An Intersectionality Approach to Understanding Turkish Women’s Educational Attainment in Germany

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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2012

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Abstract

This dissertation has two main foci: first, on the experiences of Turkish women in the German educational system, and to what extent state policies, cultural pressures, and personal choice influence their decision to pursue higher education; second, how state policies, cultural artifacts and official documents can elucidate these women’s individual accounts. This dissertation is further framed by the following sub-questions: In what ways do women of Turkish descent employ both ‘Germanness’ and ‘Turkishness’ to successfully navigate the educational system and to resist educational and social marginalization? What tensions arise between these socially-constructed identities? To explore these questions, this dissertation employs both in-depth, semi-structured interviews with women of Turkish descent in Berlin and document and cultural artifact analysis.

Chapter 1 offers an overview of the discourse used to construct the Turkish female immigrant stereotype as unwilling and unable to integrate into German society, Chapter 2 is dedicated to using the current literature in the field to frame this discourse in an historical, social, and cultural context. Chapter 3 addresses the use of intersectionality as the methodological tool in this dissertation, the aim of which is to address identity as a dialogue between the individual and larger structures of power and that categories of identity, as processes constructed through power relations, hold both internal and external components. This chapter also highlights the ways in which intersectionality as a methodology informs the methods and frames the ways in which the resulting data is interpreted. Chapter 4 highlights
the results of the dissertation research in the form of four emerging themes: the use and significance of language; laying claims to belonging; retrospective attitudes towards educational experiences; and gendered cultural identity. These themes, which emerged from the women’s individual interviews, are supported by relevant document and cultural sources. While Chapter 4 offers a cursory interpretation of the four emerging themes, Chapter 5 offers a deeper exploration of the ways in which these themes operate in tension with, and are co-constituted by, the official discourse. It speaks to the voids in the existing literature that were addressed in Chapter 2 and offers an explanation for the ways in which an intersectionality approach to understanding Turkish women’s educational experiences in Germany furthers the research on issues of immigration, educational policy, and gender in an educational context. I end by addressing the study’s limitations, implications for future research, including the ways in which this study can be extended to other German contexts and to international settings.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the five women I interviewed during my research in Berlin. Without their stories, their openness to an outsider, and their willingness to speak about their personal experiences, this dissertation never would have come to fruition. It is because of them that this research has developed and will continue to embrace stories of educational experiences which challenge the dominant narrative. I am eternally grateful to them and will always remember my time in Berlin.

I would also like to thank my committee for their unwavering support of my project. Although at times the research felt too overwhelming, my four committee members kept me on track in varying ways. Thank you for allowing me to work through my research despite the frequent frustrations, hurdles, and roadblocks. Along with my committee members, my friends, colleagues, and family have been an abundance of support and guidance and have provided much-needed listening ears. While some have worked to challenge my research with the aim of strengthening my understanding of the work I do, others have simply been there to listen to (and to quiet) my frustrations, worries, and anxieties. My husband, especially, has been a constant reminder of the strength that love and passion for something we believe in can provide.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Constructing the Trope of the Turkish Immigrant Woman

_Gastarbeiter:_ guest worker

_Ausländer:_ foreigner, alien, stranger

_Ausländische Mitbürger:_ foreigner fellow citizen

_Einwanderer:_ immigrant

_Migrant/Migrantinnen:_ migrant (masculine and feminine forms)

The constructivist view of social life poses mutually constitutive relations between modes of thought, modes of discourse, and modes of action. Discourse does not passively reflect or merely describe the world. Because language is action, different uses of language constitute the world differently. Events in the world do not exist for people independently of the language people use to make sense of them. (Mehan, 2000, p. 275)

Germany’s signing of the first labor agreement with Italy in 1955 ushered in an era of immigration founded to ensure the continual supply of manpower that fueled West Germany’s ‘economic miracle’ (Chin, 2007). Fewer than ten years after this agreement,
and less than five years after subsequent labor recruitments had been signed with Greece (1960), Spain (1960), and Turkey (1961), the country witnessed the entrance of its one millionth guest worker, a Portuguese man named Armando Rodrigues, who was greeted at the train station with flowers and a new motorcycle. Although his arrival was celebrated in front of the media and pictures of Rodrigues sitting on his motorcycle in the train station became the representational image of the era of guest worker recruitment, Rodrigues also embodied deep-seated fears that Germany was becoming overpopulated by foreigners. Even though the first labor recruitment agreement was signed with Italy and the one millionth guest worker was from Portugal, the numbers of Turkish laborers quickly outpaced those from any other country and subsequently came to represent the largest percentage of guest workers in Germany (Chin, 2007). The Turkish population has also come to represent the image of the immigrant to Germany’s collective imagination, which has “led politicians to blame them for the ‘problem of immigration’, a specifically Turkish problem in Germany: Türkenproblem” (Kastoryano, 2002, p. 17).

Both the evolution of the discourse used to describe the initial laborers recruited under the guest worker agreements and the vocabulary employed contemporarily have worked on a structural level and an individual level to situate the immigrant population, and particularly the Turkish population, as the foreign Other. There are multiple ways in which laborers, immigrants, and children of immigrants can be represented through discourse, and “each mode of representation defines the person making the representation and constitutes the group of people, and does so in a different way” (Mehan, 2000, p. 259). The term Gastarbeiter (guest worker), for example, implies both a temporality and
an individual who is defined by and reduced to their function, while an Ausländer is set as a foreigner against the measurement of what constitutes an Inländer (native). When it is not juxtaposed against Inländer, Ausländer can also mean alien or stranger (Mandel, 2008). According to the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, which published a 220-page document on integration and migration in Germany, the government currently defines people with an immigrant background in the following manner:

As defined by the Federal Statistical Office, persons of immigrant background are all those who have immigrated since 1949 to the present-day territory of the Federal Republic of Germany, all foreigners born in Germany and all German nationals born in Germany with at least one parent who immigrated to Germany or was born as a foreigner in Germany. (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2011, p. 198).

Based on this official definition, a third or fourth generation person of Turkish descent is still labeled as an immigrant, rendering hyper-visible any marker of difference, no matter how vague the categories are (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2004).

Discursive practices and the ways in which they produce identities and uphold power relations play a significant role in framing any research that involves disadvantaged populations. Discourse and language are not synonymous; indeed, discursive practices, as employed by Foucauldian scholars, do not describe but create subjects and objects (Barad, 2003). Discourse is thus an active agent in the construction of power and agency. Through this lens, an examination of the terminology used to describe the immigrant population in Germany is rather revealing. Each term employed
at the state level and adopted at the individual level has set the image of Germany as a non-immigration land: *Gastarbeiter* is a temporary addition to the labor force who will return to his/her country of origin, while *Ausländer* and *ausländische Mitbürger* begrudgingly acknowledge the extended stay of the guest workers while also framing them as eternally foreign to the common construction of Germanness (Kastoryano, 2002; Mandel, 2008). Indeed, even the contemporary official discourse on those in Germany with immigrant backgrounds renders any steps towards integration virtually invisible under the constant labeling as an immigrant Other. Such discourse sets relational powers that are felt even at the micro level of individual students in Berlin schools. Fatma, one of the women included in this research, clearly stated the lingering effects of these practices on students in the school system today:

> These are children who want to belong, who want to be accepted, and who are offended when they’re called migrant children. Why are they still migrant children? But when one says that for so long, then one begins to feel that way.

In this example, citizenship status, culture, nation, and education converge in particular ways, reminding us that these processes “operate as ideological constructs with very particular implications for how social hierarchy is developed and regulated” (Chin, 2007, p. 16).

The rapid influx of Turkish guest workers during the 1960s coupled by many of them choosing to remain in Germany during the recession in the early 1970s situated the population as an alien culture which threatened the deeply-rooted values of Germanness. A gradual acknowledgement of the guest worker’s permanency led to the media, local
and national governments focusing on specific values which distinguished modernized, Western countries from others; according to Kastoryano (2002), two which were considered essential and thus linked were the role of the school and the status of women. The linking of education and the status of women within an immigrant culture again created not just a discourse which framed Turkish immigrant women as uneducated, backwards, and in need of emancipation from their patriarchal culture, it served to reinforce gendered, ethnicized images of this population.

Gender, religion, immigrant status, and geographic location converge in specific ways which render the Turkish female body as an object of study, demonstrating that identities which are often taken as fixed categories are instead “processes constituted in and through power relations” (Brah & Phoenix, 2004, p. 77). This convergence is clearly demonstrated through the imagery held within the example of female artist’s German paper dolls. Designed in Berlin by Gisela Goppel (http://www.giselagoppel.de/), the Berlin Paper Doll enables the owner to dress the paper woman in clothing reminiscent of each different district in Berlin. While the clothing for most of the districts in the city focus on consumerism and fashion (leopard-print and shopping bags in Charlottenburg, trendy technology and eyeglass frames in the Mitte), the outfit for Kreuzberg, often referred to as ‘Little Istanbul’ because of the high numbers of Turkish immigrants who settled there during the guest worker movement and have remained ever since, instead invokes religiously-based gendered images. The Kreuzberg cutout for the female doll’s head is covered with a headscarf, her legs with pants reminiscent of genies and other Orientalist phantasms. Geographically bound to Kreuzberg, this imagery conflates ethnic
background with gendered religious expressions in a way which makes “the immigrant, the religious, the racial, and the socioeconomically disprivileged Other […] coincide” (Casanova, 2009, p. 142).

**Inherently Incompatible? Headscarves and/in German Schools**

The result of framing the Turkish immigrant woman as inherently incompatible with a Western value system is also seen in the educational system. With the growth of Islam in Europe in recent years, the right of females to wear the *hijab* in educational settings has been hotly debated throughout the European continent. Concerned that France’s definition of secularism (*laïcité*) and its form of integration was being threatened, all ‘ostentatious’ forms of religious symbols were banned from state schools in 2004, including headscarves, yarmulkes, and large crosses. In the first year this law was implemented, 48 girls were expelled from public school for refusing to remove their headscarves (Altinordu, 2004; vom Bruck, 2008; Seckinelgin, 2006; Ulusoy, 2007). Sweden has passed national laws which permit school officials to expel females who attend school wearing a *burqa*, and while Belgium has not created national laws regarding headscarves, they allow school districts to determine and enforce restrictions at the local level (Todd, 2006). In Germany, the headscarf debate, or *Kopftuchstreit*, is intrinsically connected to the country’s notions of secularism as it applies specifically to teachers; teachers who wear headscarves are denied teaching jobs not only because they are civil servants and supposed to represent German culture and ideals but because their religious beliefs are seen as threatening and incongruent with the German value system (von Campenhausen, 2004; Häußler, 2001; vom Bruck, 2008; Fogel, 2007; Weber,
Legal, cultural, and educational questions that surround the headscarf reveal that these debates are not simply about an article of clothing; rather, they are about a piece of clothing that is “burdened with conflicting religious, social, and political meaning and symbolism” (Fogel, 2007, p. 631).

In Germany, the headscarf is not just about religious rights but also broader notions of what it means to be an im/migrant Muslim woman. Indeed, the scarf itself “instantiates other issues, debates, and politics that inform the foreigner problem…it brings to focus a political, social, and gendered struggle for control” (Mandel, 1989, p. 30). Despite the persistent call for acknowledgment of Turkish women’s voices in German laws and the educational system, including a statement by the Turkish Federation of Berlin (2007) proposing the “promotion of the Turkish and intra-Islamic discussion process vis-à-vis equal rights for women” (p. 381), current laws and cultural norms reinforce an identity that is externally imposed.

Immigrant women’s experiences in the German education system and in society cannot be conflated with or viewed accurately through a one-dimensional Muslim identity; rather, the intersections of multiple dimensions, including ethnicity, gender, citizenship, religion, and class, construct each woman’s experience in a multitude of ways. For Mandel (2008), the controversy surrounding the headscarf “crystallizes the ‘foreigner problem’ in that it symbolizes the essential intractability of the ‘other’ – Turkish/Muslim/Arab/outsider” and has been used to not only justify but to explain “the impossibility of making Turks…into loyal subjects of the German nation, and it is not easily appropriable by the West” (p. 294). The headscarf is, after all, a piece of fabric;
however, this piece of fabric has been transformed by what it represents so that the request of teachers or students to wear headscarves in schools provokes a disproportionate reaction. The convergence of a cultural and religious otherness within the gendered practice of wearing a *hijab* not only sets the Turkish/Muslim immigrant woman as inherently incompatible with Germany’s value system, the discourse works to construct an eternal outsider in the social and educational systems. Today, this official discourse still operates within German society, most notably with German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s recent assertion that the multicultural project in Germany had failed, despite the recent attempts at its promotion through new youth summits, changes to school curriculum, and government programs on im/migrants and refugees.

*Figure 1.* “Islam is coming”: Graffiti on a Kreuzberg apartment building. Photo by the author.

Instead, this vision has been clouded by a ‘remembered history’ that situates citizenship and belonging at the center of a national identity largely constructed on ethnicity and
culture, a priori creating an identity of a German nation that excludes all cultural differences (Faas, 2008).

The headscarf debate in German schools underscores the continued tensions between the rhetoric that immigrants, particularly Turkish female immigrants, are reluctant to integrate into the German educational, social, and cultural value systems and the actions which are affecting this population at the individual levels. Education and employment are important elements for success for any women, but especially for im/migrant populations. Although the entry of women in Germany into higher education may appear to be equalizing, numerical representation of women in higher education is only one of many factors for the larger climate of women (Sagaria & Stewart, 2001). Indeed, “achievement of a more balanced representation does not necessarily translate into gender-balanced ideological diversity or equality” (Sagaria & Stewart, 2001, p. 8). Due in part to the highly-tracked educational system in Germany, the female im/migrant population that reaches higher education does so primarily through vocational training programs; however, only 31% of women with non-German backgrounds enter into vocational training, compared with 54% of ethnic German women (Granato & Schittenhelm, in Schittenhelm, 2009). Vocational training programs themselves are highly-gendered domains, with women of immigrant backgrounds trained in apprenticeships that lead to little chance of future entry into the job market. These highly-gendered educational opportunities, with women being tracked into vocations such as floral design and hairdressing, leave women with fewer future career choices and exemplify “our conceptions of what characteristics different jobs require are shaped by our conceptions of the people who occupy them” (Valian, 2000, p. 28). Those female
migrant students who do attain high educational qualifications tend to be further marginalized, and find themselves in a unique insider/outsider position. They “risk becoming outsiders, not only among their native German peers at school, but also among peers with immigrant backgrounds, the majority of whom are still over-represented in less qualified educational pathways” (Diefenbach, in Schittenhelm, 2009, p. 4). Females in higher education, and particularly immigrant females, are often ‘outsiders within’ the institution and consequently are forced to negotiate their positions and opportunities differently than the dominant group. For these women, “access to higher education…for those with identities that are associated with nondominant groups does not necessarily lead to the same privileges as it does for those in dominant groups. The choices, opportunities, and experiences are shaped by those identities” (Ropers-Huilman, 2008, p. 39).

**Turkish Immigrant Women in Germany: What’s Missing?**

In framing the discourse of exclusion in Germany, and more specifically within the German education system, what have so far been excluded are the individual narratives which give substance to and situate the broader context. While the official discourse may work to portray the Turkish women’s population as unwilling to integrate or to set barriers to their integration, power relations operate bi-directionally, which means that women’s individual accounts need to be examined for the ways in which they reclaim power and agency. Any research which takes these individual narratives into account must not only situate them within the broader socio-cultural context but analyze
the ways in which categories of identity converge or diverge to form particular experiences.

While qualitative studies with immigrant populations in Germany have been conducted in recent years, their study populations, research questions, and methodology still leave areas unexplored. Erel (2007) notes that life-story narratives of immigrant women work to challenge the often intimated assumptions found in migration research, including that migrant women suffer under their patriarchal culture and that the host society offers an unproblematic avenue for gendered emancipation. However, the reading of these life stories fails to link the socio-cultural context with individual narratives. Similarly, Schittenhelm (2009) conducted interviews with young female immigrants in the educational system, but the case studies focused specifically on the females’ transitions from school to work, with recommendations on how to improve support and help services for this particular population. While her research includes extensive coverage of the women’s individual experiences, the framing of her question does not get at the ways in which individual cases are influenced by the broader context of educational policies and immigration laws. Faas (2007, 2008) conducted extensive interviews with students and teachers on questions of identity, language, and belonging; however, they fall short in addressing the specific ways in which gender plays a role in the formation of these categories. Although Mahalingam, Balan, and Haritatos (2008) employed an intersectionality approach to understanding the idealized gender and cultural identities of Asian Americans, their study population differs greatly from the Turkish immigrant
women in Germany. While their approach of intersectionality can be applied to other populations, these differences must be taken into account.

