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 2008; Humphrey, 1998; Vasquez & Friedmann Marquardt, 2008) have been particularly useful in my understanding of the relationship between the Turkish children’s culture and schooling.

Findings that illustrated the rich experiences and diverse voices of Turkish families taught me how skillful these transnational immigrant Turkish families have been overall in negotiating their children’s schooling experiences and in helping them navigate through multiple geographic and cultural contexts.

Reconceptualizing ThirdSpaces

In the theoretical framework in Chapter 1, I briefly explained the notions of hybridity and ThirdSpaces and how several researchers (Bhabha, 1994; Moje, 2004; Soja, 1996) have described them. Although this notion is used and spelled as “third space” or “Thirdspace” by these researchers, I preferred to refer to it as “ThirdSpaces” to signify the non-fixed, hybrid nature of the term and the nuanced meanings I loaded onto it. Based on the interactions of the Turkish parents and children with schooling as well as their perceptions of schooling and, on a broader scale, of American culture, I claim that these families intentionally co-created hybrid ThirdSpaces to negotiate their cultural identities. In Chapter 1, I described these cultural identities as an amalgamation of traditions, perspectives, beliefs, values, and national and religious identity constructs (Fig. 1).

In interpreting their experiences, my analyses demonstrated that Turkish parents and children intentionally and deliberately shaped these hybrid ThirdSpaces within home, community, and school contexts but these spaces were not a simple result of the dichotomies of home-school, and Turkish-American. In my discussion of the findings
from this study, I position the notion of ThirdSpaces not in between two opposing worlds or binaries such as school and home, but at the intersection of spatial and cultural locations that surrounded the Turkish parents and children who participated in my study.

Spatial locations are local contexts in the United States and Turkey, such as home, community, and school settings, within which the Turkish parents and children operated. These settings conceptually transcend the notion of American or Turkish geographical spaces, although they are located in the United States or Turkey. Cultural locations include socially and discursively imagined spaces where immigrant parents and children interact with and embrace conflicting discourses, traditions, perspectives, beliefs, values, and national and religious backgrounds. At the intersection of these cultural and spatial locations are hybrid ThirdSpaces, which are temporal and fluid spheres of identity negotiation. In other words, these ThirdSpaces go beyond binary oppositions and contain the liminal spaces (Bhabha, 1994) in which identities are shaped made. Within these ThirdSpaces the Turkish parents and children in the study draw from their socio-historical resources in order to co-create their local and temporal identities. Figure 2 below illustrates how I conceptualized these ThirdSpaces.
I agree with Lee and Park’s (2008) assumptions about hybridity, and take their explanation below as the connection between the notions of hybridity and ThirdSpace:

We emphasize that hybrid position and identity should be seen as a geographic product because it presupposes spatial displacement of bodies and interrogation of cultures in home and host countries. Arguing that transnational practices are embodied in specific social relations in particular locations, we also show how locale is a socio-spatial agent and dimension of social action. By dealing with the conjunction of transnationalism and identity, greater attention is paid, not so much to how relations cross international borders, but to local contexts within which transnationalism is embedded. Accordingly, we argue that there is no universal, single hybridity, but many spatial-temporal localized hybridities. (p. 249)

The parents and the children who participated in my study were transnational immigrants, meaning they were literally living in-between and beyond two worlds, both culturally and spatially. Their perspectives and experiences were temporal, local, and hybrid. If, as Lee and Park (2008) argued, there is no universal, single hybridity, and if we need to pay
attention to spatial-temporal localized hybridities, a deeper examination of Turkish families’ local and temporal experiences was needed to address how they negotiated their cultural identities as they interacted with the children’s schooling. How did the parents embed their multicultural experiences in the local-temporal contexts in which they were placed? I claim that the Turkish parents and their children also drew from their transnational experiences to shape ThirdSpaces.

While I draw heavily from the notion of third space, it is important to note that the notion is not without contestation. There are some researchers who would argue that third space as a construct still implies some sort of hierarchy, linearity, or binary between two fixed constructs. For example, Losseau (2008) perceived the use of a spatial concept such as third space to describe hybridity as a pitfall which might lead the audience back into the binary logic that the very same term strives to get away from. I nonetheless find the idea of third space very useful in describing the hybrid, temporal and local spheres of identity negotiation that Turkish parents and children shaped. However, Bhabha himself anticipates this problem in his use of a stairwell metaphor.

The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (1994, p.4)

Therefore, in my discussion of these findings, by describing the construct as “ThirdSpaces” rather than third space, or Third Space, I attempt to move beyond the idea of positioning between two opposing forces and emphasize the multiple possibilities and hybrid nature this term should signify.
Based on the findings of my study, I defined several principles that reflected how parents’ and children’s transnational and hybrid experiences shaped ThirdSpaces. These principles included the following: (a) Drawing from multiple discourses, (b) Navigating geo-cultural spaces, (c) Parents, children and teachers as agents of negotiation, (d) Negotiating conflicts, (e) Positioning identities in-between and beyond, (f) Regenerating the traditions (see Figure 3). Here, I discuss the principles of these ThirdSpaces.

Figure 3. ThirdSpace and its principles in the case of Turkish parents and children.
First, as Turkish parents and children in my study negotiated their cultural identities, they found multiple discourses available to them, which in turn provided them with agency (Holland et al., 1998) to interpret their experiences with schooling and culture in the Midwestern United States. It is important to point out the importance of the local context that these families experienced: It was a medium sized city with a large university and with a lot of cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity. Due to this context, the social life in the city allowed a great deal of multicultural influences to co-exist within various communities.

Second, as the participants revealed through interviews and observations, all of the parents were open to learning from other cultures, not only from American culture. All of the participants had friends and neighbors from a variety of sociocultural backgrounds, which in turn was reflected in their children’s friendships.

Third, some families had lived in other countries before they came to the United States, which also influenced their perceptions of their children’s schooling experiences.

Fourth, the findings indicated that when school and classroom contexts became more monocultural, the children had more difficulty in their relationships with their classmates and in developing bicultural competency. This led some Turkish parents to make intentional choices in providing their children with more multicultural experiences such as moving them to a charter school, or preferring a particular school with a more diverse student body over another, newer school in the same district. This mobility ensured that Turkish students would experience a diverse context. For example, Merve moved from her gifted education program in a White-suburban school district to an urban
classroom, where all students were African American. Her third stop was a charter school, where most of her classmates were from diverse cultures and ethnicities. Through multicultural friendships, the Turkish students who participated in my study were exposed to different popular culture elements such as jokes, chants, music, and conflicting ideas, lifestyles, beliefs, and so on.

Fifth, the Turkish parents and children perceived ESL classes and the multicultural component in social studies classes very positively. These programs, as the children and parents expressed, affirmed the students’ identities and provided them the opportunity to engage in dialogue with children from diverse communities. Again, home settings sometimes became multicultural through friendships, such as how Gizem became friends with her Jewish friend in another state, how Buse found her two best friends, an African American and an Egyptian girl, and how Murat enjoyed his friendship with his German friend. In these ThirdSpaces, the parents and the children were able to draw from multiple discourses to negotiate their identities.

Bakhtin asserted that as individuals are influenced by society, society is also shaped by individuals (as cited in Freedman & Ball, 2004). Therefore, there is a dialectical relationship between the individual and society. One may wonder how this dialectical relationship played out for the Turkish parents and children whom I studied. I argue that Turkish parents and children established transnational identities that contribute to the diversity of their cities, states, and their new country.

Transnationalism calls for a need to understand immigration as a form of “internationalization of societies rather than the cultural or class homogenization of people in nation states” (Humphrey, 1998, p. 1). Immigration in this century, and
particularly in the case of the Turkish parents and their children I worked with, correspond well with globalization through technology, faster means of transportation, and cultural dialogue. These parents and children who originated in Turkey and who had rich multicultural experiences moved these multiple discourses and hybrid identities to the center of the cities that legitimate social knowledge through the global force of mobility and transnational migration (Vasquez & Friedmann Marquardt, 2008). The Turkish parents, fully participating in the economic, political, and educational dimensions of society, actively showed that their hybrid identities influenced the fabric of American society.

_Navigating Geo-Cultural Spaces_

Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc (2008) explain how transnational individuals realize the various binaries around them as they live in two or more cultural contexts.

By living their lives across the borders, transmigrants find themselves confronted with and engaged in the nation building processes of two or more nation-states. Their identities and practices are configured by hegemonic categories such as race and ethnicity that are deeply embedded in the nation building processes of these nation-states. (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 2008, p. 268)

As I conceptualized ThirdSpaces, I found that the two opposite centers for Turkish children’s negotiation of their identities were not home and school contexts as argued in traditional immigrant studies (Ogbu, 2008; Zhou, 1997). The geo-cultural contexts that created conflict for children were Turkey and the United States, both countries serving as geographical locations and as the center of mainstream cultural expectations.
In the context of this particular study, the children and parents positioned Turkish culture as they experienced it in Turkey on one side of the dichotomy, and American culture as they experienced it in schools, on the other side. Therefore, the parents often became mediators of their children’s cultural conflicts or dilemmas when they visited Turkey. The parents informed their children about the ways they needed to navigate through traffic in Turkey, the slyness of street-smart Turkish children, language fluency, and challenges they may have in peer relations in Turkey.

Several parents expressed that they felt a tension with their relatives, friends, and older members of their communities in Turkey. They felt that people in Turkey had their own cultural codes, etiquette, and expectations for the children of Turkish-American families visiting Turkey. Turkish cultural expectations such as dinner etiquette—i.e., sitting together at the dinner table with family, using forks and knives, beginning to eat only when older people begin eating, sitting at the table properly—may not match the children’s practices in hybrid Turkish-American homes. The Turkish children who are used to living in hybrid Turkish-American homes have created their own cultural codes with their parents. Several parents mentioned that they mediated such conflicts by approving of their children’s practices, and explaining the reason to their relatives when they were in Turkey. The Turkish children who participated in the study struggled the most because of the essentialist perceptions about their identity in both contexts. When they visited Turkey, they were often perceived as “different” by locals and friends, even by some of their own relatives. In a few instances, they may have even been reminded of their American identities, through which they were seen as “the other” in the Turkish context.
In the United States, mainstream cultural expectations and perceptions about these Turkish immigrant children sometimes impelled them to make their Turkishness invisible in order to avoid being “the other.” Yet, I discovered through my findings that while the children were made conscious of their Turkish identity in the United States context, they did not feel a full sense of belonging in Turkey, either. Moreover, in Turkey, the children could not make their Americanness invisible. For instance, the children’s accent, their lack of tacit knowledge about social relations in Turkey, their challenges in understanding humor, popular phrases, and slang in peer conversations made their Americanness more visible during their visits in Turkey, thus adding to their questions of identity. Helicke (2002) talks about how Turkish immigrants in Germany experience in-between identities more overtly than do Turkish children in the United States:

Often they are no longer accepted as strictly “Turkish”—the identity they have attempted to retain in Germany—and Turkish friends and family often refer to them as Almanci (someone from Germany). Many have indeed adopted aspects of German culture. This dynamic is particularly acute among later generations of Turks residing in Germany, who, similarly, are sometimes called “deutsche Auslander” (German foreigners) or ausländische Einheimische (foreign natives) in German media. (p. 182)

Likewise, the participants in my study carried dual identities, and felt in-betweenness when they visited Turkey. Unlike in Europe, however, Turkish parents and children in the United States were able to use socioeconomic resources. All of the participants in this study had jobs and skills to navigate through U.S. societal life. Thus, they were not on the edge of, but in the center of, social life because of the openness in American society towards immigrants. Non-discriminatory regulations provided these families an access to American urban and suburban contexts. Thus, the Turkish families were in-between cultural and geographical spaces of Turkey and the United States; but they were also
beyond both spaces because they were able to use the dynamics that ThirdSpace and hybridity offered them. Their positive experiences continued to nourish them to carry dual identities with competence.