A lack of consideration in the research regarding the unique ways gender, immigrant status, religion, and ethnicity overlap to create unique experiences is problematic in that it asks researchers to either fill in the holes with existing literature on populations that do not share in the same experiences (for example, Turkish men’s experiences are not comparable to those of Turkish women, nor can German women’s experiences speak to or for immigrant women) or it forces an envisioning of broad categories as being static and homogeneous. Additionally, constructing these binaries forces identities into either/or definitions, ignoring the multi-faceted and nuanced experiences that do not fall into such homogeneous categories. While the existing literature offers a firm and stable foundation to the idea that Turkish students fare worse than their German counterparts in the school system, gleaning information from the current literature also has its boundaries, as there is no research specifically on Turkish women’s educational experiences or outcomes in higher education.

In regards to the Turkish population in Germany, it is clear that the socioeconomic status or parental level of education within immigrant families is not “capable of explaining the substantial disadvantages borne by the children of some ethnic groups in the German educational system” (Alba, Handl & Müller, 1998, p. 138); however, little literature currently exists on other cultural and political factors, including gender, language, and religion, which might also play a role. Exploring Turkish women’s educational experiences offers insight into the ways in which the social
construction of German and Turkish identities intersect with educational policies and frame their educational opportunities.

This dissertation concentrates on two main foci: first, on the experiences of Turkish women in the German educational system, and to what extent state policies, cultural pressures and personal choice influence their decision to pursue higher education; second, how state policies, official documents, and cultural artifacts can elucidate these individual accounts. This dissertation is further framed by the following sub-questions: In what ways do women of Turkish descent employ both ‘Germanness’ and ‘Turkishness’ to successfully navigate the educational system and to resist educational and social marginalization? What tensions arise between these socially-constructed identities? If, as German Chancellor Merkel stated, the multicultural project has failed fifty years after the arrival of the first Turkish guest worker, what are the implications the Turkish immigrant populations, especially within the educational system? These questions are only partially answered by the existing literature, which either addresses the broader educational and political trends through large-scale data sets or individual life narratives with little contextual account. Because these research questions are multi-faceted, they require a number of layers of analysis: both on the categories of identity performed by an individual and on the ways in which this individual experience is in tension with the larger structures of power. These questions required a methodology that would adequately capture the interplay between the micro and macro; consequently, I chose intersectionality as a framework for guiding my methods and interpreting my data.
Dissertation Overview

While Chapter 1 offers an overview of the discourse used to construct the Turkish female immigrant stereotype as unwilling and unable to integrate into German society, Chapter 2 is dedicated to using the current literature in the field to frame this discourse in an historical, social, and cultural context. Immigration and labor migration movements were not a new consideration in Germany after World War II; in fact, the Turkish guest worker recruitment in many ways parallels the experiences of Polish workers first recruited and then vilified as the ethnic Other in Germany (Mueller, 2006). Offering a genealogical tracing of the guest worker movements and the resulting xenophobia is significant in showing Germany’s consistent unease with a population deemed foreign by the measurement of Germanness. The overarching aim of Chapter 2 is two-fold: first, to show, through this historical tracing of the Turkish population’s arrival and settlement in Germany, that the categories of identity created by immigration laws, federal policies, and deeply-rooted beliefs about belonging are also overlapping, messy, and operate to homogenize the immigrant population rather than elucidating the nuances contained within and second, that the current literature focuses on the ways in which categories of identity operate in isolation rather than the particular experiences they create when examined in tandem. The historical tracing outlines that the tensions of belonging still exist and that current literature examines these issues through a one-dimensional lens, which offers a foundation for my research by showing where the holes are in the existing research.
Chapter 3 addresses intersectionality as the methodological tool used in this dissertation to address both identity as a dialectic between the individual and larger structures of power and that categories of identity, as processes constructed through power relations, hold both internal and external components (White, 1997). Chapter 3 traces intersectionality’s origins to its contemporary use, highlighting the ways in which intersectionality as a methodology informs my methods and frames the ways in which the resulting data is interpreted. In this chapter, I emphasize that intersectionality as a methodology contributes the following unique characteristics to my research: first, it enables a more nuanced description and analysis of the ways in which identity categories overlap in particular ways to create or restrict power; second, it offers an analysis which considers both historical, political, and social context simultaneously with individual narratives; third, it as a framework for choosing my research population and developing interview questions which addressed identity in a particular way. This dissertation employs both in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a small number of women of Turkish descent and document collection and analysis of immigration and educational policies and statistics. While the interviews, conducted with five women in Berlin who are affiliated with immigrant women’s organization, can illuminate how macro structures and policies have affected their educational achievement, educational policies, newspaper articles, election campaign platforms, and Turkish hip-hop and poetry provide a triangulation and a contextualization of women’s individual accounts.

Chapter 4 highlights the results of the dissertation research in the form of four main themes which emerged from the interviews; these themes operate in tandem to
stretch the artificially-constructed categories of identity which have placed the Turkish immigrant woman as the ‘reluctant immigrant’ in Germany society. These four themes, laying claims to belonging, the use and significance of language, retrospective attitudes towards educational experiences, and gendered cultural identity, are further broken down into sub-themes based on the analysis of the interview data. Within each theme, I use a variety of archival sources and cultural artifacts, including newspaper articles and political candidates’ platforms, to triangulate the women’s narratives and to draw connections between the individual and the macro experiences. Because of the complexity of my research, particularly in using multiple methods to address the ways in which categories of identity play out broadly and at the micro level, each emerging theme includes a brief discussion of the findings. While a more developed discussion of the findings, including my contributions to the research literature, research limitations, and future considerations, will be elaborated on in Chapter 5, the complexity of the data required the most important findings to be highlighted, particularly the incongruence between the women’s narratives and official discourse which have framed their educational experiences.

While Chapter 4 offers a cursory interpretation of the four emerging themes, Chapter 5 offers a deeper exploration of the ways in which these themes operate in tension with, and are co-constituted by, the official discourse. It speaks to the voids in the existing literature that were addressed in Chapter 2 and offers an explanation for the ways in which an intersectionality approach to understanding Turkish women’s educational experiences in Germany further the research on issues of immigration,
educational policy, and gender in an educational context. This chapter takes on the following questions: How do assertions like Angela Merkel’s stance that multiculturalism is a failed project in Germany typify the educational experiences of the women I interviewed? In what ways do their actions and voices reveal that the stereotypical Turkish immigrant woman held in the minds of many Germans is incongruent with their own experiences? How has the use of intersectionality enabled a deeper analysis of these micro and macro levels of power relations and the ways in which they work in each woman’s educational experience? This chapter also addresses structural and personal limitations within the research and implications for future research, including the ways in which this study can be extended within Germany and other educational contexts.

**Guiding Considerations**

I want to note the ways in which I employ terminology throughout this dissertation is closely linked to the ways in which official discourse in Germany has also framed conversations of citizenship, integration, and belonging. Paralleling the ways in which Chin (2007) and Mandel (2008) constructed the use of language within their research, I have chosen to employ a discourse similar to the historical timeline and the language used by my interview participants. In this way, I attempt to offer a context of these categories because “in many cases, the labels represented convenient shorthands for much larger sets of ideological assumptions about West German history, culture, and identity…” (Chin, 2007, p. 15). Within my dissertation, for example, there is no mention of the construction of the Turkish Other based on race, since in Germany *Rasse* is a tenuous category tied to the Third Reich’s propagandist agenda of eliminating the Jewish
population (Chin, 2007; Knapp, 2005; Mandel, 2008). Similarly, despite literature which uses hyphenated identity categories like Turko-German and German-Turk, these categories do not exist in common parlance or in official discourse and can in fact imply a “cultural loss or a pauperization rather than an enrichment” (Schneider, 2002, p. 16). Throughout this dissertation terminology, from guest worker to migrant and people of migrant background, is used to characterize the unease of and the power within the official discourse. I also commonly use phrases which imply both a monolithic German and Turkish culture and society, such as ‘the Turkish population’ and ‘German society’. The Turkish population in Germany is extremely diverse culturally, ethnically, and religiously, and included within this singular category are Kurds, Alevi, Sunnis, and secularists; however, it is the image of the male Turkish guest worker and his headscarved female counterpart that has formed the trope of “the Turk” in Germany. While I am aware of the vastly differing ethnic and cultural systems which are included under the umbrella of Turkish, it is precisely the imagery evoked through the discourse of Turkish that I aim to replicate. The construction of a diverse segment of the population as static and monolithic has enabled the foreign Other to be reconstituted throughout multiple generations as “the Turk”.

I also want to address the question of voice within my dissertation. One of the guiding principles of intersectionality and a key feature of feminist research is that it allows women the opportunity to “speak from their own experiences, to give authority to the diversity, richness and power of their experiences” (Collins, in Sagaria, 2002, p. 682). I have made every effort to represent the women’s individual voices and stories as they
were presented to me last summer in Berlin. Although I, as the researcher, analyzed and interpreted the data and made choices on what specific quotes to include, my voice should not be considered a substitute for, or an attempt at speaking for, these women. As Grillo (1995) points out, “what I can also do is help their voices be heard, not by presuming to speak for them, but rather by doing what I can to put a microphone in front of them” (p. 28). In the end, intersectionality asks us to “define complex experiences as closely to their full complexity as possible and that we not ignore voices at the margin” (Grillo, 1995, p. 22). This research, which interrogates the void in the existing literature, also points to a place that can be filled with these women’s unique experiences, so that their voices can explode the static construction of categories and create a more nuanced understanding of their lived intersections.

I am often asked about the ways in which I became interested in the Turkish population in Germany and why I have decided to focus my research on an immigrant group in a country in Europe when America offers the opportunity to research many diverse groups of people. While this question often arises from genuine interest in my research, there have been times where I have been challenged on my ability to research with an underrepresented and marginalized population. I hope to illuminate two sides of this question by telling briefly about how I became interested in this immigrant sub-group and by also addressing the ways in which I conceive of insider/outside status and the challenges of representation in research.

During my sophomore year of my undergraduate program I was able to study abroad in Innsbruck, Austria. My time abroad was marked with many memorable
occurrences, including conversations with Austrian professors and students which illuminated the nuances of Austrian culture I had not been aware of. During one of these conversations with an Austrian student, the topic of the Turkish population in Austria arose in a way which, more than a decade later, still remains with me. It was the first time I had ever stopped to think about the ways in which Austrians viewed the Turkish population, and part of this was because I had never met any Turkish people my age. There were no students of Turkish descent at the university that I remember, nor did I come into contact with any while in the city at restaurants and clubs. Why was there such an underrepresentation at the university of a large segment of the Austrian population? What factors contributed to the Turkish population being largely absent from higher education? These initial questions guided me down the path of my dissertation research, and although the geographic location has shifted to Germany, many of the questions still remain the same.

The question of representation is one of the major challenges qualitative researchers face, particularly when working with populations where they do not hold insider status. Even in feminist research, where women interview women, both the researcher and the participants need to be aware that although they share a gendered link, inequalities can still be reproduced and certain stories can be privileged over others, whether consciously or unconsciously (De Vault & Cross, 2006). When I interviewed Turkish women in Germany, it would have been overly simplistic to believe that sharing the same gender would grant me insider access to their community or would account for any representational biases in my analysis. In claiming a shared identity with the
research participants, the researcher is seen as having a certain amount of legitimacy and is often not questioned or viewed as suspicious by those she interviews. However, the very claim that one’s demographic identities or social positioning “determines” their ideologies and identities is to stereotype, deny agency, and refute the possibility that humans have the ability to generalize from their own experiences to that of others” (Briscoe, 2005, p. 37, emphasis in original).

I am aware that my demographic positioning as a white, married, American, middle-class woman affects not only my knowledge of Turkish women’s educational experiences in Germany but also how these demographic markers are perceived by the women with whom I researched. I contend that researchers must give serious consideration to Briscoe’s (2005) assertion that underrepresented and marginalized groups should be suspicious of privileged researchers seeking to conduct research with them. Given the history of marginalization, subordination, and appropriation of the Other by researchers operating from a place of privilege, those who want to conduct research with marginalized populations must expect, and be willing to answer, questions regarding their positions as outsiders. However, given that identities are fluid, subjective, and multiple, it is also problematic not to trouble the binary construction of outsider/insider status. While my gendered identity alone may not grant me access to a deeper understanding of Turkish women’s educational experiences, I also cannot assume that a Turkish woman conducting research will be privy to ‘better’ or ‘more authentic’ knowledge. Although knowledge and understanding will always be affected by one’s subjectivities, “one’s multiple demographic positioning affects but does not determine
one’s ideological positioning, which in turn affects but does not determine how one discursively positions the other” (Briscoe, 2005, p. 34).

Although the binary construction of insider/outsider status allots me a specific placement as an outsider, this is neither a fixed nor a permanent position. While it does lead me to question my motives as a privileged white woman conducting research with underrepresented populations, being assigned to ‘outsider’ status is not necessarily a negative thing. Not only does this assigned position allow me a ‘bird’s eye view’ of the community I am researching, it also affords me more chances to self-reflect on my biases and how they have affected the research process. Given the subjective and dynamic nature of knowledge, researchers and underrepresented groups should not argue over whether an insider or an outsider can provide a more accurate view of that group (if there could even be a researcher who is wholly insider or outsider), but rather that research should include representations from all points on the spectrum between insider and outsider. According to Briscoe (2005), “the greater the number of interpretations, the fuller our understanding of others’ experiences will become” (p. 35). It is in this space between these entrenched perspectives that offer the most possibility of insight into the ‘other’ perspective, since it is in this space between from which most people operate.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Eternal Other: Turkish Immigrants in Germany

“The Turks are Coming”

Alongside the recruitment of workers from Italy, Spain, and Greece, the hiring of Turkish workers will begin in the near future, as the Federal Employment Agency just announced. …effective as of July 15, 1961, a German liaison office in Istanbul will handle the placement of Turkish workers suitable for the Federal Republic…it should be possible to place qualified workers in the textile industry, metalworking industry, food, drink, and tobacco industries, shipbuilding, building trades, mining, as well as quarrying and brick making. (“The Turks are Coming”, 1961)

In 1961, almost a decade after the German guest worker program began with a treaty between Germany and Italy, the first Turkish guest worker was officially recruited. Drafted into the country to work temporarily and semi-skilled or unskilled laborers, no one could have conceived of the ways in which the visibility of Turkish laborers-turned-permanent-minorities would challenge the dominant construction of citizenship and Germanness. The political rhetoric which denied Germany’s status as a country of immigration underscored its ambivalence to define a place for the largest Turkish population outside of Turkey (Chin, 2007; Mandel, 2008). Today, over 50 years after the
arrival of the first Turkish guest worker, over 3 million people of Turkish descent are attempting to negotiate the tensions between the role allocated to them in 1961 (temporary, foreign, unskilled laborers) and the reclamation of their own identity. To understand this tension, the historical context of the guest worker movement, the educational system, and the varying categories of identity which place the Turk as Other must be examined. This chapter examines the historical context surrounding the Turkish guest worker movement in the 1960s and 1970s, tracing the policies and events which allowed the Turkish population to be constructed as Other. By tracing the political, social, and cultural changes in post-war Germany, this chapter underscores how the dynamic shifting of events at the level of the nation-state has enabled categories of identity to intersect in uniquely oppressive ways, particularly in regards to gender, religion, and educational attainment.