**Parents, Children and Teachers as the Agents of Negotiation**

As I outlined in Chapter 1, I found Holland and colleagues’ (1998) perspective on identity development, specifically their explanation of *cultural self* versus *constructivist self*, very helpful in conceptualizing the perspectives and experiences of Turkish families. Here, I focused on the notion of agency and how Turkish parents and children utilized agency in constructing and negotiating their cultural identities. As I investigated into the Turkish families’ experiences with schooling, I took into account the roles of history and culture in shaping their practices, norms, behaviors, and beliefs as these influenced how they perceived schooling and culture. However, I also used a constructivist perspective to emphasize agency and explored how subjects made active choices in different contexts.

Turkish parents who participated in my study displayed a strong sense of agency in shaping ThirdSpaces. Having had transnational and crosscultural experiences, the Turkish parents and children, particularly the parents, seemed to be very aware of the cultural elements they needed to negotiate and how they could do it through their children’s schooling experiences. Indeed, Bhabha (1994) argued that any time a cultural conflict arises, there is a third space in-between. Yet, the difference Turkish parents’ agency made in ThirdSpaces is that they intentionally created practices, perspectives, and negotiated identities, in this way shaping ThirdSpaces.

The nature of the experiences these parents and children had, particularly multicultural influences and transnationalism, is worth looking into, to help us understand
how Turkish parents and children used their agency. Humphrey (1998) argued that “…immigrant culture contains within it both the seeds of incorporation and resistance, retaining the hope of return to social trajectories and lives abandoned—ironically with economic and cultural capital accrued through migration” (p. 15). Building on Humphrey’s idea, I speculate that the strong agency the parents, and in some cases the children, displayed comes from the seeds of incorporation of, as well as resistance to, the mainstream culture. I argue that one of the dynamics that kept the Turkish parents I studied from simply accepting the idea of assimilation is their transnationalism and their hope to return to Turkey, or to have a future in another country.

One example of how the parents intentionally created ThirdSpaces is the notion of mentorship that some of them mentioned. Mrs. Yaprak, Mrs. Gece, and Mrs. Bulut explained how they ensured that their children spend time with a role model, a Turkish young adult, for a few hours on the weekends so that the children could learn more about their own cultural and religious traditions. They preferred not to teach particular knowledge and skills directly. Rather, by using these mentors as examples, the parents were able to avoid any conflict or resistance to authority that their children may have.

Teachers’ agency also played a crucial role in how Turkish children negotiated their identities within schooling contexts. The parents and the children participated in my study expressed that when teachers approached them and offered them to introduce their culture and their country to the classroom, this affirmed children’s identity and legitimized their culture in the eyes of peers. Especially when the Turkish children began school, the teachers’ warm presence comforted parents. There were times when parents needed teachers to help children establish social relationships in the classroom, and this
was not always the case. Turkish children’s struggle in not knowing how the classroom culture operates and what the expectations are for social relationships made the presence of teacher crucial in mediating these contexts and helping children negotiate their cultural identity.

**Negotiating Conflicts**

The parents’ role in negotiating conflicts regarding their children’s cultural identity was an important principle in creating ThirdSpaces. All of the Turkish parents in the study made an effort to resolve conflicts regarding their children’s cultural identities. Their role in negotiating these cultural conflicts is important to explore because many times this was the key to why the Turkish children were able to operate within these multiple cultural identity locations, as seen in Figure 4 below.

![Figure 4. Multiple cultural identity locations that were influential in ThirdSpaces.](image)
These conflicts did not only happen between Turkish and American geo-cultural spaces, but also between parents and children at home. The Turkish children often did not oppose their parents’ goals to maintain their cultural identities; yet, they still had their own opinions, which sometimes conflicted with what their parents thought, especially regarding their language use, where they would like to live, and their cultural practices.

Some of the parents mentioned to me that when they observed their children bringing habits from school that they did not like, they first handled it with their spouse. The parents often thought about the Turkish cultural elements that they did not want to negotiate, and considered other elements that would be okay to let go. Some examples included how the parents allowed partial Halloween celebrations, how they negotiated their children’s use of English at home even though they did not want it, and how they ignored the children’s practices influenced by classroom culture, such as sitting or lying on the floor or sitting improperly. Yet another example was how Mrs. Nil opposed the idea of her daughter listening to English pop music, but still created a space and designated car trips for her daughter to listen to Turkish pop music, classical music, and religious music.

The findings indicated that since Turkish-American homes became the place of negotiation and co-creation of identities, they were transformed into ThirdSpaces that allowed contextual, hybrid identities to grow. For instance, the children’s desire to participate in pop-culture spaces that they were exposed to at school was often honored by their parents, such as American food and recipes, American holidays, popular children’s TV programs, English language, books, videogames, or music influences that the children shared at school and in their neighborhoods. However, using the filters of
Muslim beliefs and Turkish cultural codes, the parents also cooperated with their children to become cognizant of which cultural elements are appropriate for the children to be exposed to. For instance, Merve gradually became very selective in the TV shows she would watch, determining which ones were appropriate for her.

The parents’ negotiation of the relationship between home and school contexts also included compromising some of their perspectives on the curriculum and instruction. One point all of the parents in the study strongly felt was that academic rigor in their children’s schools was not at the level that they desired. They suggested that organizational skills, longer writing and homework assignments, and disciplined study for longer periods of time were needed for their children’s academic success.

At the same time, these parents were able to scrutinize their perspectives and early experiences. For example, they observed that the school system in Turkey encouraged a certain type of individual, one who conformed to authority and was more reserved. In contrast, they noticed that the educational system in the United States promoted a kind of learner who was more independent, more confident and outspoken, and who was supported by more extracurricular skills. Although these notions of “confidence” and “independence” sometimes conflicted with Turkish sociocultural understanding of “respect for elders and teachers,” or “avoiding self-centeredness,” the parents still had a positive outlook on the way their children were shaped as individuals by American schools and society.

In addition, the Turkish parents displayed a partial and more subtle agency in their negotiation of the relationship between their children and the classroom culture. Though they did not have wide access to cultural expectations and practices at schools, they were
still able to utilize classrooms to introduce their culture and country to the other children and the teacher, thus creating legitimacy for their children’s cultural identity. Sending presents to other children in the classroom and to the teachers were other ways that the parents negotiated the potential conflicts their children might encounter.

Such negotiation processes in which this particular group of parents engaged was interesting, in that the parents often took the burden of mediating opposing ends to create a comfortable ThirdSpace for their children. This is an important assertion because many times in traditional literature home and school are juxtaposed to describe immigrant children’s in-betweenness (Sarroub, 2002). Home contexts are often placed in a contradictory position to schooling contexts, and parents are perceived as fixed and static in their perspectives of culture. This leaves their children to carry out the task of negotiation between their home and school cultures (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Portes, & Rumbaut, 2006).

In contrast, the results of my study showed that it was actually the parents who mediated the relationships for their children and who were in central position to create ThirdSpaces for them. These results indicated that home and school were not opposite constructs; rather, it was the geo-cultures of Turkey and the United States that were in opposition. Chapter 4 illustrated the cases of well-informed and conscious parents who often discussed and scrutinized their own cultural assumptions related to curriculum and instruction, teachers, and their children’s future. Therefore, the current study illustrated that the traditional dichotomy of home and school falls short in describing the unique experiences of the Turkish children and their parents, due to their transnational and hybrid experiences.
Suarez-Orozco (2001) argued that identity is contextually constructed especially for immigrant individuals. For instance, she claimed, an individual from Beijing may not realize he is Asian before he is in his 30s. Yet, the situation of immigrant children is different, in that they realize their cultural identities are different from many others in their classrooms. In my study, the Turkish children were aware and conscious about their cultural identities as they realized it when they were very young, at preschool ages in the United States and other country contexts in which they lived. However, the transnational stories that Turkish families shared with me also revealed how complex and dialectical these identities are in relation to different contexts. Because of this, I defined the hybrid identities Turkish parents and students in my study as both “in-between and beyond.” Being both in-between and beyond Turkish and American geo-cultural spaces constituted another principle of ThirdSpaces.

Figure 1 in Chapter 1 illustrated how I conceptualized the cultural identities of Turkish parents and children by utilizing the literature and my own assumptions of identity. I described cultural identity as composed of national and ethnic identity, religious identity, and sociocultural norms, beliefs, and practices (Figure 1). Based on my findings, I argue that hybridity and fluidity of identities enabled Turkish parents and their children to carry multiple identities, that is, multiple national identities and sociocultural norms, beliefs, and practices, which were on the surface seen as conflicting, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Vasquez and Friedmann Marquardt (2008) asserted that “hybridity points to ‘how newness enters the world,’ and specifically, how cultures become the locus for multiple
contestations, for creative resistance and appropriation” (p. 321). Similarly, I use the term “hybridity” to describe how parents and children in my study shaped ThirdSpaces to make sense of their multiple cultural identities. I use hybridity to point out the duality and the emerging ThirdSpace, in which both Turkishness and Americanness, or being Muslim and American, co-existed for my participants. As Vasquez and Friedmann Marquardt (2008) argued, “Hybridity is now recognized to be both local and global, part of both ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies” (p. 322).

As I examined the findings, I discovered a strong interaction between the Turkish and American identities of the Turkish children and parents who participated in my study. At the same time, I also noted a strong interaction between their Muslim and American identities. The Turkish parents and children in my study were engaged in a negotiation of their beliefs, norms, and practices. Through this negotiation process, the children naturally adopted an American national identity with the influence of patriotic knowledge to which they were exposed in schools. The children learned about American history and American culture, and gained an awareness of their national identity as Americans in their schools.

It is true that Turkish national identity elements in the children’s lives seemed to conflict with their American identities. The example in Chapter 4 of the comparison of the Turkish oath and the American Pledge of Allegiance well reflected these conflicting nationalistic discourses, when understood to be fixed and essential. However, for hybrid Turkish-Americans, these conflicts do not seem reasonable for the children’s personal identity constructs, because the United States is also their home, the land that sustains them – something that is very important in Turkish culture and one that evokes loyalty.
This explains the decrease of a Turkish nationalistic discourse in the perspectives of Turkish-American families, which was replaced by a multicultural discourse, as was illustrated in my interviews with the Turkish-American families.

The parents of these children, well aware of these nationalistic discourses, were selective about what aspects of Turkish culture and nationality to include in their ThirdSpaces, so that their children could negotiate both cultures. For example, most parents deliberately taught their children or ensured that their children were taught about the history of Turks, the National Anthem, and the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and his ideals about science, progress, and peace that are compatible with those today. Other national elements the parents brought to their children’s lives included the Turkish flag, the Ottoman State, the Children’s Festival on April 23rd, Turkish music, folk culture, and traditional clothing. Through these cultural practices, the parents deliberately carried their Turkish national identities into the ThirdSpaces.

Indeed, as I described in Chapter 4, Turkish children and their parents who participated in my study embraced biculturalism and bilingualism. In shaping ThirdSpaces, such as homes, Sunday school, Turkish language courses, and schools, the Turkish parents and children negotiated their Turkish, American, and Muslim identities using cultural tools such as language and symbols. Teaching their children the Turkish language was on the parents’ agenda in constructing these cultural and educational ThirdSpaces. Maintaining and developing the children’s Turkish language proficiency emerged as important for the parents, although my study was not about second language
learning. It was striking to discover that all of the parents strongly associated learning Turkish and using it in daily life with the children’s Turkish identities.