**Immigration and the Construction of Germanness**

**Labor recruitment and guest workers in Germany: A brief history.**

Although the guest worker movement after World War II was the largest and most rapid influx of immigrants Germany has experienced, labor and workforce immigration was not a new concept to the nation. Like the later flows of immigration, the earlier arrival of foreigners undergirded the need to establish an ethnic German identity. In Germany, “there has been a long-standing German tension between the desires for cheap foreign labor as well as an ethnically pure culture” (Klopp, 2002, p. 35). During the 19th century, in what was then a Prussian nation-state, Polish workers were
drafted to fill an agricultural labor shortage created by the booming industrial industries of coal and steel (Mueller, 2006). Through the mid-nineteenth century Germany was primarily agricultural; by 1871 the rural population had dramatically declined to 64 percent of the population, highlighting the shift in the German economy to primarily industrial (Mandel, 2008). By the time the Polish workers arrived, the Volk-centered identity of German belonging had already taken root, fed by Napoleon’s conquests earlier in the century and by contemporary German writers who romanticized the connection to language, homeland, and a common people (Barbieri, 1998; Bauder & Semmelroggen, 2009; Mueller, 2006). As with the Turkish Gastarbeiter after World War II, the Polish agricultural laborers were recruited on a temporary basis; like many of the Turkish workers, the Polish laborers chose to remain permanently in Germany. Set as the cultural ‘other’ and vilified by Germans as workers who displaced German farm hands, the Polish population became the target for nationalistic fears of Überfremdung, the over-population of foreigners (Mueller, 2006). During the Polish labor immigration movement, people became so worried about Polonisierung (Polonization) that the nationalists pushed to promote and strengthen Deutschum (Germanness) (Klopp, 2002). At this point, the German Volk was not defined through just birthright, common language, or shared traditions; Germanness was “a question of quality, and other ethnic or national groups in German society were often distinguished as lesser or inferior” (Lepsius, in Barbieri, 1998, pp. 13-14). Value-laden belongingness continued to play a role through World War I, the disintegration of the Kaiserreich, and the rise of the Third Reich.
Between 1910 and 1920, there were an estimated 1.2 million immigrant workers in Germany, which was about two percent of the population; despite, or perhaps as a consequence of a large population of immigrant laborers, Germany took strong governmental measures to assure the immigrants remained foreigners (Mueller, 2006). The citizenship laws of 1913 reflected these measures and allowed for citizenship to be acquired only through birth, legitimate ancestry, or by naturalization, which included numerous steps and required the person to have led a “morally upright life” (Göktürk, Gramling & Kaes, 2007, p. 154). The label of Polish, and later Turkish, immigrants as Gastarbeiter reinforced the status of citizenship as belonging to those who were of German ancestry and not temporary guest workers who would one day return to their country of origin. The term Gastarbeiter itself “reduces migrants to their function” and “virtually precludes a transformation from guest worker to immigrant – guests always go home again” (Mandel, 2008, p. 55). According to Barbieri (2006), World War I propaganda adopted a religious and nostalgic tone and aimed to connect the German idea of freedom and civic duty to religious identity. Notions of citizenship thus shifted to include subjective characteristics: the composite German not only speaks German, but has a German bloodline, shares in a common German culture and religion, a German appearance, and a shared loyalty to the German state.

The rebuilding of the German landscape after World War II required thousands of immigrant laborers who, starting with the German-Italian agreement of 1951, became referred to as Gastarbeiter, guest workers, whose stay in Germany was meant to be temporary. The need for thousands of laborers to rebuild the infrastructure stemmed
from persistent labor shortages which prompted the German government to welcome semi-skilled laborers from Mediterranean countries, including Turkey. Often these workers were mostly men, although immigrant women were not uncommon, from rural settings who hoped to earn money abroad and then return to their home and families. Subsequent labor agreements followed Italy’s (Greece, 1960; Turkey, 1961; Portugal, 1964) and were designed on a rotation system, allowing new labor to be constantly coming in to replace those returning home; this was created most likely to encourage economic growth while dissuading the migrant workers from remaining in Germany and establishing a home (Auernheimer, 2006; Faas, 2008). During the 1950s, the Italians constituted the largest percentage of immigrant workers in Germany; however, after the agreement was signed with Turkey in 1961, the Turkish population quickly became the single largest nationality in the guest worker movement. Eventually the Turkish population came to “personify the very image of the guest worker in German public discussions of migration” (Chin, 2007, p. 2).

At first, the seasonal labor benefited both West Germany and the worker; however, because of the post-war economic revival, many guest workers, including hundreds of thousands of Turks, chose to remain in West Germany. During the 1960s, both government officials and business leaders had little sense of the long-term impacts this kind of labor recruitment would have (Chin, 2007). The Family Reunification Act of 1972 enabled these workers to reunite with their families and either bring them to Germany or return home to Turkey (Yurdakul & Bodemann, 2006a). By 1973, in the midst of a recession, the West German government decided to end the recruitment of
foreign laborers; this choice effectively stopped the 2.6 million immigrant workers from returning to their homelands and increased the number of those sending for their families (Auernheimer, 2006). According to a November 1973 article in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the intention behind ending the recruitment of foreign labor was “to stem the employment of foreigners as a precautionary measure” because of the recession and energy shortages (Göktürk, Gramling & Kaes, 2007, p. 45). The numerous policies developed by Germany to get the laborers to return to their home countries failed to entice the workers to leave Germany (Mueller, 2006). The belief that tighter controls on the number of immigrants in Germany would not only lead to successful integration but an improved economy spurred a 1983 repatriation act which would give each voluntary returnee 10,500 DM (Chin, 2007). Such policies fueled the reluctance of many politicians to support multiculturalist agendas and instead supported the call to return the guest workers to their country of origin (Faas, 2008). In the midst of what Germany called its *Ausländerproblem* (‘foreigner problem’), the “absence of an immigration law and the prevalence of official discourse that denied the reality of immigration shaped the popular understanding of the nation throughout the latter half of the twentieth century” (Klopp, 2002, p. 40). This refusal to acknowledge their status as a country of immigration enabled the nation-state to envision the guest workers as temporary laborers who would return to their country of origin; however, the denial of the guest-worker-as-permanent-resident created a system lacking in political, social, and educational resources both for the immigrant and the native population.
Integration and the *Ausländerproblem*.

The marginalization of Turkish immigrants became visible during the 1980s, as Germany witnessed the growth of technology, which led to a decreased need for unskilled and semiskilled workers (Auernheimer, 2006). In a speech given before the Bundestag in 1982, Helmut Kohl spoke of integration of the immigrant population, rather than assimilation; this marked a decisive shift in the discourse on how to handle the *Ausländerproblem*:

Integrating the foreigners living with us is an important goal of our foreigner politics. Integration means not the loss of one’s own identity but rather the most frictionless coexistence possible between foreigners and Germans. Integration will be possible only if the number of foreigners living with us does not continue to increase. (Kohl, 1982, p. 46)

The official discourse regarding the guest worker-turned-permanent-minority shifted and permitted Turks and other non-Germans to be included in the system, as long as they abided by the parameters of a “frictionless coexistence”, which meant surrendering religious and cultural practices deemed ‘other’ by the normative structures of belonging. Although officially Germany went to great lengths to make the definition of integration distinctly different from assimilation, the belief remained that “the basis for living together in Germany is not multicultural arbitrariness, but the value system of Christian occidental culture” (CDU, 2001, in Ehrkamp, 2006). Kohl’s speech highlights the subtle but distinct changes in the discourse of immigration by using the term *Ausländer* (foreigner) rather than *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker); this shift takes on the notion that the
The Turkish population is no longer a “guest” but instead permanent foreigners. Although the term ‘foreigner’ is less pejorative than ‘guest worker’, there is still an implication that they will forever remain Ausländer to ethnic Germans’ status as Inländer (Mandel, 2008). The integration of Turks into German society hinged on their capacity to relinquish their ‘oriental’ Muslim identity and adopt the occidental Christian culture, an act which for many could be viewed as forced assimilation and not Kohl’s definition of integration. According to Mueller (2006), Kohl’s call during the 1980s for the integration of Turks into German society was a failure, specifically because it was understood as a thinly-veiled attempt at cultural assimilation to the German Leitkultur.

During the same year Helmut Kohl delivered his speech to the Bundestag calling for a new solution to the Ausländerproblem, a group of influential academics from multiple German universities published the “Heidelberg Manifesto”; the document was largely controversial and drew criticism from many in Germany, who deplored its underpinnings of National Socialist ideology (Mandel, 2008). This document not only addressed the shift in the government’s policy from assimilation to integration but reinforced the concept of belonging based on a common ancestry, language, religion, and culture:

The integration of large masses of non-German foreigners is not possible without threatening the German people, language, culture, and religion. Every people, including the Germans, has a natural right to preserve its identity and character in its residential areas…we must remind the reader that the Basic Law emanates from the term Volk, indeed from the German Volk, and that the federal president
and the members of the government take this oath: “I swear that I will dedicate my energies to the good of the German Volk, further its interests, and prevent injury to it.” Whoever understands this oath cannot deny that it is the **German people whose “preservation” is at stake.** (Heidelberg Manifesto, 1982, p. 112, emphasis mine)

According to Mandel (2008), the Heidelberg Manifesto brings to light some common fears regarding the Überfremdung of Germany, both in space and in culture. Not only does the Manifesto describe the unbearable numbers of immigrants who are a threat spatially and to the landscape of Germany, it also suggests the preservation of the Volk is being threatened by non-Christian, non-Germanic peoples. Although the exponential economical growth that Germany experienced after World War II ended quite suddenly, in part due to the German recession and the oil shortages of the 1970s, ethnic Germans classified the problem as Germany experiencing another wave of Überfremdung, similar to the fear of the Poles at the turn of the 19th century. Although the German nation is an imagined one “in terms of organic bonds between individuals sharing the same origins, in terms of membership in the German people” the German Volk creates a definition of belonging based solely on origin (Kastoryano, 2002, p. 43). The invention of an imagined German community serves the role of regulating who belongs and who never will. A belonging based on *ius sanguinis* thus perpetuates the status of foreigner from one wave of immigration to the next; thus we see that not only are the dichotomous constructions of us/them, German/foreigner upheld through different patterns of immigration, the relegation of Turks to status as a foreigner is also maintained so that “a Turkish child born in German of Turkish parents, who were themselves born in Germany,
remains a Turk both de jure and de facto” (Kastoryano, 2002, p. 61). Despite the Manifesto drawing harsh criticism from every political party in Germany, its publication supports the assertion that in Germany, “there is no assimilationist, unifying ideal that would make diversity itself a source of national identity and unity” (Kanstroom, in Klopp, 2002, p. 41). According to Chin (2007), the significance of the Heidelberg Manifesto is not that it invoked Nazi rhetoric but that it marked a new set of racialized concepts at the time when the government was just beginning to examine Germany’s position as a multiethnic country. By 1990, more than 5 million immigrants had permanent status in West Germany, making it home to the largest foreign population in Europe. Included in those numbers are the second and third generation migrants, whose parents and grandparents arrived in Germany under the guest worker program. Thus in practical terms, although not according to official political discourse, West Germany was in fact a country of immigration (Chin, 2007).

“Duvar bizim üstümüze düştü” – The wall fell on us.¹

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the divide between East and West Germany resulted in a reinforcement of German citizenship based on ancestral blood. After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, West Germany was flooded with ‘returnees’ (Aussiedler) from Eastern Europe; simultaneously, factories were closing or moving production to East Germany, where labor was cheaper (Yurdakul & Bodemann, 2006a). The closure of factories coupled with the return of an estimated 2.3 million Aussiedler led to widespread unemployment among Turks. Since the Aussiedler were considered

¹ Quoted in Mandel, 2008
descendants of German-speaking people in Eastern Europe, they were immediately able to claim German citizenship, while Turkish people living and working in Germany for 25 years were still considered foreigners (Auernheimer, 2006). The administration under Kohl allowed unlimited citizenship rights to be granted to these returnees, despite any linguistic, practical, or emotional ties to the nation of Germany itself (Göktürk, Gramling & Kaes, 2007). Between 1989 and 1991 it is estimated that over 1 million ‘returnees’ left Eastern Europe and resettled in Germany (Bauder & Semmelroggen, 2009). While the returnees were given access to jobs in West Germany, the Turkish immigrant workers remained mainly unskilled or semi-skilled, and for them, jobs requiring technology or higher education were unattainable; by 1997, an estimated 18 percent of Turks in Berlin were unemployed, with many requiring government assistance (Yurdakul & Bodemann, 2006a). According to Mueller (2006) the high unemployment rate and need for government assistance within the Turkish population has become a “constant irritant” to many native Germans; indeed, the unemployment rate remains twice as high for foreigners as for Germans and is highest for workers who are Turkish.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War was, for ethnic Germans, a new cultural and economic beginning; however, for the Turkish workers, it signaled “increased competition in the labor market from unemployed eastern Germans, threats by growing neo-Nazi groups, the generalized fallout from the unification taxes of increased Ausländerfeindlichkeit, xenophobia, and so on…” (Mandel, 2008, p. 31). Thus the return of the ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and their immediate status as German citizens coupled with the widespread loss of employment for Turkish workers served to
reinforce the imagined community of Volk while relegating Turkish immigrants to the status of ‘other’. The welcoming home of the German ‘returnees’ highlights the legacy of ius sanguinis; despite this population having little or no practical ties to the German nation itself, they were nonetheless greeted with full citizenship status as “participants in a historical manifest destiny returning to the rightful homeland” (Mandel, 2008, p. 69). Like the Turkish immigrants, the ‘returnees’ had ties to other nation-states and were not from Germany but rather Ausland; unlike the Turks, this population possessed the critical marker of belonging, Deutschstämmitigkeit (German heritage) which granted them status as Germans. Although the ‘returnees’ challenged the normative assumptions of what it meant to be an immigrant to Germany, they also challenged what it meant to be German; although accepted into the country with full citizenship rights, their culture, language, and even religion was distinctly different (Mandel, 2008). Immigration through unification was perceived as a social, cultural, and economic burden to the German state; despite this, Aussiedler are once and always considered German and thus not immigrants (Kastoryano, 2002). This construction of belonging underscores Germany’s legacy as a nation of people, the Volk, rather than a nation of immigrants, despite the returnees’ differing notions of culture.

In 1998, the election of Gerhard Schröder as Chancellor of Germany marked a shift from Helmut Kohl’s conservative government to a new coalition which immediately began to address Germany’s ever-growing ‘foreigner problem’; like his predecessor, Schröder envisioned a new plan for immigrants in the political, social, and educational arenas by addressing multiculturalism and the issues of dual citizenship. Schröder, a
member of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), led a coalition of SPD and the Green Party, which worked to create access to citizenship for immigrants and attempted to change the official government discourse of Germany from ‘we are not a country of immigrants’ to ‘a country of immigration’ (Göktürk, Gramling & Kaes, 2007). The plan included a consideration of dual citizenship, less stringent rules for naturalization, and access to German passports for third-generation immigrants, many of whom were Turkish (Schneider, 2001). Meeting resistance from conservative politicians and the media, including one newspaper’s headline exclaiming ‘900,000 Turks Soon Germans?’, the issue of dual citizenship was dropped by the coalition (Schneider, 2001, p. 352).

The highly-charged debate of granting dual citizenship to immigrants evolved around differing constructions of Germanness; with many Germans already considering all Turkish people foreigners, the desire to keep allegiance to their country of origin only reinforced this perception. Despite the SPD/Green coalition’s reformatting of the citizenship laws to include *ius soli*, a move which Turkish newspapers hailed as “the end to Germany’s ‘guest-worker’ ideology” (Göktürk, Gramling & Kaes, 2007, p. 152), the dispute between the SPD/Green coalition and the conservatives reveals much larger issues within Germany, including the differing definitions of belonging. Some viewed dual citizenship as an act of disloyalty to the German nation-state, while others claimed that granting dual citizenship to Turkish immigrants would be nothing but a concession to the Turkish state (Margolina, in Göktürk, Gramling & Kaes, 2007). While the project of multiculturalism was gaining a following in Germany, the debate of dual citizenship reaffirmed for some that multiculturalism was simply ethnicism and Islamism cloaked in
the message of belonging. Still today, the debate surrounding dual citizenship, specifically for Turkish people, is one which reinforces their status as outsider to the German state which denies them the right to maintain this crucial marker of ethnic identity.

**The shifting of citizenship: *ius soli* in Germany.**

By 2000, the debate regarding citizenship rights evolved into *how* to integrate the immigrant populations, instead of *why*. As of January 2000, the citizenship laws had changed; instead of acquiring citizenship based only on *ius sanguinis* (‘the right of blood’), Germany now allowed *ius soli* (‘the right of soil’); however, to be granted permanent citizenship, the children born in Germany must relinquish their citizenship to his/her parents’ country before the age of 23 (Yurdakul & Bodemann, 2006a). Additionally, although the new citizenship law was more liberal in granting citizenship to non-ethnic Germans, immigrants had to negotiate the difficult bureaucracy to do so. One caveat to becoming a German citizen is that relinquishing one’s citizenship to another country (Germany does not allow dual citizenship) also means giving up certain rights in the home country, including inheriting property (Mueller, 2006). Although since 1980, 620,000 people of Turkish descent have become German citizens and it is estimated that 35,000 to 40,000 children each year benefit from the law of *ius soli*, many Turkish people living in Germany still have not relinquished their Turkish passports (Söhn & Özcan, 2006).
Despite the shift in immigration laws, descent is still considered the most crucial identifier between German and the construction of the Other; thus identifiable accents, dark hair or skin, and foreign last names is indicative of a non-German identity (Schneider 2001). The reliance on external characteristics serves to maintain the construction of German identity as ‘by blood only’, while simultaneously sculpting a stereotypical ‘other’ out of accents, religions, and differing skin tones. The change in citizenship policies from one rooted in *ius sanguinis* to one that acknowledges *ius soli* has not eliminated the cultural and social legacy of *ius sanguinis*. The Republican Party of Germany, a splinter party of the Christian Social Union, published the following in their 2002 party program:

One can be expelled from one’s homeland without changing locations: through cultural infiltration and mass immigration of foreigners. Those who support the now-arising “multicultural society” because they do not value homeland are not authorized to dismiss another’s right to homeland. Furthermore, as experience shows, every multicultural society is a society of conflict. Therefore, the most important demand of the Republican Party is **protection of the German homeland, no multicultural society, no multiracial state!** (Republican Party of Germany, 2002, p. 143, emphasis mine)

It is clear from this document that a multicultural society is conflated with anti-German sentiments, essentially becoming an attack on the ‘homeland’. The discussion of citizenship and the creation of a multicultural nation-state thus revolves around an ‘us versus them’ mentality, so that making allowances to accept other cultures, ethnicities,
and religions into the nation-state becomes anti-patriotic. The consequence of these competing definitions of belonging has been the formation of a multitude of dichotomies: “east/west, Turks/foreigners, blood/citizenship, German/European, national/transnational” (White, 1997, p. 766). The categorical classifications are constructed as “qualitative judgments of otherness” because rather than resulting in a continuum of judgment, they create a “juxtaposition of mutually exclusive categories” (Sutterlüty & Neckel, 2006, p. 804-805). Although the new citizenship laws are more inclusive and have allowed for ius soli as a determining factor for German citizenship, within the culture itself “the presence of foreigners has not changed anything in the laws on ‘Germanness’ and German nationality” (Kastoryano, 2002, p. 60).

Germany’s continuing struggle with what rights foreigners, in particular those of Turkish descent, should be given reveals a society still deeply entrenched within the identity constructions of the past. The imagined communities, steeped in a remembered history of shared language, religion and culture, contribute to the construction of the ‘other’ based on specific categories of identity. Over time the Other has shifted, from Polish workers during industrialization and Jewish people in the mid-1900s, to Turkish (and Muslim) immigrants from 1960 onward. What has remained constant is that the “mention of origin suggests the persistence of an ethnic and/or religious identity separate from that of the majority” (Kastoryano, 2002, p. 25); thus the foreigner, demarcated by categories of identity, will always remain a foreigner. The nation-state of Germany was itself founded as a country of and for dem deutschen Volke; despite the millions of immigrants who catalyzed the German economy after World War II, Germany has
consistently denied its status as a country of immigration. Germany’s continued denial of the immigrant population reinforces the legacy of policies and cultural claims to *ius sanguinis*. The history of immigration in Germany reflects that “the territory of the German state has never been coterminous with the “German nation”. For this reason, a variety of groups (from the National Liberals to the Nazis) have long argued that citizenship should be reserved solely for those of German descent (*ius sanguinis*) and that population growth through immigration was not necessary” (Klopp, 2002, pp. 34-35).

The guest worker movement in post-war Germany presented a marked shift to an immigrant population that was ethnically, culturally, religiously, and linguistically ‘other’. When these striking differences in identity intersect with the larger educational, social and political structures in Germany, crucial questions of citizenship rights, educational inequalities, and gendered relations begin to emerge.

**Immigrants and/in the German Education System**

**Guest worker children and Ausländerpädagogik.**

Even before the end of World War II, the Occupation forces in Germany approached education as an “ideological tool of social reconstruction” (Lawson, 1994, p. 248) and was a main consideration in the American zone of Berlin. It appears this focus had more to do with restructuring the system of the Third Reich and working towards establishing civic education and democratic principles rather than addressing the new immigrant population. During the first decade of Turkish immigration, little was done for the non-German population in the educational systems in Germany, as the immigrants
were viewed as temporary laborers who would return to Turkey. Officially, the government took the stance that if more educational provisions were made, the guest worker population would be encouraged to remain permanently in Germany. According to Faas (2008), it was only in 1964, nine years after the arrival of the first workers from Italy and three years after those from Turkey, that schooling for the children of guest workers became compulsory. During this time, the official curriculum had little to no focus on the place of immigrant populations in Germany but rather on reimagining a post-war German identity. Guest worker children and their educational needs were addressed through policies of assimilation called Ausländerpädagogik (foreigner pedagogy); these policies were similar to those of special needs education and enabled schools to have non-integrated classrooms. The migrant children were treated as if they had a disability; however, the only 'disability' of these children was that they could not speak German, which meant they could not follow the German educational system (Faas, 2008). Although some contend these educational policies were thinly-disguised examples of racism, Lucassen (2005) asserts that the policies of exclusion, especially in conservative states like Baden-Württemberg, were actually attempts to allow the guest workers to maintain their cultural identity and not feel forced into assimilation. From this perspective, it was wrong to immerse Turkish, Greek, and Italian children in German-language classrooms which would hinder their re-integration into their country of origin’s educational system. Although these policies were conveyed as a way for foreign children to receive education that would help the transition back to their home country, these students often did not achieve anything but the lowest academic levels (Lucassen, 2005).
Assimilation policies in the educational system were common during the recession of the 1970s, when many politicians supported the halt to the drafting of Gastarbeiter and encouraged those already in Germany to return to their country of origin. Although Ausländerpädagogik was still the guiding philosophy of education for non-Germans, there were politicians and organizations that recognized the need for educational reform. In 1979, Heinz Kühn, the Federal Commissioner for the Promotion of Integration Among Foreign Workers and their Family Members, issued a statement regarding the state of guest worker children in the educational system. In contrast to government officials who supported the unconditional return of workers to their country of origin, Kühn not only recognized many of the workers were uninterested in leaving, but that their children should be offered “unconditional and permanent integration” (Kühn, in Göktürk, Gramling & Kaes, 2007, p. 247). He outlined a project that included an increase to integration measures within all levels of the educational system; training for teachers of foreign students so they could understand the language difficulties of non-native speakers; and pilot projects that would encourage community involvement and scholastic improvement (Göktürk, Gramling & Kaes, 2007). Some federal states responded by allowing for classes to be taken in the child’s native language, with instruction often under the direction of the children’s country of origin, while other states instigated systems of preparation courses, where the non-native children would be separated from their peers for at least a year (Auernheimer, 2006). Despite the call from some government officials to address the growing educational need of guest worker children, education for children of guest workers remained one built on a deficit model, where guest worker children had a deficiency that could only be addressed through the
assimilation policies of *Ausländerpädagogik*; this allowed “the monocultural and monolingual identity of German schools [to] remain untouched” (Auernehimer, 2006, p. 76).

**Intercultural education: A step forward?**

During the 1980s, government officials and educators increasingly shunned *Ausländerpädagogik*, recognizing its deficit-oriented and assimilationist philosophy. Instead, intercultural education, Germany’s form of multicultural education, was introduced and remained popular throughout the 1980s and 1990s. This philosophy of education attempted to “address all children in order to prepare them for a life in a culturally diverse society; trie[d] to establish cultural identity; guarantee[d] mother-tongue teaching; and modifie[d] curricula towards a multicultural representation of values” (Hoff, in Faas, 2008, p. 110). The educational adjustments reflected the transformations happening outside the schools; in 1991, the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs in Berlin made posters addressing ‘what is German?’ which listed numerous characteristics: “Love thy neighbor? Kindergartens? Hospitality? Closing the borders? The fatherland is the kingdom of heaven?” (Göktürk, Gramling & Kaes, 2007, pp. 253-254). The goal of these posters was to interrogate the normative definitions of Germanness in an effort to establish a multicultural understanding. While these posters were somewhat successful in opening the space for a critical interrogation of what it means to be German, the federal government’s efforts at intercultural education were not so successful. Most of the 16 German Länder (states) adopted a structural and curricular model which placed emphasis on examining the racist structures of the German school
system, which represented a major shift from a deficiency model that placed the responsibility of assimilation onto the child. While the guidelines and teaching materials that were adopted by most of the states came directly from the recommendations of the ministers of education, the implementation of the intercultural plan lacked structural support from the state government (Faas, 2008). Towards the mid-1990s, some of these states, including the southern state of Baden-Württemberg, transitioned from intercultural education, which emphasized an awareness of cultural diversity within Germany, to a more intra-European model of cultural education, which focused on Germany’s identity and role in the European Union. Although there were guidelines established for a curriculum that included multicultural teaching, it is clear that “the consequences for educational policy are that intercultural innovation without structural reforms that aid in the equalization of social differences are contradictory and hopeless” (Allemann-Ghionda, 2002, p. 24). The failed effort at intercultural education reinforces the message that Germany is not an immigration country; success in the educational system is only for ethnic Germans and those foreigners who can assimilate into the culture. According to Alamdar-Niemann, Berg-Winkels and Merkens (1991), the curriculum, methods, and goals of instruction remained largely unchanged since the 1970s, despite the national push for a more inclusive method of instruction, revealing that although Germany ‘talked the talk’, the country was largely unable to alter the German-centered focus of the curriculum.
Education in post-9/11 Germany.

In the past decade, schools in Germany have received mixed messages from the government in regards to a multikulti education: although at the national level, efforts to support cultural diversity are reflected in the 2000 citizenship laws and the 2006 anti-discrimination law, the local levels of education still privilege a European agenda over a multicultural approach in the curriculum (Faas, 2008). This contradiction is evident in a 2001 article from Die Zeit entitled “Where are the Turkish teachers and doctors?” Cornelia Schmalz-Jacobsen, a member of the Free Democratic Party, addresses the deep-cutting paradox of German citizenship laws and their consequences for German education:

The result, nonetheless, is a contrary and agitated immigration country with frustrated immigrants, signaling a lack of normalcy and opening to the fact of migration…The idea that integration is a mandatory task of the state has not yet been made official policy. Migrants are the blind spots in most school textbooks, and not just there…but it appears that no one has taken notice of this – neither in teacher education nor in higher education. (Schmalz-Jacobsen, 2001, p. 272)

Her article highlights the structural issues of education: although more immigrants are attending school, their dropout rate is twice that of their German counterparts. Despite the changes in citizenship laws that allow for many immigrants to apply for citizenship, they remain relegated into the lowest tracks in the educational system, making higher education nearly impossible to achieve. The title of Schmalz-Jacobsen’s (2001) article is telling: Turkish people represent the largest immigrant group in Germany, and yet not
only are there no positive representations of them in the media, they are also distinctly absent from many positions of power or those which require higher education. While citizenship in Germany is a means of guaranteeing residence and political rights, it has no bearing on the expectations of cultural integration or identity (Kastoryano, 2002); thus, Turks, regardless of their citizenship status, remain the Other to the dominant narrative of ‘German’.

Germany’s educational policies reflect the country’s ongoing ambivalence to the immigrant population, in particular the Muslim Turkish population. In the past decade, controversial proposals regarding the educational system highlight the difficulties in integrating ethnic and religious minorities into the educational sphere: compulsory kindergarten for all ethnic minorities, combined with a German language exam; a foreigner quota for schools; and the continued call for immigrant children to learn and adhere to German *Leitkultur* (Faas, 2008). Although efforts have been made on the part of the German government to adapt educational policies to make allowances for the multi-ethnic immigrant population today, there is perhaps no better example of the exclusionary othering Turkish immigrants experience than the structural deficiencies present in German educational system. In Baden-Württemberg, a conservative southern state that recently banned teachers from wearing headscarves, a 2007 report revealed that students with a migrant background achieved lower than their ethnic German counterparts, and had an average educational deficit of up to one year (Faas, 2008). Germany’s school system, long recognized for its highly stratified and standardized methods, uses tracking and standardized testing as a sorting mechanism, a way to create a binary between those with and without education (Kristen, Reimer, and Kogan, 2008).
These sorting mechanisms, in turn, contribute to the reproduction of the societal status quo, with Turkish and other immigrant populations often ending up in tracks that give access “solely to occupations that are highly vulnerable to market trends, and sometimes only to semiskilled jobs in which the risk of unemployment is above average” (Auernheimer, 2006, p.80). While close to 50% of foreign students attend schools that do not allow them, after graduation, to continue their education, only 20% of Germans attend those same schools (Mueller, 2006). Despite curricular adjustments that claim multiculturalism, the construction of the Other is thus highly correlated to the structure and methods within the educational tracks.

The structure of German schools: Tracking educational inequality.

The three-tiered tracking system used in Germany today is favored by the middle class, because it leads to “different certificates with a clear hierarchical order” (Söhn & Özcan, 2006, p. 104). The Gymnasium, a track that covers what America calls upper elementary, middle and high school, is centered on sending children to elite universities. Most of the students who attend the Gymnasium are from a middle-class background; over 33 percent of all students in Germany attend the Gymnasium, but only nine percent of immigrants do (Auernheimer, 2006). Mueller (2006) notes the class-based discrepancies of the Gymnasium: whereas more than 50 percent of their students come from a middle-class background, only 10 percent of the students are from a working-class background. In order to enter into the Gymnasium, the student must have support and a recommendation from the teacher (Mandel, 2008). Parents who have themselves gone through the same educational track or who hold the right agency typically play a crucial
role at this stage; however, for immigrant parents, low-income parents, or parents who do not speak German as their primary language, navigating the intricacies and pressures is much more difficult. Deeply-entrenched tracking, parental and student agency, and the structure of the school system lead to immigrant children being vastly underrepresented in the university-track: only 8.2 percent of foreign students, versus 25.7 percent of German students, took the Abitur, the university entrance exam, after completing Gymnasium (Mandel, 2008).

The Realschule is the intermediate type of secondary education in Germany, which is comprised of vocational training and can lead to a salaried white-collar position (Söhn & Özcan, 2006; Auernheimer, 2006). In contrast to the Gymnasium and the Realschule is the lowest track school, the Hauptschule. The diploma acquired in this lowest-tracked school has lost much of its value in the past few decades; as a result, graduates are in a difficult position when applying for jobs or vocational assistantships (Söhn & Özcan, 2006). Because approximately 50 percent of foreigners attend the Hauptschule, it is commonly referred to as the “school for leftovers” (Auernheimer, 2006, p. 80). The reproduction of the status quo is most apparent in this school; students who attend the Hauptschule, mostly immigrants or those from low socio-economic backgrounds, are ill-equipped upon graduation. This leads to a further devaluing of the Hauptschule diploma, which in turn creates difficulties in finding and keeping a job. According to Auernheimer (2006), “the dismal outlook awarded by a Hauptschule diploma surely lowers motivation, and this coupled with the low expectations on the part of teachers and the social environment is clearly a factor in a student’s self-conception
and performance” (p. 80). While the total number of students classified as foreign in German secondary schools is 9 percent, only 3.3 percent in Gymnasiums fall under the same classification. In contrast, five percent of Realschule and fourteen percent of Hauptschule students are foreigners (Alamdar-Niemann, Bergs-Winkels and Merkens, 1991). About 40 percent of Turkish graduates of these schools do not succeed in moving on to occupational training, compared to 8 percent of German graduates (Mueller, 2006). Turkish immigrant students are vastly overrepresented in the lowest-track schools, a trend that is “hardly reversible at a later stage in a child’s school career or in adulthood” (Söhn & Özcan, 2006, p. 104).