As Banks (2006) asserted, individuals who migrate to the United States for work or study are often forced to become bilingual because of their social and economic contexts. The families in my study were in a way also forced to achieve bilingualism; however, each family had a unique understanding of bilingualism, the premises of which they constructed with their children based on their particular sociocultural school and community contexts. The understanding of the Turkish language as lying at the core of Turkish identity led the parents to make decisions on the kinds of literacy practices in which they wanted to engage their children.

In her study of Yemeni immigrant adolescent girls in the United States, Sarroub (2002) observed that although at times Arabic classes could produce restrictive discourses, they still provided an in-between place for the girls to negotiate their identities and interact with their teachers about their dilemmas. My research results indicated that supplemental educational contexts such as Sunday school and Turkish language classes became places where the children’s and parents’ hybrid identities could be observed. For instance, Sunday school was designed to be a cultural educational context where children would learn the Turkish language, Qur’an recitation, religious knowledge, do some crafts, and play games.

On the surface, the goal of this context is to help preserve Turkish-Muslim cultural identities. Yet, on each Sunday that I visited, I was able to observe how fluidity is at the center of ThirdSpaces. I noted that the children often code-switched between Turkish and English depending on each particular conversation they were having at any
given time. Interestingly, even in the absence of American classmates, most of the conversations among the children themselves during lunch or at recess were in English. At the same time, the children mixed into their English conversations Islamic and Turkish terms that reflected the new code that they loaded onto those terms and their meaning-making of a current event.

Another symbolic example of how hybridity shaped these ThirdSpaces was in the food preparation for lunch each week in Sunday school. The Turkish parents prepared the meals from Turkish cuisine, but accommodated their children’s preference for the style of fast food, and were mostly bite size. Therefore, as seen in these examples, Sunday school cannot be described as a Turkish- or an American cultural setting, but as a ThirdSpace, where it was possible for the Turkish children to carry both American and Turkish traditions, reflecting the practices of hybrid Turkish communities in the United States.

The relationship between national and religious identities was complex as I delineated in Chapter 4. Here, I argue that hybrid identity constructs also need consideration beyond fixed understandings of national or religious identities because through the perspectives of ThirdSpaces, I was able to see the ironies and complexities of identities that cannot be essentialized. Some studies examined the ways that Muslim immigrant children and youth’s identities clashed with mainstream culture, or the culture of their host country (Rida, 2004; Sarroub, 2002; Vertuyken & Yildiz, 2007). However, as shown in Chapter 4, in the case of the Turkish parents and children, their Muslim identity did not conflict with the idea of being American in the United States context. In fact, it is striking that Buse, although she could not decide if she felt more American or
Turkish, expressed that she felt more confident with her Muslim identity in the United States, than she did in Turkey.

*Regenerating the Traditions*

Chapter 4 presented a vivid portrait of the Turkish parents who, instead of banning the celebration of American holidays, created alternative and fun holidays and cultural occasions for their children, which carried both American and Turkish cultural characteristics, and went beyond both. This is an example to how the conflicting cultural locations “… can be reconstructed to form a third, different or alternative, space of knowledges and Discourses” (Moje, p. 41). I perceive this phenomenon of *regenerating traditions* to be a principle of hybrid ThirdSpaces that the Turkish parents and children shaped.

The participants in my study carried bicultural identities. Moreover, they embraced hybridity as seen in how they regenerated traditions, meaning, they did not just follow American traditions, but modified them, and introduced Turkish cultural elements into them. As they practiced Turkish traditions and rituals, they did not exactly follow the traditions and rituals as they are experienced in Turkey; instead, they adopted a hybrid version of these traditions, with the resources and priorities that their local communities had. For instance, the holiday celebration in Turkey typically includes visiting of elder relatives, kissing hands, and getting pocket money, and engaging in adult conversations, collecting candy, and enjoying the children’s discourses outside with peers. However, in the United States, the notion of visiting elderly relatives is not applicable because there are no relatives to visit, and there are few older persons to visit and kiss their hands.
The findings of my study indicated that the children needed to have the kinds of experiences that their American peers had in their holiday celebrations and festivals. Therefore, some parents expressed that they needed to create alternatives that would provide fun, attractive, and unforgettable moments so that their children would love Turkish and Muslim holidays.

Another reason for creating hybrid holiday celebrations is that the Turkish parents wanted to provide their children with a strong sense of belonging to a tradition. Even if most of these children had nothing to say about Christmas, they now had alternative experiences to talk about with their friends. The Turkish children’s unique experiences were interesting to both their Turkish and American friends, alike. This also helped to satisfy the children’s need to identify with cultural rituals. Therefore, these practices helped the Turkish children to develop integrity around their identity. These examples also highlight how deliberate creation of ThirdSpaces helped Turkish parents to make peace with their children’s Americanness, because they could monitor the influence of American culture and traditions and mediate it through hybrid cultural practices within ThirdSpaces.

Implications

It is true that this study highlighted just some voices from an understudied small immigrant community in the Midwestern United States. However, regardless of the size of the community, learning about immigrant parents’ and children’s experiences has always provided good insight into creating educational experiences that are sound with the needs of these communities. Lukose (2007) made a point that it is time we rethink
how we present the experiences and cultural identities of immigrants in schools. For instance, as I described in the literature review, multicultural education and other attempts to present cultural diversity in schools have remained at a superficial level. Therefore, in the ways I understood the experiences of 10 Turkish-American families, there are important implications for the members of academia and educational institutions. I will describe these implications in three sections that are of central importance to both schools and immigrant families: Classroom teachers and ThirdSpaces, incorporating ThirdSpaces into schooling, educating Muslim students, and developmental implications.