Recent studies and school assessments conducted in multiple countries reveal the stark differences between German policies and those of countries experiencing similar migration issues. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), conducted in 2000 and confirmed again in 2003, made evident the unusually broad dispersion of test scores as compared to other countries (Auernheimer, 2006). Not only was the distance between the top and bottom test scores large, but there was a distinct correlation to social origin (Auernheimer, 2006); additionally, the scores revealed an educational gap equivalent to about four years of study between second-generation students and native Germans. On average, the 15 year-olds with a migrant background trailed their native German counterparts in mathematics by 40 points, which is about one full year of studies (Faas, 2008). Furthermore, the PISA studies reveal the influence of parental education on child’s achievement is larger in Germany than any other country participating in the assessment (von Below, 2007). The linkage of origin, parental education and
achievement places Turkish immigrants at a disadvantage in the classroom today, despite the recent attempts at reforming educational practices and policies. In another study, von Below (2007) used data from a recent survey conducted by the German Federal Institute for Population Research (Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung) in an attempt to locate possible correlations between the low achievement of Turkish students and other factors, including educational level of parents and knowledge of the German language (von Below, 2007). The results indicate a strong correlation between parental education achievement and their children’s education. In addition, the findings reveal Turkish people in Germany are “clearly disadvantaged” (von Below, 2007, p. 226) in all fields investigated.

The results from the PISA exams suggested the need for structural and curricular changes as urgent; specific measures were then put into place, including mandatory language training in German and more apprenticeship programs (Mueller, 2006). These changes were a step towards acknowledging the broad differences in educational achievement, but stop short in allowing for educational training and curricula which could benefit all children in German schools. Although there are other countries in Europe who have experienced similar waves of immigration, in no other country is there such a strong correlation between social origin and educational achievement. While the highly-stratified and class-based tracking underscores the structural deficiencies of the contemporary German educational system, it does not account for everything. In many states, multicultural education remains Eurocentric, with a specific focus on EU countries and Germany’s identity within the European community, with little attention being given
to immigrants within the German context (Faas, 2008). Additionally, public schools in Germany are required to offer religious instruction, which has been done from a Judeo-Christian orientation. Although recently schools in several states, including Berlin, are now offering a course on Islam alongside Protestant and Catholic instruction, other states reject outright the idea of offering courses on Islam and some continually question the curriculum and messages being taught within these courses (Faas, 2008). Since 9/11, the fear surrounding the Turkish and Muslim populations in the school system has shifted from an ethnic to a religious focus, underscoring the larger question of whether Muslims are inherently unable to integrate into a secular society. Although Germany is regarded as a secular society, the discourse surrounding the place of Islam in the nation reveals that “a religious understanding of German identity relies on Muslim immigrants and Islamic fundamentalism as the ‘Other’ to dialectically define the unmarked self in terms of liberal Christianity” (Bauder & Semmelroggen, 2009, p. 20). Setting religion as the central marker of belonging resituates other categories of identities; although Turks can be recognized legally as Germans, they remain *de facto* a foreign and unintegratable population.

**The role of religion in German education.**

The German constitution stipulates that education, including religious, is the responsibility of the state; while the constitution also recognizes that there is to be no state-sanctioned church, Catholicism, Protestantism and Judaism are all recognized and supported by the state (Mandel, 2008). The status granted to these three religions enables them to offer religion classes in the public schools; however, because Islam has not yet
been recognized by the state they are denied access to religion courses in the public schools. In recent years, Islam has made little progress in gaining access to school religion courses; this is partly because the religion does not recognize one strict hierarchical structure like that of the Catholic church, which makes it more difficult for all sects of the faith to be recognized and represented. The Muslim population in Germany is not just ethnically diverse but religiously as well; there are Kurds from Turkey, Sunnis from Turkey, as well as smaller pockets of Shiites from Iran and Iraq (Pauly, 2004). This ethnic and cultural differentiation makes it difficult for one Muslim group to represent all Muslims in Germany.

Despite the problems of being legally acknowledged by the state, there have been numerous ways in which individual organizations have enacted their constitutional rights for freedom of religion in public schools. Berlin’s Islamic Federation (IFB) created a larger organization to represent over 50 mosques and attempted to gain corporate status. They were eventually acknowledged and were permitted to participate in educational decisions; as a result, in 2005, there were 20 public schools in Berlin that offered optional religious courses on Islam (Mandel, 2008). Following the precedent set by the Islamic Federation of Berlin, the Alevite Muslims have also been granted the right to teach religious education in Berlin schools. Although these allowances in Berlin schools can be hailed as multicultural achievements and the opening of both German society and classrooms to non-Christian religions, the progress has been largely localized to cities that contain a high population of Turkish students (50% of the Turkish population is concentrated to only 4% of Germany) (Kastoryano, 2002). Despite these gains, the
suspicion regarding Muslim religious education remains, with some fearing that the IFB has Islamist tendencies and is working on conforming students to their form of Islam (Fetzer & Soper, 2005). The continued debate regarding Muslim education in German public schools underscores the broader cultural issues; language, religion, cultural identity, and nationality all contribute to the artificial construction of an imagined German community. The multiple identity categories enable the Volk to call upon any one of the categories at any given time to reinforce the common identity while simultaneously manifesting the identity of the Other (Kastoryano, 2002).

One of the most debated (and gendered) symbols of Islam is the hijab, or headscarf. Although students in Germany are permitted to wear headscarves in schools, the headscarf debate, or Kopftuchstreit, is intrinsically connected to the country’s notions of secularism as it applies specifically to teachers; teachers who wear headscarves are denied teaching jobs not only because they are civil servants and supposed to represent German culture and ideals but because their religious beliefs are seen as threatening and incongruent with the German value system (von Campenhausen, 2004; Häußler, 2001; vom Bruck, 2008; Fogel, 2006-2007; Weber, 2004). According to Häußler (2001), the “German Federal Constitutional Court has characterized the school as an institution as the place where the cultural heritage…of the German society is transmitted to the young generation…Christian tradition and value heritage function as bases for teaching all subjects…” (p. 465). Despite the acknowledgment that “there is no secularism in Germany” and that “the two Christian dominations [Catholic and Protestant] are privileged, and thus far there have been hardly any attempts to introduce secularism…”
(Terkessidis, 2007, p. 318), Muslim women are still perceived as a threat to the state’s secular laws. In two court cases that reified the oppression of Muslim educators in educational settings, external definitions of the headscarf were employed; denying these women the right to their own self-definition served to reinforce the existing structure of a secular, Western, and enlightened culture.

Although the historical premise of the headscarf debate in Germany can be traced back to the rapid influx of immigrant populations in the 1960s and 1970s, two court cases have played a defining role in the current debate. The headscarf debate, or *Kopftuchstreit*, began in 1998 when the school system of Baden-Württemberg, a traditionally conservative German state, denied Fereshta Ludin the right to teach because of her refusal to remove her headscarf in the classroom (Rottmann and Ferree, 2008; vom Bruck, 2008; Altinordu, 2004). Despite the fact that Ludin, a naturalized German citizen from Afghanistan, completed her student teaching successfully, receiving positive feedback and no complaints from parents or teachers regarding her choice to wear a headscarf, the school system refused to place her in an actual teaching position, stating that the headscarf was not specifically required by the Koran and thus was a political symbol and “a sign of ‘cultural limitation’” (Altinordu, 2004, p. 7). After multiple appeals in local and federal courts, in 2003 the Federal Court in Karlsruhe ruled in her favor. The courts pointed out, however, that if adequate legislation was passed, the individual German states could ban teachers from wearing headscarves in the classroom. Although the ruling created temporary accommodations for teachers who wear headscarves, the decision had another effect: within months of the court case, Baden-
Württemberg had begun legislation forbidding teachers from wearing headscarves in the classroom. Multiple other states have followed suit, including Bavaria and North-Rhine Westphalia, which, like Ludin’s home state of Baden-Württemberg, forbid headscarves but allow other religious head coverings, including nuns’ habits and yarmulkes (vom Bruck, 2008; Faas, 2008; Fogel, 2007). According to Faas (2008), the amended state educational laws in Baden-Württemberg now explicitly prohibit teachers from wearing headscarves in the classroom:

> Teachers in public schools may not show political, religious, or other affiliations which may endanger or disturb the neutrality of the federal state towards students and parents, or the political and religious school peace… The representation of **Christian and Christian Occidental** educational and cultural values and traditions does not contradict the behavior requirement above. (Faas, 2008, p. 112, emphasis mine)

The paradox of the state’s concept of neutrality is that it allows for religious and cultural values to be taught and displayed *only when* these values are congruent with German, Christian, and Occidental ideas. As in the case of religious education, the measuring stick for secularism and state neutrality is a form of Christian and western culture that is specific to Germany. Educational systems are not value-free institutions, as they derive values and norms from the larger cultural context; however, setting exclusionary practices based on a teacher’s adherence to one specific religion allows for all other curricula, methods, and pedagogy to go unchallenged. “No instruction is free of the values and norms that this part of the world has created for itself, which it declared to be
universally valid, and against which there had been worldwide resistance. Therefore, a teacher with a cross around her neck...fits into the overall picture, whereas a teacher with a head scarf sticks out, just because she is Muslim” (Zaptçioğlu, 1998).

Around the same time that Ludin was trying her case in the Stuttgart courts, the German state of Niedersachsen was also deciding a case centered on the wearing of headscarves by teachers in school. The woman, whose name is not disclosed in the court documents, was a German-born Lutheran who converted to Islam in 1990; during a September 1999 job interview she stated that she wanted to wear her headscarf while teaching, adding that she would not change her position if parents complained, but would reconsider only if the students were suffering harm (Häußler, 2001). Although she was offered a teaching position at first, the offer was later revoked; the rejection letter stated that students should not be forced to deal with religious convictions that contradict their own beliefs, especially in a classroom setting (Altinordu, 2004). The teacher candidate brought her case to the local Administrative Court of Lüneberg; in October 2000, the court ruled in her favor, upholding the belief that a headscarf alone was not sufficient grounds to disqualify her as a teacher (Altinordu, 2004). A teacher, as the court pointed out, is not just an embodiment of external religious symbols, but the sum of his or her attitudes, values, pedagogy, and classroom expectations. Like the Ludin case, the Lüneberg courts also stated that a headscarf is not just a religious symbol; however, unlike Ludin’s ruling which pointed out possible hidden political symbolism, they argued that the headscarf should be seen in a similar fashion to a teacher wearing a cross necklace because of “its dual capacity as both jewelry and an expression of their religious belief” (Häußler, 2001, p. 462).
Both Ludin and the student teacher in Lüneberg defined their desire to wear the headscarf in religious terms, but the case of the ethnic German convert was handled much differently. Both cases employed definitions of Germanness as seen through the headscarf. In Ludin’s case, it was seen as an inherently political and thus potentially dangerous symbol, but in Lüneberg, the teacher was not reduced to an external religious symbol. In ruling that the student teacher should not be judged on “the basis of her religious dress alone” (Häußler, 2001, p. 461), the courts created a neutral, more German, representation of the student teacher, one that does not disrupt the status quo or limit the Western religious and cultural ideals in the classroom. When the courts evaluated the meaning behind the student teacher’s headscarf and the possibility of her connection to Islamic fundamentalism, they “considered the fact that she had been raised in Germany as an Evangelical-Lutheran and later converted to Islam as a sign that she was unlikely to be persuaded by Islamic fundamentalism” (Altinordu, 2004, p. 14). Because Ludin was an Afghani Muslim immigrant, her choice to wear a headscarf defines her more as “other” than as German. Some argue that the main issue at the heart of these two headscarf cases is the distrust of others, specifically the distrust of foreigners. Although the discussion of headscarves is, on the surface, about values that are being transmitted within German schools, for Zaptçıoğlu (1998) the “head scarf has an important, perhaps unique, discussion-worthy aspect: how do Germans envision their future with (Muslim) migrants, when they make them an assimilation offer that they themselves refuse to honor?” (pp. 213-214). For Mandel (2008), the headscarf crystallizes the “‘foreigner problem’ in that it symbolizes the essential intractability of the ‘other’…it is used both to justify and explain the impossibility of making Turks (and perhaps Muslims in general) into loyal
subjects of the German nation” (p. 294). The message being given through the decisions of the court cases are underpinned by the normative construction of Germanness and reveal that external markers of difference serve a function in issues of belonging. The German *Kopftuchstreit* reveals that headscarf controversies are “never only, and sometimes not at all, about headscarves” (Borovali, 2008, p. 1); indeed, it symbolizes not only the larger social and cultural ways in which the Other is constructed in direct contrast to what constitutes Germanness, but *who* gets to create these definitions.

**Gendering German Higher Education.**

Germany’s struggle with identifying what role religion in its public schools should play has made clear the significance of gender in redefining what it means to be German (Rostock & Berghahn, 2008). Central to the debate on cultural integration is the position of Muslim women within their own culture; included in this discussion are questions regarding the rights to freedom of choice, educational achievement, and the perceived oppressiveness of Islam. Although academics and feminists began researching Turkish women in Germany during the 1970s and 1980s, these studies accomplished little more than to cement a particular trope in the minds of Germans. Despite the researchers claiming their intent was to foster intercultural understanding, for some the goal of this understanding was to liberate “non-Western women from customs and practices deemed illiberal or even destructive” (Chin, 2007, p. 165). Although this logic did not go unchallenged, the image of the oppressed and uneducated Turkish woman became the dominant trope and served to undermine this population’s educational growth in the German schools.
Education and employment are important elements for success for any women, but especially for im/migrant populations. Despite the recent growth of women in higher education, Germany did not see the percentage of women attending institutes of higher education rise above 50% until 1999 (Mischau, 2001). Although the entry into higher education may appear to be equalizing, numerical representation of women in higher education is only one of many factors for the larger climate of women (Sagaria & Stewart, 2001). Indeed, “achievement of a more balanced representation does not necessarily translate into gender-balanced ideological diversity or equality” (Sagaria & Stewart, 2001, p. 8). In the case of higher education, there is still a highly gendered representation in certain fields of study. The proportion of female students in differing fields of study ranged from education and teacher training at 71% to engineering and architecture at 16% (Mischau, 2001). Statistics of female employees in German universities reveals a trend: the higher the position in the university hierarchy, the lower the percentage of women; in fact, only 6% of all full professors are women (Mischau, 2001). Due in part to the highly-tracked educational system in Germany, the female im/migrant population that reaches higher education does so primarily through vocational training programs; however, only 31% of women with non-German backgrounds enter into vocational training, compared with 54% of ethnic German women (Granato & Schittenhelm, in Schittenhelm, 2009). Vocational training programs themselves are highly-gendered domains, with women of immigrant backgrounds trained in apprenticeships that lead to little chance of future entry into the job market. Additionally, 53% of women are tracked into only ten vocational professions, including hairdressing and doctor’s receptionist (Schittenhelm, 2009). These highly-gendered educational
opportunities leave women with fewer career choices and exemplify “our conceptions of
what characteristics different jobs require are shaped by our conceptions of the people
who occupy them” (Valian, 2000, p. 28). Careers, fields of study, and even certain forms
of knowledge thus become gendered; a job dominated by women becomes corresponded
with feminine knowledge and devalued, while a male-dominated field is associated with
masculine characteristics and is thus more valued (Valian, 2000).

Those female im/migrant students who do attain high educational qualifications
tend to be further marginalized, and find themselves in a unique insider/outsider position.
They “risk becoming outsiders, not only among their native German peers at school, but
also among peers with immigrant backgrounds, the majority of whom are still over-
represented in less qualified educational pathways” (Diefenbach, in Schittenhelm, 2009,
p. 4). In the example of females in German higher education, it is clear that the
“nurture/nature, public/private, and other either/or debates framed in terms of
male/female differences serve as continued barriers to women’s advancement, affecting,
the teaching and learning environment and the personal and professional well-being of
both men and women” (Glazer-Raymo, 2008, p. 30). Females in higher education, and
particularly immigrant females, are often ‘outsiders within’ the institution and
consequently are forced to negotiate their positions and opportunities differently than the
dominant group. For these women, “access to higher education…for those with identities
that are associated with nondominant groups does not necessarily lead to the same
privileges as it does for those in dominant groups” (Ropers-Huilman, 2008, p. 39).
Although gender does correlate to educational achievement and entry into certain fields
of study, it is not the only marker of Turkish women’s experiences in higher education in
Germany. Ethnicity, class, and citizenship status all contribute to the multi-layered definitions of oppression so that despite “the marker of difference between ‘them’ and ‘us’ still seems to be the question of gender equality” (Rostock & Berghahn, 2008, p. 351), gender alone does not account for Turkish women’s positions in the German education system. Despite the persistent call for acknowledgment of Turkish women’s voices in the German educational system, including a statement by the Turkish Federation of Berlin (2007) proposing “promotion of the Turkish and intra-Islamic discussion process vis-à-vis equal rights for women” and “a public and active avowal from Turkish and Islamic organizations on the right of self-definition for women” (p. 381), laws and existing academic literature reinforce an identity that is externally imposed and fragmented.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Intersectionality: moving beyond the cartography of categories

For this project, identifying a methodology which would adequately account for individual experiences and macro structures, contextual descriptions and categories of identities, and the ways in which these can combine to create a unique situation was a daunting task. The overlap, messiness, and artificiality of categories of identity must be situated in conversation with the processes and power relations from which they were created. Erel (2007) points out the ways in which including immigrant women’s life stories and biographical interviews can balance the power structure of research:

Life stories reveal effects of immigration legislation on personal lives, which one cannot simply read off the legal or policy texts. They reveal structures of exclusion and resistance that quantitative or larger scale studies render invisible. Moreover they can call into question the categories of legislation and theorisation based on these as for example the discreteness of statuses of refugees, labour migrants, au pair, marriage migration, student migration, professional or undocumented migration. Since life stories do not narrow down lived experience to one single category or event, they offer a privileged vantage point for understanding and theorising the processual dynamics of migration and the
intersectionality of gendered, ethnocised and class structures of power. (Erel, 2007, para. 5.2, emphasis mine).

While methods, such as in-depth interviews or life stories, focus on the ways in which a researcher employs a procedure, tool, or technique to generate data, a methodology gives definition to the object of study and involves an explanation of the kinds of problems the research is investigating (Schwandt, 2007). Because of this symbiotic relationship between methods and methodology, it is crucial that both work to support and inform the other. As Erel (2007) identified with his research, a method which allows both individual experiences and the larger apparatuses of power which have constructed categories of identity to be visible also needs to be analyzed through a lens of power and oppression. Although employing biographical or in-depth interviewing with immigrant women can disrupt the often tacit assumptions held by the dominant culture, including the belief that migrant women are oppressed and victimized and are more often receivers of than contributors to the society of residence, the ways in which the data is collected and analyzed is also significant (Erel, 2007).

Intersectionality has often been criticized for addressing only the theoretical aspect of inquiry while neglecting the ways in which researchers can employ it as a method or methodology, particularly with an ethnic minority group of women who has systematically been rendered invisible in both policy and academic discourse. Rooney (2009) calls attention to the disconnect between policy discourse and theoretical dimensions and reminds the intersectional researcher that “social categories and ‘identities’ are products of particular historical circumstances. They change and are
changeable” (p. 207). Such requirements reveal the complexity of researching Turkish immigrant women’s educational attainment in Germany, and while intersectionality has been rightly criticized for its reification of categories of identity and for its focus on individual oppressions to the exclusion of broader context, its use as a methodology here enables an excavation of gender, ethnicity, and educational attainment from the German/Other binary (Conaghan, 2009; Rooney, 2009). Conaghan’s (2009) critique of the commonly-used concept of intersectionality as a map which does not “denote either depth or dimension…nor can it capture or evoke movement through time” (p. 41) is well-placed. Indeed, if intersectionality aims to move beyond mapping categories of identities and into the uncharted terrain of context, processes and practices, it must first be entirely reconceptualized. Applying intersectionality as a methodology is a first step in this process, as it enables the mapmaker to draw on a variety of maps, including the political map, which reveals borders and defines one as a citizen or foreigner, and the topographic and geological maps, which reveal both the contours of what is occurring on the surface but also the underlying characteristics of formations and fault lines which exist below the surface. Although the mapping is messy and the territory is uncharted, such an approach allows for the movement from theory into practice, where researchers can employ intersectionality as a methodology to “redress social power differentials” and to frame the “negotiation of the often contradictory power dynamics central to each phase of feminist field research” (Fish & Rothchild, 2009, p. 267).

I chose intersectionality as a methodology for this research project because it offers a particular way of theorizing the problem, framing the data collection, and
analyzing the results. Unlike with feminist standpoint, which places gender as the center of the analysis, or Marxist theory, which holds the mode of production and economic factors as the most salient category, intersectionality enables the research to examine the interplay between multiple categories of identity which work to construct particular experiences. My use of intersectionality in the research project also takes social, historical, and political contexts into account, offering a more textured analysis of the lived experiences of Turkish women in the German educational system. While accounting for the power relations which uphold the construction of these identities contributes to a deeper examination of the problem for Turkish women in German higher education, one drawback to intersectionality is that as the number of categories included in the analysis expands, the researcher surrenders the depth of understanding for the breadth of inclusion. Echoing the critiques of other intersectionality theorists and researchers (see, for example, Conaghan, 2009), such inclusion of identities can render invisible their depth. I make every effort in the framing of my research and the data analysis to address the overlaps and fissures as completely as possible, because despite the critiques of an intersectionality approach, it has enabled me to trouble the existing literature, push back against common misperceptions of Turkish immigrant women, and offer a new map for future research on this subject.

Intersectionality: Origin Story

Intersectionality’s ‘origin story’ varies widely both across and within different disciplines and has even been traced back to Sojourner Truth’s 1851 “Ain’t I a Woman” speech given at a Women’s Rights Conference in Akron, Ohio (Brah & Phoenix, 2004;
Crenshaw, 1989). Historically, the critiques of male-dominated research and the binary constructions of male/female and masculine/feminine led feminist researchers to deconstruct the dominant narratives of the time; of particular concern was the use of “women and gender as unitary and homogenous categories reflecting the common essence of all women” (McCall, 2005, p. 1776). Not only were certain groups of women (in particular African Americans) not reflected in these binary constructions, but their status was relegated into either/or categories in the research: either one was female or African American, but not both simultaneously. This construction of identity “as ‘woman’ or ‘person of color’ as an either/or proposition…relegate[s] the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling” (Crenshaw, 1994, p. 93). This led Black feminist writers to account for both race and gender by describing Black women’s oppression as “double jeopardy” (Beale, 1970); later, feminists like Deborah King (1988) would complicate the race-gender oppression of double jeopardy by including a discussion of class oppression. For King and later feminist writers, race-class-gender oppressions were not simply additive but multiplicative in nature; to reduce the complex negotiations to an additive equation “is to define the issue, and indeed black womanhood itself, within the structural terms developed by Europeans and especially white males to privilege their race and their sex unilaterally” (King, 1988, pp. 298-299).

Although Black feminist writers had been addressing the multiplicative race-class-gender oppressions for some time, Kimberlé Crenshaw’s 1989 article on antidiscrimination doctrine and antiracist politics was the first time the term ‘intersectionality’ was used. Grounded in her background as a critical legal scholar,
Crenshaw (1989) presents three separate court cases in which Black women were either completely erased from the legal conversation or were made hyper-visible in their presentation of work discrimination. She outlines that “Black women can experience discrimination in any number of ways and that the contradiction arises from our assumptions that their claims of exclusion must be unidirectional” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149). Other feminist scholars have since pointed to the paradox of intersectionality as a theory about Black women’s experiences and as a theory about multiple categories of identities and have also questioned, as Judith Butler points to, the “embarrassed ‘etc.’ at the end of the list” (Knapp, 2005, p. 254; Yuval-Davis, 2009); despite this, Crenshaw’s term remains descriptive of one of the most widely used (and debated) concepts in feminist theory (Nash, 2008).

It appears that the concept of intersectionality is one of the most defining contributions made by feminist researchers to the study of gender (Mahalingam, Balan & Haritatos, 2008). Today, intersectionality has been interpreted in a multitude of ways and can refer to “particular forms of intersecting oppressions” while also reminding us that “oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice” (Collins, 2000a, p. 18). Weldon (2006) questions the assertion that categories of identity (race, class, gender) cannot be separated from each other or that all oppression occurs equally as a product of gender, race, and class. Other feminist researchers have extended the definition past the relationships of oppression to include the ways in which “any particular individual stands at the “crossroads of multiple groups”” (Minnow, 1997 in Mahalingam et al., 2008, p. 326). Stewart and McDermott
(as cited in Narváez, Meyer, Kertzner, Ouellette, Gordon, 2009) posited three basic tenets that construct intersectionality: “(a) no social group is homogenous, (b) people must be located in terms of social structures that capture the power relations implied by those structures, and (c) there are unique, nonadditive effects of identifying with more than one social group” (p. 64).

Despite the growing recognition of its importance for underrepresented populations in research, the framework of intersectionality is rarely applied to the female Turkish population in Germany. Ethnic German women in education cannot speak to or for Turkish women’s experiences; allowing this erasure only elevates the dominant narratives while simultaneously perpetuating social inequalities. It is not that Turkish women in Germany have nothing to say regarding their experiences in higher education, but that they have not had a say (Henderson, as cited in Collins, 2000b). Mahalingam’s, Balan’s, and Haritatos’ (2008) study points to the significance of identifying how “immigrants make sense of the gendered nature of their ethnic experience” (p. 333) and how researchers must “take into account the unique experiences and realities of immigrant groups across different social locations” (p. 334). Gender, class, ethnicity, religion, citizenship status, and location come together at varying intersections to construct a ‘Turkish woman’s experience’ in the educational system in Germany. These intersections, some more apparent and easily recognizable than others, are frequently

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2 See Rottmann and Ferree (2008) for a detailed look at the intersections of citizenship, feminism, and headscarves in Germany. See also Mahalingam, Balan & Haritatos (2008) for a broader application of intersectionality with immigrant populations.

3 Mae Henderson’s direct quote is as follows: “It is not that black women...have had nothing to say, but rather that they have had no say”.

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performed differently and in complex ways. One’s “salient identity” is chosen from “among the various options that are available to us in our performances” (Ropers-Huilman, 2008, p. 36). These performances, however, require each person to make choices about which intersection to express; consequently, the “masking and unmasking of oneself is particularly difficult for those whose cultural homes and associated practices are not well represented in the larger dominant society” (Ropers-Huilman, 2008, p. 37). Although negotiating multiple identities, especially those who must navigate multiple non-dominant identities, can “exact a painful toll on those doing the negotiating”, the results of speaking one’s intersections can be beneficial to people both in and outside of their communities (Ropers-Huilman, 2008, p. 36).

**Intersectionality: Critique**

Current debates surrounding intersectionality reflect researchers’ and theorists’ unease with its vagueness, both in how and with whom intersectionality can be used. Yuval-Davis (2009) points to the danger in conflating or separating the different levels of analysis within the intersectionality approach. She also question which social divisions (and how many) should be incorporated into the analysis of the intersectionality process. Race-gender-class have constituted the three major social divisions; does adding additional social divisions like religion and citizenship status make the approach different than intersectionality? Do we, as Yuval-Davis (2009) questions, “have to be concerned that the list is limitless” (p.53)?
While Yuval-Davis’ questions focus on the number and type of categories which should (or can) be included when using intersectionality, other theorists question whether intersectionality can translate cross-culturally, particularly to contexts where the ‘core’ categories of race-class-gender become muddied by the culture. If, for example, intersectionality is used in the context of researching ‘others’ living in the German nation-state, how does the category of race get treated when “Rasse is a category that cannot be used in an affirmative way in Germany: it is neither possible to ascribe a Rasse to others nor is it acceptable to use Rasse as a basis for identity claims, which by comparison is a common practice in the US” (Knapp, 2005, p. 257). Is intersectionality equipped to handle the many different cultural discourses of race-class-gender? Knapp (2005) cautions that such fast-moving theories like intersectionality have failed, in their quickness at being taken up by researchers in multiple disciplines and contexts, to really be examined for the applicability at both the micro and macro levels of analysis. Indeed, while Dill, McLaughlin, and Nieves (2006) point out, “intersectional work can validate the lives and histories of persons and subgroups previously ignored or marginalized, and it is used to help empower communities and the people in them” (p. 632), they also outline that currently, most intersectionality work focuses on the experiential/individual level and that more work needs to be done to apply intersectionality to structural levels. Conaghan (2009) extends her critique of intersectionality even further by arguing it has reached the limits of its potential because it cannot “unpick or unravel the many ways in which inequality is produced and sustained” (p. 22). Like the argument put forth by Dill et al., Conaghan (2009) challenges the applicability of intersectionality past the level of the individual and suggests that it has become too bound up in notions of identity which
helped to create it in the first place. Although these researchers both identify the usefulness intersectionality serves (or once served), they concur that for it to continue to play a role in law, politics, and theory, it must be extended and applied as a practice.

These critiques point to a place in research that is missing intersectionality-as-practice. My approach in using intersectionality focuses not just on individual lived experiences of Turkish women but also the larger structures of German educational policies. Framing my methods within intersectionality allows me to examine the fissures and overlaps in the educational policies and official government documentation of Turkish immigration with the individual experiences of Turkish women in German schools. It is not just how these women experience the everyday intersections of larger systems of oppression (sexism, xenophobia, anti-Muslim practices) but the interplay of these larger systems in combination with questions of citizenship, secularism, and educational policies that create a larger level of analysis where intersectionality can be applied. The following section outlines the particularities of intersectionality theorists and researchers which have specifically influenced the construction of my own methodology. In particular, I highlight McCall’s (2005) approach to utilizing identity categories while still maintain a critical stance towards them, Yuval-Davis’s (2009) assertion that categories must be analyzed through the lens of their specific context, and Cuadraz and Uttal’s (1999) intersectionality research to influence my own analysis of overlapping categories and their larger historical, social and political contexts.
Intersectionality and Turkish women in Germany: My methodology

Because my research is intricately tied to one group’s experiences in the German educational system that has either led or prevented them from entering into higher education, intersectionality as a methodology allows me to examine these experiences from their multiple oppressions. While other theories, such as feminist standpoint theory, call attention to the knowledge that arises from each individual’s unique standpoint, it falls short in recognizing multiple identity categories and their connection to larger state structures like laws that regulate school curriculum and immigrant housing opportunities. For feminist standpoint theory, acknowledging women’s experiences creates a knotted entanglement: it allows for individual voices and experiences to counter the prevailing versions of what constitutes truth and knowledge, but it also reveals that the category of ‘woman’ has a multitude of variations based on other identity categories. Intersectionality as a theory and a methodology is structured in such a way as to allow the research to take up these multiplicative identities and begin to analyze them, both in how they construct the individual and the connections to the larger structures of the state. Because intersectionality interrogates the entanglements not only on an individual level but also questions the political, state, and economic structures and their perpetuation of group identities, this theory actually extends feminist standpoint’s legacy of social justice. However, understanding the ways in which intersectionality, often used in research only as a theory, can be translated into a methodology is more difficult. Despite numerous descriptions to frame one’s methods offered by intersectional researchers, there is no one agreed-upon approach. Before offering a description of my own
methodological framework, I describe how other scholars practicing intersectionality have approached their research.

Intersectionality focuses on “the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations” (McCall, 2005, p. 1771) – these relationships themselves become the focal point of analysis and point to how intersectionality can be used as a methodological tool. The significance in using intersectionality as a theoretical lens and methodological tool is that it allows researchers to better understand the complexities and diversities of the multiple experiences of race, gender, sexuality, class, and religion. Individuals are no longer researched through fragmented binaries but are acknowledged more wholly, embodying a multitude of identities; if analyzed separately, these identities appear fragmented, allowing for a person’s lived experiences to only be represented one category at a time. McCall (2005) points out that despite its quick emergence as a major paradigm in women’s studies, there has been little discussion of how to do intersectionality. Intersectionality is complex in nature and demands multiple levels of analysis; consequently, it has limited those who attempt to conduct research within its framework. In an attempt to classify ways in which intersectionality can be used as a methodology, McCall (2005) outlines three varying approaches of intersectionality: anticalegorical, intercategorical, and intracategorical. These approaches, defined by their stances towards analytical categories, all attempt to “satisfy the demand for complexity and, as a result, face the need to manage complexity, if for no other reason than to attain intelligibility” (p. 1773). Significant to my methodological framework is McCall’s third category described as
intracategorical complexity; this category fits in between anticategorical and intercategorical on the continuum. Like the anticategorical approach, it interrogates the boundaries of social categories, but it also acknowledges the relationships that social categories represent at any given time and maintains a critical stance towards these categories. For McCall, those researchers who operate within this approach tend to focus on particular social groups and their locations at varying intersections in order to reveal the complexity of their lived experiences. The way that she troubles the undefined methods by which intersectionality can be used in research leads to the understanding that different intersectional methodologies can lead to different kinds of knowledge and that more work must be done to fully engage the many sets of issues that fall more broadly under the umbrella of intersectionality (McCall, 2005).