**Classroom Teachers and ThirdSpaces**

The literature on cultural diversity in education described the experiences of teachers, who have transformative experiences with diversity and learned to be culturally relevant teachers through their students and their communities (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Paley, 1979, Gay, 2000; Hollins, 1999). Anthropologic studies (Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff, 1990; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) also focused on the social and cultural resources students and communities have and possibilities to bring back these resources to the classrooms. Gonzales argued that the funds of knowledge approach leaves a static notion of culture, and brings a new meaning that is based on the processes of everyday life, which are manifestations of cultural historical heritage and funds that households offer to teach (2005).

The study results and discussion indicated that while Turkish parents and children have strived to negotiate their identity through facilitating biculturalism and ThirdSpaces, some teachers did not have much clue about this process as parents and children
experienced it. In other words, while parents and children had to construct bicultural competencies and negotiated their cultural identities, some teachers fell short of understanding the complexity of this process and the multicultural knowledge, skills, and perspectives that parents carried with them. Therefore, understanding the cultural identities of Turkish parents and children through conceptualizing it through hybridity and the idea of ThirdSpaces may mean a great deal for classroom teachers. The ways children’s identities are shaped through social relationships and networks leave the doors open for the agency of teachers, so that they can also become cultural mediators for children.

Researchers have proposed ways to establish better home-school connections in the case of culturally diverse communities. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) described how a teacher, who is fluent in Spanish, created culturally responsive ways to get together with immigrant parents. She designed workshops in the form of a big family feast, where immigrant families attended with their children and close relatives, participated actively in role plays, skits, and monologues, and learned from the teachers’ experiences. This is a great example of creating personal warm spaces and connecting with students and their families.

Seidl (2007) pointed out the importance of developing bicultural competencies as a prerequisite of culturally relevant teaching, especially if the teacher has had little experience and connection with the communities of people whose children s/he aspires to teach well. I argue that classroom teachers can benefit from such experiences to understand the nature of hybrid spaces and identities in home and community settings. For instance, crosscultural partnership, in which preservice or inservice teachers are
immersed in another cultural community, is one of the successful pedagogies for preparing culturally competent teachers (Smolkin & Suina, 1999). Seidl reported that several preservice teachers, after participating in a community internship project with an African-American church, felt they were able to see the cultural and communicative patterns of the African-American church society. They therefore have taken a step forward to develop competency and confidence in approaching their students with more connections to their out-of-school lives (2007).

Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (1994) found that successful teachers of African-American students used out-of-school environments (churches, their own houses, parents’ houses, camping, scouting, casual lunches with students in the classroom) as casual spaces where teaching and learning occur without the pressures and expectations of formal schooling. In these settings, teachers were able to learn more about their students and their strengths. Therefore, when teachers move themselves into a learner position, they can perceive that their students’ cultural backgrounds can be rich resources and funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).

In working with immigrant students, especially in the case of Muslim Turkish children, teachers need to approach the students and families with no assumptions about their cultural identities. This study also illustrated the cultural diversity within Turkish families and communities. This implies that the invisibility and the visibility of Turkish and Muslim identities could be misleading. Therefore, the best way to understand the sociocultural experiences of Turkish families is to connect with them on a personal level, and have a warm, welcoming outlook in their communication with the families to
establish deeper collaboration for the success of these immigrant children (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003).

**Incorporating ThirdSpaces into Schooling**

Schools as institutions are limited in their traditional positioning as the location of transmitting culture and as places for legitimizing and formalizing mainstream discourses about identity, culture, and citizenship. In other words, they are destined to be on the opposite swing of the pendulum with the Turkish children’s sociocultural experiences. I argue that the actors within schooling, specifically the teachers, have agency in constructing ThirdSpaces both within and outside of the classroom contexts. However, just like how the parents in the study had to negotiate their cultural understanding, values, perspectives, and assumptions, teachers also need to take one more step in understanding how students’ in-school conversations and out-of-school lives shape their identities.

The parents in my study proved they were skillfully capable of creating ThirdSpaces of home, community, and some school contexts. However, they did not have access to schooling as an institution in the United States, nor did they have an overall strong presence in schools, despite their economic and social well-being. This aligns with the findings of earlier studies (Lightfoot, 2003; Suarez-Orozco, 2001) that immigrant parents may be uncertain in their interactions with schools due to their concerns over not knowing how the school culture operates, how they can find a space for themselves, and how the traditions, rituals, and expectations in parent-teacher interactions are shaped.

In this study, the Turkish children and parents reported that they had a wide variety of experiences with various schools and classrooms. Their experiences included various classrooms that are racially, ethnically, culturally, socioeconomically, and
academically different than each other. The parents and children’s choices of schools reflected many different dynamics that they considered. Some parents and children preferred public schools or private schools to be a home for their children because of academic, multicultural, and social benefits.

However, especially with the impact of high-stakes testing it is becoming a wide practice that some school systems direct some students coming from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to few schools students in order to better serve their needs especially if they are English language learners. Yet, they inadvertently rob other schools of opportunities of multicultural experiences.

It is also true that some other parents and children felt that a charter school could provide racial, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity, thus giving them agency in shaping the schools as ThirdSpaces. However, it is important that we not judge the schools or compare their different characteristics. This is not a study about public schools versus charter schools. Rather, in this study I illuminated how the Turkish students and their parents perceived their experiences in negotiating their cultural identity in regard to specific schools with which they interacted.

As my study findings showed, regardless of the type of school, when monocultural practices were promoted in classrooms, this marginalized the Turkish students. On the other hand, when the children and their parents found a classroom context that highlighted their voices and allowed their hybrid identities and multiple discourses to emerge, they had more positive experiences with schooling.
Educating Muslim Students

In educational research, “the role of ordinary people as active agents in negotiating religious and global discourses in their daily life and the formation of their local identities is largely neglected” (Ghannam, 1997, p.132). Religion is usually not included in thinking of national and cultural identities; however, the results of my study showed that, as the Turkish parents and children in my study shaped ThirdSpaces, religion played an essential role in defining their cultural identities. Therefore, although this study gives some glimpses into how religious identities interact with schooling, more research is needed to explore the impact of religious diversity on schooling amid increasing diversity. Vasquez and Friedmann Marquardt (2008) argued that for new immigrants, “Religious narratives and tropes provide resources for ‘route learning’ and ‘wayfinding,’ offering migrant moral and ritual landmarks to situate themselves amid dislocation” (p. 318). How did these experiences interact with children’s schooling in the case of 10 Turkish families?