Another methodological approach to intersectionality is outlined by Yuval-Davis (2009): “field methodology should carefully separate, and examine separately, the different levels in which social divisions operate…only when such a contextual analysis is carried our can there be an intersectional review of policy initiatives” (p. 57). What is significant in her methodological framework is the separation and reuniting of the different social divisions to create a unique contextual analysis; additionally, Yuval-Davis outlines the importance of an analysis at both the macro and micro level. The key to understanding one’s identity is that social relations, and also one’s construction of self, “are multiple, sometimes contradictory, and, like a net, full of w/holes” (Rockhill, 2000, p. 400). Researchers and theorists who subscribe to intersectionality acknowledge that identities are complex, multi-layered and that the structures of oppression cannot be
“dismantled separately because they mutually reinforce each other” (Grillo, 1995, p. 27). Although debated by recent challenges to the dominant theory of intersectionality (see for example, Weldon, 2006) identities and conditions of oppression (racism, sexism) are not mutually exclusive but rely on other forms to reinforce this oppression; for example, homophobia enforces sexism by privileging certain socialized gender roles over others (Grillo, 1995). Racism and sexism operate together; anti-Muslim tendencies in Germany use xenophobia as its enforcer; likewise, educational achievement and socio-economic status are inseparable conditions that operate in tandem to simultaneously create both privilege and oppression.

McCall (2005) points out that although intersectionality has experienced development across disciplines (and even cultures), this development has occurred primarily in its construction as a theory or a research paradigm; consequently, “what is restricting feminist research on intersectionality comes down primarily to methods – not substance, theory or philosophy” (p. 1795). This sentiment, echoed by Dill, McLaughlin and Nieves (2006), points to the often uncharted territory of intersectionality-as-methodology and the disconnect between its use as theory and social reality. Hancock (2007) focuses on intersectionality’s emphasis on the dynamic interaction between the individual and the institutional structures has allowed for a more comprehensive view of policy successes and failures; however, while this has led to the potential for cross-cutting research, “this emphasis does not then create a pre-determined set of methodologies or doctrines acceptable to all intersectionality theorists” (p. 74). I draw on Crotty’s (1998) research framework in outlining my methodology; while I focus on
intersectionality as my research design that shapes my decision regarding which methods I employ, I also assert that Crotty’s model enables a more fluid account of each step in the research process.

Intersectionality encompasses a wide range of approaches to research, and more specifically, in how categories of identity are used, constructed, and analyzed. Here, I draw on McCall’s (2005) delineation of intersectionality based on their separate approaches to categories. While she outlines the anticategorical approach, which focuses on one’s identity as too complex to be reduced to categories, as the most successful in addressing the complexities of intersectionality, I am framing my research within the intracategorical approach. According to McCall (2005), this approach “falls conceptually in the middle of the continuum between the first approach, which rejects categories, and the third approach, which uses them strategically” (p. 1773). The intracategorical approach acknowledges the relationships that social categories represent at any given point in time while maintaining a critical stance towards those categories. It is within this category that researchers who focus on particular groups of marginalized people tend to operate. While she sets forth the caveat that not all intersectionality research fits neatly into these three categorical approaches, I maintain that an intracategorical framework is in line with a non-additive approach to understanding Turkish women’s experiences within the German education system. While I acknowledge that both identity categories and larger institutional structures are artificially constituted in and through power relations, I also must operate within the confines of these categories to analyze my research.
While these social categories can appear limitless and thus too complex to analyze within a research project, McCall (2005) asserts that this complexity can be managed by narrowing the focus to one single group; in this way, “complexity derives from the analysis of a social location at the intersection of single dimensions of multiple categories, rather than at the intersection of the full range of dimensions of a full range of categories, and that is how complexity is managed” (p. 1781). Because my research focuses on an immigrant sub-group in Berlin, I am able to more deeply examine their schooling experiences and allow the intersectional descriptions of their identities to derive from these in-depth interviews. Although limiting my research population in numbers and geographical location has restricted its generalizability, this project is a beginning which “represents only one of many sides of a set of intersecting social relations, not social relations in their entirety” (McCall, 2005, p. 1782). While the breadth of this research is limited by my intersectional methodology, the depth of both individual and macro analyses can speak to the ways in which these structures interact with and construct the individual’s identity. Here, it is significant to note my choice in using a small group of participants and conducting in-depth interviews does not lessen the validity of my research (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999).

Researchers who employ an intersectionality framework focus not only on the value of understanding the individual experience but how that single story connects to the larger socio-cultural and historical context and in what way it reflects the larger structures of state policies (see Bowleg, 2008; Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999; Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005). While McCall (2005) and Conaghan (2009) call for an examination of the broader
structures of inequality to provide context to the ways in which the individual experiences are “produced, mediated, and expressed” (Conaghan, 2009, p. 29), these structures cannot speak to the complexity of an individual’s lived experience; likewise, individual accounts provide unique knowledge about a population that is often ignored in academic research but these experiences cannot encompass the far-reaching effects of state policies and structural inequalities. If context is not taken into account, the research can lose the complexity of its analysis because it places all subjects as ahistorical and isolated from structures of power.

A methodological framing that interrogates individual experiences and structures of power means that the research must explore each of these structures separately as well as simultaneously. Here, I draw from Cuadraz and Uttal’s (1999) extensive description of their intersectionality research. They suggest that in order for an intersectional analysis to be thorough the researcher must, among other things, explore both the structures of power (policy, xenophobia, anti-Muslim tendencies) and the categories of identity (ethnicity, class, gender, religion) individually and simultaneously. They state that “methodologically, the point here is that if simultaneity is being pursued, the researcher must engage in constantly shifting and reordering of individual accounts, history and theory” (p. 167). Although some researchers conducting intersectional projects reject the idea of studying categories of identity both separately and simultaneously, arguing this reinstates the additive effect discarded more than two decades ago, others claim this kind of analysis allows for a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which these categories mutually constitute one another (Bowleg, 2008;
Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999). I reject the notion that this methodological approach is at odds with the theory of intersectionality; in fact, the framing of intersectionality in this way is congruent with McCall’s (2005) intracategorical approach, which asserts this significance of a categorical analysis which takes into consideration the processes by which they are produced and reproduced in everyday life. Because the data I collected, in large part, derived from the in-depth interviews conducted with Turkish women, the analysis focuses on what the participants describe as contributing to their educational experiences. Although conducting an analysis on separate categories of identity appears to be problematic in that it can be used to reinscribe additive approaches to research, I contend that it allows for a deeper analysis of the ways in which categories intersect to create individual experiences. Based on McCall’s (2005) intracategorical approach and Cuadraz and Uttal’s (1999) suggestions for those using intersectionality as a methodology, I have framed my research to address the categories of identity both separately and simultaneously. The questions asked of the women were constructed in such a way as to get at the intersections of gender, ethnicity, citizenship status, and educational attainment, but also allowed them to speak of these categories of identity in ways which were authentic for them (e.g. excluding terminology like ‘race’ which carries the burden of past struggles in Germany and can be seen as too broad and vague). Additionally, the interviews were coded to reflect when categories of identity appeared either in isolation or in tandem.
Location and Participants

I conducted my research in the city of Berlin, which is home to a large number of Turkish people, both new immigrants and children of people who were recruited as *Gastarbeiter*. Berlin represents a city that was an “experiment in the making of a distinctive German national narrative” (Mandel, 2008, p. 5), a “social laboratory” (Lawson, 1988, p. 117) particularly in the postwar period. It is a city characterized by its divides: East/West Germany, old/new capital, and the German/Other divide that often exists less in stringent separateness and more in fissures. Berlin is a city-turned-laboratory of social relations, where *Gastarbeiter* and *Aussiedler* are as permanent a fixture as the *Fernsehturm* (television tower). Although the experiences of Turkish people in a city as cosmopolitan as Berlin cannot speak to those in smaller towns or the industrial regions of states like Baden-Württemberg, their mere presence in Berlin challenges many Berliners’ construction of cosmopolitanism (Mandel, 2008). It is precisely this tension between the Berlin-as-a-global-city, where sushi restaurants exist in close proximity to its world-class art museums and many Starbucks, and the Berlin of Kebab shops, women with their heads covered, and Turkish flags draped on apartment balconies which defines both its residents and its culture.

In 2007, there were an estimated 477,000 people with a non-German passport living in Berlin, 47.7% of who were women (Forum Berliner Migrantinnen Projekte, 2009). According to the Agency for Statistics in Berlin-Brandenburg (as cited in Forum Berliner Migrantinnen Projekte, 2009), 25.7% of female Berliners, or about 863,500 women, have a migrant background. The three districts of Berlin that have the highest
percentage of low-income residents are also the districts with the highest number of people with immigrant backgrounds (Berlin-Mitte: 44.5%; Neukölln: 38.7%; Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg: 36.6%) (Forum Berliner Migrantinnen Projekte, 2009). These statistics indicate that the population of female Berliners who have a migrant background or themselves are immigrants makes up a significant proportion of Berlin’s total population. Additionally, the overlap between gender, immigrant status, and class underscores the unique perspective and needs of Berlin’s im/migrant population.

Organizations

I initially traveled to Berlin to work with the organization which employs Fatma. Once in Berlin, I was able to interview three women (Fatma, Lale, and Ayşe) at this women’s organization. Additionally, Fatma put me in contact with three other organizations that work with people of Turkish descent, immigrants, women, or a combination of the three; however, due to time constraints, I was only able to set up interviews at one other location. While both organizations worked with similar populations, they were located in two different districts of Berlin where there were high numbers of Turkish residents. Included below is a brief history of the organizations, their mission statements, and target population:

Organization #1:

The first organization with whom I worked is located in an area of Berlin that has historically been known as “Little Istanbul”. Established in 1975, it is one of the oldest Turkish organizations in Berlin specifically with a mission to help women. It was
founded under the philosophy that every person has the right to learn and further their education, women have the right and power to make their own decisions, and that integration begins with language acquisition. According to the website and its numerous paper brochures and fliers, its goals include creating a safe space for Turkish women to meet; taking action against all forms of discrimination and oppression; working together on creating solutions to problems; and supporting women who are coping with personal and social problems. Most of the women the organization serves come from the neighborhood where the office is located; additionally, women from the neighboring district, also an area with large numbers of people of Turkish descent, frequently attend workshops and seek help there. The population of women given assistance includes those in financial or family crises; women and girls with health problems; women who lack education or work training; and girls with problems in school. The activities, workshops, and social events organized and conducted by this organization include homework help; consultations with social workers; German language courses and integration courses; and opportunities to socialize with other Turkish women, including sponsoring trips to Turkey. All of the materials, including their website and information posted outside the office, are in both German and Turkish.

Organization #2:

I was put in contact with the second organization after my interview with Fatma. When I was leaving the interview, she gave me a packet of information, including a brochure about a consortium of immigrant groups in Berlin who were working on a large
Figure 2. Games and socializing room at Organization #2. Photo by the author.

project geared specifically toward migrant women. I contacted a number of the partner
groups listed as a part of the female immigrant forum; of the three I contacted, two were
unable to meet during my time in Berlin. The third group, a Turkish-German girls’
organization located in a different section of the city with large numbers of immigrants,
invited me to visit and tour their facilities. After seeing their office space, which
included a fully-stocked kitchen for girls to learn how to cook, a study room with books,
computers, and internet access, and a recreation room with couches, musical instruments,
and games, I interviewed a German social worker and a woman of Turkish descent who
had been a member of the organization growing up.
Figure 3. Homework, studying, and computer room at Organization #2. Photo by the author.

According to the organization’s website, their name derives from the Turkish word meaning “together” and this is the focal point of their mission and services. The organization serves girls and young women (ages 11-23) of all ethnicities, with the goal of creating a safe space for young women to meet and socialize without their parents and to support young girls throughout their development and help build self-confidence. They offered homework help, free use of the internet, cooking, playing games, and organized social events. In April 2011 they sponsored a two-week trip to Turkey for a handful of their members, chaperoned by employees and social workers. One requirement for girls to participate in the organization is that their parents have to sign a consent form; additionally, there are yearly dues (around 8 Euros for girls and 16 Euros for young women over 18). Like the first organization, they were also connected to a
larger community of groups in Berlin who focused their efforts on issues of health, education, socialization, and assistance for immigrant women.

Participants

To locate participants for my research, I searched online for organizations in Germany who worked with Turkish people, women, or recent immigrants to Germany. Before contacting the organizations, I examined their mission statements, philosophies, and work within their community to get a sense of any political affiliations or funding sources which might conflict with the research. I chose organizations which were not affiliated with any political organization or union. I then sent an email to each organization, outlining my both research interests and my plans for collecting data in Germany. Within the email, I addressed the following topics (as suggested by Weiss, 1994): who I was and my affiliation; the reason for the study; how I located the organization; and what will be asked of them, both as an organization and from the individuals who participate. Although I contacted numerous Turkish groups within Germany (including in Freiburg and Stuttgart), only one organization contacted me in return. This organization, an established Turkish women’s organization in a section of Berlin with a high concentration of Turkish people, acted as a kind of gatekeeper to the rest of the Turkish community. Because they have been in operation since the 1970s, they identify as the oldest organization of their kind in the city; this status grants them a lot of power, both within the Turkish community and the German political system. Fatma was the first woman I interviewed and is a social worker connected with this organization. She is politically involved in issues connected to the rights of immigrants.
and has given testimony before German parliament sub-committees on the condition of Turkish students in Berlin schools and Turkish women’s status within German society. Although she did not self-identify as such, but because of her respected role within the Turkish community, this organization, and in the larger context of Berlin, Fatma acted as an informal gatekeeper (Seidman, 1998). Gatekeeping, as defined by Kawulich (2011), is the “process by which investigators gain access to the research setting under study and to the participants in that setting” (p. 58). Like Seidman (1998) suggests, once I identified Fatma as an informal gatekeeper, I sought her participation in the study because it could help to facilitate other women’s involvement as well. Indeed, once I conducted my initial interview with Fatma, she contacted a number of other women within her association and at other organizations in Berlin to invite them to participate in the study. Because of her willingness speak with other women, her position as an informal gatekeeper served to make my research legitimate and ‘safe’; as a result of her status in the community and the study, I was given contacts to two other women at her organization and email addresses for directors of other associations in Berlin. As both a key informant and a gatekeeper in the research project, Fatma provided a better understanding of cultural norms, beliefs, and social relationships; additionally, her status as an insider provided me with cultural knowledge I would not have had otherwise (Kawulich, 2011). In all, I spoke with five women, four of whom were of Turkish descent and one who was a German social worker in one of the immigrant women’s organization. Below are brief descriptions of the women’s educational background and biographical information regarding their immigration to Germany:
Fatma:

Fatma came to Germany when she was 18 years old specifically to study at the university. She was reunited with her father who had been working in Berlin as a Gastarbeiter for 14 years. After taking a year-long intensive language training course, she was admitted to a university in Berlin where she studied social work. Because she worked and attended school at the same time, it took her 10 years to complete her degree. Today, Fatma is in her late 40s and has been living in the same neighborhood in Berlin for 30 years. She speaks German fluently and is one of two women I interviewed who had a higher education degree. She is married and has two sons. At the time of our interview, she was employed as a social worker with a Turkish women’s organization in Berlin and worked closely with different generations of Turkish people living in the city.