Much public discourse both before and after September 11 made it a focal point to discuss that the religious identities of Muslim children and their parents may not be compatible with Western ideals on schooling. Moreover, the religious identities of some citizens are put in contrast with another kind of identity construct, national identity. Yet, in this study, I differentiated these identity constructs as I placed them under the umbrella of “cultural identity” (Figure 1). My findings revealed that most of the participants identified with Islam, and at the same time, they did not experience conflict between their Muslim identities and national identities as Americans. They also highlighted their sociohistorical and multicultural roots from Turkish history and contemporary Turkey.
This implies the need to understand the diversity among Muslim communities, who are culturally very diverse, although they share common religious identity constructs.

Thus, researchers and educators need to be aware of how cultural identities encompass nationality and religion in different ways. In addition, this study highlighted the ways in which cultural, religious, and national identities shifted through hybridity and transnational experiences for these participants, thus deviating from traditional and essential approaches of civilization or culture clashes.

On a side note, although these participants expressed that they were not necessarily affected by the social storm after September 11, this does not overwhelm the double “otherness” that Muslim students and their parents face in educational institutions in the United States, firstly, through the challenges of being immigrants, and secondly, through the impact of stereotyping and negative perceptions of Muslims in the public arena. This poses challenges for teachers and schools, which can only be overcome through true dialogue and communication with students and their parents.

**Developmental Implications**

I did not examine the developmental milestones of constructing cultural identity in this study. However, the findings illustrated how older children seemed to better cope with the issues regarding culture, identity, and schooling. Adolescents seemed to be more in tune and clear in their perspectives about identity. This may imply that there was a developmental shift in understanding. I assumed that younger children and older children came to understand their cultural identities differently, utilizing different cultural tools and symbols, as well as drawing from multiple discourses. This also implies that more
empirical studies are needed to explore how children as young as preschool ages negotiated and understood their cultural identities.

Although the current study did not specifically explore gender as a variable in the children’s experiences with schooling and cultural identity, the girls’ “Turkishness” seemed to be identified easily by their choice of clothing, and if they chose further modesty, by their headscarves. Overall, they were more willing to talk about their identity and culture in school; even if not, they faced many instances where they needed to communicate and think about their identities in front of their peers or the teacher. Boys preferred not to share so many ideas about their identities in the school context. However, this does not imply that the boys in the study did not have as deep an awareness as the girls did about their cultural identities. The findings indicate that at as early as preschool age, the boys as well as the girls realized that they carried multiple hybrid identities as “American,” “Turkish,” and “Muslim.”

These findings confirm what Sirin et al. (2008) found in their study with Muslim adolescents in the United States. They discovered that although the degree to which boys and girls negotiated and embraced dual identities did not vary by gender, girls and boys still had qualitatively different ways of perceiving their identities. The boys took the view that their bicultural identities were parallel, whereas the girls seemed to have an integrated and intertwined understanding of their dual identity. Although it is difficult to arrive at conclusions based on the limited data I have, the way the Turkish children and their parents responded to their cultural contexts revealed similar patterns of gender differences.
Limitations of the Study

Being one of the first studies done with Turkish families and their children focusing on educational experiences in the United States, this study has some limitations.

The first limitation of this study is that I was not able to make observations in the children’s school lives. In addition to my observations of their cultural settings and my interviews with them and their parents, the Turkish children’s negotiation of their cultural identities could also have been captured in their classrooms through a more ethnographic focus. However, the multiple school districts and the numerous classrooms that the children attended made such observations not possible due to time, resources, and physical limitations.

Second, in relation to the first limitation, interviews with the children’s teachers could have been conducted to understand children’s experiences with schooling from a teacher’s perspective. However, in my research, I mainly wanted to focus on the perspective of the parents and the children to understand the phenomenon of being Turkish and Muslim in elementary and middle school. Studies focusing on classroom settings and classroom teachers in relation to Turkish immigrant children are a future research agenda for me and perhaps other prospective researchers.

Third, the number of families (10) I worked with has been a limitation. I had access to the research participants mainly through community nominations, snowball sampling, and through email. Although I would have liked to work with a larger number of participants, the qualitative nature and the depth of this study was not achievable with a large number of participants. My research was based on the premise of subjectivity and sought a partial and situated understanding of particular individuals and their experiences.
Therefore, I do not claim representativeness for the issues that Turkish communities face in educational contexts; nor do I argue that my sample of participants is a true cultural reflection of Turkish communities. However, the nature of qualitative inquiry allows me to have a deeper and contextual understanding of particular individual experiences, which in turn could inform us about the ways that culturally diverse students interact with schooling.

Fourth, all of the children who participated were successful in schools. All of the families except one were middle and upper income earners. Although that is usually illustrative of the Turkish immigrant communities in the United States (US Census, 2000), I would have enjoyed working with families in different circumstances and perhaps children with differing degrees of academic success to illuminate how these factors could interact with my findings.

Finally, a limitation, which perhaps is also a strength at the same time, is my background as a Turkish-Muslim woman/teacher/researcher. As an international student, I also negotiate my cultural identity in another context. This sparked my interest in how younger Turkish immigrants, such as children as young as the ones in elementary schools and their parents, negotiate their culture and identity through schooling in the United States. Therefore, as I explained in detail in Chapter 3, the dual space that I occupy as an insider and outsider of this particular community made me a subject in this research, with my own assumptions and interests.

Summary

In this chapter, I attempted to conceptualize the principles of ThirdSpaces that the Turkish children and their parents shaped, and outlined the implications of this study for
the teachers, schools, and the education of Muslim students. I also noted some
implications on developmental issues regarding the children’s negotiation of their
identities. Finally, I described the limitations in my study as I concluded the chapter.

CONCLUSION

In 1909, Israel Zangwill wrote his infamous play called “The Melting Pot,”
imagining ships loaded with people from all around the world, striving to be educated, to
have a job, and to earn their identity as Americans:

Ah, what a stirring and seething! Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and
Syrian-black and yellow-Jew and Gentile. Yet, East and West, and North, and
South, the palm and the pine, the people and the equator, the crescent and the
cross-how the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame...Ah,
Vera, what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem where all nations come to worship
and look back, compared with the glory of America, where all races and nations
come to labour and look forward! (p. 15)

Today, transnational immigrants to the United States paint a different portrait from what
Zangwill imagined. The findings of my study suggest that modernist theories on culture,
immigration, and identity cannot answer the questions posed about immigrant families
hailing from a very different sociocultural context. For instance, traditional immigrant
identity theories still focus heavily on assimilationist ideas. However, they fail to take
into account the experiences of families and children who have the social, educational,
and cultural tools to bring them academic success in the host countries despite the
challenges in negotiating their culture. Some describe these families as “model
immigrants” because of their academic success. Yet, this observation fails to help us answer why these families are facing challenges despite their cultural capital.

My study showed that all of the children were academically very successful in their schools. However, some still had challenges, such as being accepted as a member of the classroom community, making connections with their teachers, and negotiating their hybrid multiple identities as Turkish-American Muslims. My findings demonstrated that when immigrant children were faced with a negative reception by the mainstream, this had profound effects on their identities and success in school. This was true in the case of Salih, who began stuttering after a period of neglect and strict treatment from his teacher. However, on the whole, my findings highlighted the strong agency that both the Turkish parents and children displayed. In the end, this agency helped the Turkish parents and children to develop their own vehicles so that they could overcome these challenges by shaping ThirdSpaces that allowed identities in flux, and contained hybrid discourses and cultural practices.
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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARENTS OF TURKISH STUDENTS

1. Tell me about your stay in the United States? How did you begin living here?
2. How long do you plan to stay here?
3. Tell me about life here compared to Turkey.
4. Tell me about your own education?
5. What are your best memories related to your education and your teachers?
6. Tell me about a few historical/cultural figures whose ideas influenced you as a person?
7. What did you think of United States and education here before coming here?
8. How do these perspectives changed now that you have been living in another country?
9. Tell me about education system here as you learn through your child’s schooling.
10. Tell me about your communication with your child’s teacher?
11. Tell me about your visits to your child’s school?
12. How do you feel when you go to their children’s school?
13. How do you think your child’s identity is viewed in school?
14. How does your child define their culture and identity?
15. What do you think the challenges your child face at school?
16. How do you negotiate cultural practices such as the celebration of national and religious holidays within another cultural and educational context?

17. How do you think cultural diversity in classrooms is utilized in the classrooms?

18. What do you think your child brings into the classroom as cultural knowledge?

19. How do you think your children’s teacher perceive your kid at school? Did you have any experience where what you describe as perfect behavior for your child at home did not fit the expectations of teacher?

20. Have you explored curriculum contents or pedagogical approaches in schools?

21. What is your vision of good teaching?

22. How do you view the role teachers play in the education of a child?

23. What do you think of ability and achievement indicators in your child’s grade? Do you think they are sound with your child’s actual learning?

24. How the conversations about school subjects at home are shaped as the children move to the upper grades?

25. How often do you work with your child on homework? How do you arrange the daily schedule at home?

26. Do you think how you educate your child is in accordance to how your child is educated at school?

27. If you were to have an alternative school experience for your children, what kind of experience would this be?

28. What kind of education and future do you envision for your child now? What formed your perspectives in your child’s education?

29. What are your aspirations about yourself and your children?
30. Tell me the most remarkable stories / poems / ideas that are central for you in your children’s education.
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TURKISH STUDENTS

- Were you born here?
- How it is like to be born and be a native speaker in United States for a Turkish student?
- If you were not born here, when did you come here?
- What do you think about living in United States?
- Do you visit Turkey? What do you remember about Turkey?
- What is the difference between Turkey and the United States?
- Tell me about your memories of school?
- Do you feel happy in school? What makes you happy?
- How many schools have you attended? How were they similar, different?
- Who is your favorite subject? Favorite teacher?
- How are the classes going for you? What is your favorite school subject?
- What is your favorite place in school?
- Describe a good day at school.
- Describe an upsetting day.
- Do you find any information about yourself and your parents in your textbooks?
- Do you have any difficulty in school?
- What is your best memory about school here?
- What do you learn from your friends?

- Can you make a drawing or writing for me to tell your feelings about being a Turkish children in your school?

- Do you get any questions at school about where you come from and how is your culture like?

- Do your school friends know about Turkey and Turkish culture?

- Do your friends ask you questions about what your culture is like?

- Are you happy to talk about it? What do you tell them?

- How do you describe your culture to your friends?

- How do you help other students and your teacher to learn about you?

- How do you feel about knowing two languages?

- What do you like to read? Do you like to write in Turkish? Can you read in Turkish? In what language you can talk easily? What does your parents like you to talk in language?

- Do you take different roles at home, at school, with friends?

- Tell me about all your friends, and then your best friends.

- How is your relationship with your Turkish friends?

- How is it different than your school friends?

- What do you feel when your teachers or friends in school say things that are different than your parents?

- How does your family help you in your education?

- Is there a difference between your parents’ education and your education at school?
- How is home like for you? What do you like about home?
- Tell me about your brothers and/or sisters?
- What do you do when you are home?
- What is your favorite place at home?
- What do you like to do outside school? (Music, books, sports, hobbies)
- What books, cartoons, and TV characters do you like in Turkish and in English?
- Tell me about your hopes for future?
- What do you plan to do when you grow up?
- Where will you live when you grow up?