Ayşe:

Like Fatma, Ayşe’s father was a Gastarbeiter who moved to Germany without his family. In 5th grade, her family moved to a small town near Dortmund in West Germany to be with her father. She attended a Turkish-German school, where she learned to speak German, and graduated in 10th grade. After finishing school, she worked as a salesperson for two years before moving to Berlin. Today, Ayşe is in her early 50s and is married with three sons who are 25, 23, and 16 years old. At the time of our interview, she had been employed at a Turkish women’s organization in Berlin for 6 months, providing general assistance with paperwork and helping non-German speakers fill out government documents, learn German, and find employment.
Lale:

Lale attended primary school in Turkey through 5th grade when she and her siblings moved to Berlin. Unlike the other women I interviewed, both Lale’s mother and father went to Germany to work during the major wave of Turkish Gastarbeiter, leaving Lale and her siblings in Turkey to be raised by her grandparents. Although both her parents were literate, Lale’s grandparents were Macedonian so they were not only unable to read or write in Turkish, they did not speak Turkish fluently. Because she did not speak any German, Lale was placed in a year-long language preparation class upon her arrival in Berlin. She enrolled in Gymnasium after leaving the Hauptschule in 10th grade and later enrolled at a university in Berlin. At the time of our interview, Lale worked as a social worker in a Turkish women’s organization. She had one son who was 18 and enrolled in a Berlin public school.

Yeşim:

Unlike the other Turkish women with whom I spoke, Yeşim was born in Berlin to parents who were from Turkey and had come to Germany during the Gastarbeiter recruitment. She attended school in an immigrant section of Berlin, where she said 80% of her class was either Turkish or Arabic. She attended school until her graduation from 10th grade. After leaving school she worked for a communication firm and then was promoted to the financial section of the firm. At the time of our interview, she was taking a computer training program to further her skills for her office job. Yeşim was the youngest woman of Turkish descent I interviewed and was married with one young son.
Annika:

Annika is a social work student who had originally worked at the second organization as part of her university internship and was currently working there part-time while finishing her education at a local university. She was very knowledgeable about the origins and mission of the second organization and had even accompanied the members on a recent trip to Turkey. Annika is the only woman I spoke with who was not of Turkish descent; she was also the only woman I interviewed who was able to respond in both English and German. At the time of our interview, Annika was finishing her studies in social work and hoped to get a full-time job at the organization where she had interned as a student (organization #2).

**Research Methods**

An analysis of the intersections of a Turkish woman’s experience in German education and the structures of power required methods that can adequately capture these differing data. There are two strands to my research methods. First, the in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a small number of Turkish women enabled me to explore how these women’s experiences have been shaped by the larger structures of power such as educational policies and cultural pressure. Second, collecting archival documents on immigration and educational policies and statistics provided not only a socio-historical contextual foundation but also is evidence of ‘official knowledge’ that can be contrasted with these women’s individual accounts. Both in-depth interviews and analysis of official government archives have been used by researchers conducting intersectionality
(see for example, Bowleg, 2008; Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999; Hancock, 2007) to provide a greater depth (in-depth interviews) and breadth (archival sources) to the research. If, as researchers, “we want to create knowledge that challenges rather than supports ruling regimes, we must constantly be attentive to histories, experiences, and perspectives that are unnoticed, unfamiliar or too easily neglected or misrepresented” (DeVault & Cross, 2006, p. 182). While personal accounts and governmental documents can crystallize particular moments and experiences, they still offer only one of many sides to intersecting social structures (McCall, 2005).

In-depth informal interviews are used widely in intersectional research; the informal style has little structure and allows the interviewer to build a relationship with the participant to explore topics that might otherwise be overlooked (Hesse-Biber, 2007). The core components of in-depth interviewing are that the interviewer does go in with a basic plan in mind; the interviewer maintains a minimal amount of control over the respondents’ answers and the ways in which they should answer; and that the interview is conducted as a conversation around a specific issue, making in-depth interviewing different from methods like oral history. In-depth interviews are used when the researcher is interested in working with and looking at a small sample, which does eliminate the generalizability of the research. When operating from an intersectional framework, in-depth interviewing with a small group of research participants can reveal how their identity has been socially constructed and selectively shaped by the larger structures of power. Using a small group of participants does decrease the research’s generalizability, but, as Hesse-Biber (2007) asserts, the goal of in-depth interviewing is
“to look at a ‘process’ of the ‘meaning’ individuals attribute to their given social situation, not necessarily to make generalizations” (p. 119). A larger sample size is not always better than a smaller sample; based on Cuadraz and Uttal’s (1999) assertions, the claim of social validity needs to be made through one’s research analysis and not because of their methods, but researchers who use this method tend to make the trade off of not being able to generalize their research for the advantages that come with in-depth interviews, including gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities of social processes as they play out at the individual level. Additionally, researchers who use in-depth interviews as a method must be aware of the participants’ heightened state of vulnerability and work to ensure that they feel the interview is a safe space for disclosing information. One way to lessen the harm that respondents could experience by participating in a vulnerable process is to learn as much as possible about the community and the social and historical context of the research as possible. DeVault and Cross (2006) caution that “feminist researchers should avoid using interviews – especially with women in vulnerable or marginalized social locations – as a way to learn things that could be gleaned from available sources” (p. 188). Because so little research has been done on Turkish women’s educational experiences in Germany, I have had to collect a large part of my information through these interviews; however, government documents on education, immigration, and laws concerning the Turkish population were a starting point and informed what areas to explore in more depth with the interview participants.

During my two weeks in Berlin, I conducted in-depth interviews with a total of five women from two Turkish organizations in different areas of the city. The
interviews ranged in length of time from 20 minutes to three hours; although each interview was audio recorded, one participant continued to speak for over an hour after the interview had formally concluded. Given the time constraints for the research project itself, any more participants for this research would not have been possible. The population with whom the research was conducted was primarily women of Turkish descent who have attended some form of formal education in Germany and who are currently members of a Turkish women’s organization in Berlin. Additionally, I interviewed one social worker who was not Turkish but was employed at one of the organizations and had extensive knowledge of both the organization’s history and the current members. Because the participants were members of two different Turkish women’s organization, they had already self-identified as women of Turkish origin living in a specific region of Germany. IRB approval was gained through The Ohio State University prior to leaving to conduct the research in Germany. All participants were over 18 years old and consented in writing to participate. Before each interview began, the women were given the opportunity to self-select a pseudonym; this self-selected name became their identifier and these names are used throughout this dissertation.

Upon arrival at the first organization, I spoke with Fatma, my primary contact and respondent who was a respected member of the community and thus viewed as a gatekeeper. Once potential participants were identified by Fatma (based on the condition that they spoke German fluently enough to be interviewed and that they had received some type of schooling in Germany), recruitment was done individually and
the women were invited to participate by being interviewed in a private area of the office.

In some cases, an interview situation where participants are asked to discuss their personal educational experiences can lead to discomfort in discussing certain aspects of their experiences. Additionally, if participants had particularly negative educational experiences they might feel discomfort in recalling them; however, this did not occur during the interviews and in fact, the women with the most negative educational experiences had the longest interviews. The women with whom the research was conducted have already distinguished themselves within their community as public members of a Turkish women’s organization and so discussions regarding their experiences as a minority sub-group is not an uncommon experience for them. Because the interviews were semi-structured and I had a key list of open-ended guiding questions which served as a framework, the interviews provided an atmosphere for the participants to feel open in exploring any questions more thoroughly, or choosing to not answer. The questions were organized to reflect the development of rapport throughout the interview process; I began with questions concerning categories of identity and educational attainment and transitioned into questions about the role of gender, ethnicity, and family in their education. The interview guide that helped me focus on setting and topical areas of interest to address with the respondent; having this allowed me to pay particular attention to creating my ‘line of inquiry’ during the interview, asking particular questions about educational experiences and schooling choices that have affected their entry into higher education (Weiss, 1994). Based on Hesse-Biber’s (2007) outline, my interview
guide consisted of 16 main questions, outlined below, which served as guides for further inquiry:

- Describe the schools you attended – were they mostly Turkish students? What language(s) were spoken at your school?
- What did you do after school?
- Were you involved in any extracurricular activities (clubs, groups, or sports)?
- Who did you get homework help from?
- What did you do on the weekends?
- What did you do during vacation?
- Describe for me your school friends.
- Tell me about your experience in school and how you came (or didn’t come) to entering into higher education.
- What were your educational goals when you were younger? Your career goals?
- In what way did your peer group affect your education?
- What role did your family play in your education?
- How you were perceived by teachers/students in school?
- What role did your ethnicity play in your educational experience?
- Were you aware of any national or local educational policies that affected your schooling (language, religious, etc)?
- What role did your identity play in your schooling, particularly in whether or not you pursued higher education?
- Did your school/educational meet your needs?
- Overall, how would you describe your educational experience?

Based on these ‘essential’ questions that focus on the central concern of my research question, I was able to pursue answers that inform how the respondent’s experiences in school were affected by her identity and what role these experiences played in her pursuing or not continuing her education (Berg, 2001). I consider Bowleg’s (2008) suggestions based on her own intersectional research: “(1) ask an additive question, get an additive answer; (2) the problem of attempting to measure intersectionality through addition; and (3) ask precisely what you want to know” (p. 314). At the start of each interview, I asked the participants to choose a pseudonym which would be the only name connected to their data. Only data on broad categories of identity, such as age,
marital status, and level of educational attainment, were collected to further the scholarly understanding of the research. All other markers (names of schools attended, places lived, etc) have either been given pseudonyms or have been only described and not named.

The analysis and coding of the data have been tightly connected to the methodological framework of intersectionality. As suggested by Bowleg (2008), before any analysis of the interviews began, I coded the data using a two-step process, where I first coded any broad and overlapping themes (such as intersections, school, and family). The second step in coding was more specific and focused on distinct codes, such as intersections between gender and ethnicity, or school and family (Bowleg, 2008). Once the coding was complete, I began the data analysis phase, keeping in mind that “just to tell what happened (the ‘what’) is not enough because the what depends greatly on the ways, negotiations, and other interactive elements that take place between the researcher and the respondent (the ‘how’)” (Fontana & Prokos, 2007, p. 74).

I approached the analysis from an issue-focus perspective, where I describe what I learned from the respondents about specific issues (Weiss, 1994). This approach allows for the individual respondents to be represented while exhibiting emerging patterns across the interviews. In analyzing the interview analysis within an intersectionality framework, I employed Bowleg’s (2008) and Cuadraz and Uttal’s (1999) approaches which state that the first phase in interview analysis is regarding individual accounts as individual experiences and letting the ‘data speak’, with the caveat that the “researcher must move beyond presenting a strictly phenomenological description of the experiences
and meanings described by the interviewees” (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999, p. 165).

According to this approach, during the second phase of data analysis, the researcher must move past a description of meanings and interrogate the data to see how different categories of identities have shaped the respondents’ accounts. This step recognizes and seeks to identify where and how the respondents’ accounts are shaped and defined by both categories of identity and larger structures of power. The goal of the second phase of analysis is to “learn how other and different individual accounts are shaped by their location within social hierarchies based on race, sex, and sexual orientation” (Bowleg, 2008, p. 318); additionally, this analytic step requires a contextualization of the larger socio-cultural and historical issues. Outlining this context from mainly archival sources enabled the interview data to be situated in the broader social context, which provided a bridge between the individual accounts and the macro structures. According to Bowleg (2008) the final stage of analysis examines any contradictions or tensions that are relevant to the intersections, both at the individual and macro level. The final stage of analysis is the culmination of the previous stages, as it requires not only an understanding and interpretation of individual accounts but also an intimate knowledge with the larger socio-cultural and historic situations that shape the individual. Undertaking an analysis of the role Turkish women’s ethnicity, religion, gender, and social class plays in their educational experiences and choices required me to contextualize the data gathered from in-depth interviews within larger structures of power, “resulting in studies that more accurately reflect the social realities of inequality and power in society, yet at the same time not lose sight of the individual experiences that reflect, shape, and construct those social structures” (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999, p. 170). As such, four main themes emerged
from the interview data which was both informed by and in tension with the broader socio-cultural context: laying claims to belonging; the use and significance of language; retrospective attitudes towards education; and gendered cultural identity. These four emerging themes have been examined from both the individual perspective, informed by the interviews, and situated within the German historical, political, cultural, and educational context, informed by archival sources.

Official documents, both current and archival, illuminate the larger historical and social framework of the individual woman’s educational experience; although these documents are inextricably bound to the historical moment in which they were created, they also provide insight into contemporary debates (Göktürk, Gramling, & Kaes, 2007). Document analysis is often used in qualitative research as a method of triangulation and to corroborate findings across data sets and help guard against potential researcher bias (Bowen, 2009). This project utilized historical documents like immigration records, statistics, and collections of photographs to corroborate the data gleaned from the in-depth interviews and make my findings more trustworthy (Glesne, 2006), while tracing educational policies and laws affecting Turkish Muslim women presents a genealogical timeline that is especially significant in paralleling the larger structures with women’s experiences. I followed what Bowen (2009) calls a thematic analysis, in which the researcher examines the documents collected and looks for broad or overarching patterns, which allows the researcher to apply the same thematic codes from the interview data to the content of the documents, so that, as with my interview data, I coded for distinct themes like intersections of religion, gender, immigrant status, and/or ethnicity. The
overlap of these identity categories within archival documents can point to how and which intersections are contributing to policies on education and im/migration. Document analyses can better direct the researcher’s “attention to how social structures and social history may appear to disappear from the individual’s awareness of their influence, yet they never entirely disappear from influencing individual experience and shaping meaning” (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999, p. 170). It is in this bridging of individual experience and socio-cultural structures that my in-depth interviews served to inform my document analysis and that my documents illuminated the influences of these structures on the individual.
Chapter 4: Results and Interpretations

Contestations of the ‘Reluctant Immigrant’

Four significant themes emerged from the interviews conducted with the women in Berlin: laying claims to belonging; the use and significance of language; retrospective attitudes towards educational experiences; and gendered cultural identity. Each woman spoke to these broad themes in a unique way, which not only underscored the need for an intersectional analysis which takes multiple categories of identity into account but also led to the creation of sub-categories. In this chapter, the themes are guided by the women’s own voices and supported by various archival and cultural sources, including newspaper articles, educational policies, candidates’ election platforms, and creative writing produced by the Turkish population in Germany. Despite their differing experiences, each woman exhibited particular ways in which they contest the dominant construction of the Turkish woman as a ‘reluctant immigrant’. Whether through their involvement with the immigrant women’s organizations, the ways in which they stretch the boundaries of belonging, or their personal beliefs regarding language and education, each woman presents a perspective that lies in direct opposition to the idea that Turkish people, particularly Turkish women, do not place value on German language or education and are inherently unable to integrate into a western value system. While this chapter
presents a cursory analysis of the data within each category, Chapter 5 provides a cross-themed analysis to highlight the emerging patterns from the data.

**Laying Claims to Belonging**

**In and between two worlds?**

One of the most consistent themes to emerge from the interviews is the ways in which the women each define and claim their belonging as a Turkish woman in Germany. By finding ways to emphasize their belonging outside of the formal definition of citizenship, these women present an alternative narrative to the dominant discourse surrounding Turkish belonging in Germany. Although the Turkish immigrant population has been settled and established in Germany for decades, they are not self-identifying as Germans. According to Seifert (1998), in 1994, only 8 percent of Turkish immigrants self-identified as Germans. Although this number is higher for second generation immigrants, 25 percent in 1994, the majority still see themselves as “members of their ethnic community and not as Germans” (Seifert, 1998, p. 98). While Seifert points to these numbers to highlight the exclusionary practices of German citizenship, they are also indicative of a diverse group of immigrants who have opted for another route to defining their place in German society.

Defined at one time only by their role as *Gastarbeiter* in the labor force, “textile industry; metalworking industry; food, drink and tobacco industries; ship-building; building trades; mining; as well as quarrying and brick making” (Confederation of German Employer’s Associations, 2007, p. 31), Turkish people have begun to challenge
the construction and boundaries of citizenship. The identity of the *Gastarbeiter*, as defined by the German term, thus “reduces migrants to their function…leaving limited conceptual, social, or linguistic space for meaningful incorporation into society” (Mandel, 2008, p. 55) By reclaiming their right to self-define their belonging in German society, they also challenge the deep-seated beliefs that form the us/them, German/Turkish dualities which “establish the role of national institutions in the maintenance and perpetuation of these principles and indirectly define the place granted newcomers” (Kastoryano, 2002, p. 30). The women I interviewed displayed concepts of belonging that lie in direct opposition to the common conception of immigrants as reluctant to adapt to cultural norms of the new society. By creating a self-defined sense of belonging, these women challenged the ‘reluctant immigrant’ trope and subverted the dominant classification of belonging based on citizenship.

For Barbieri (1998) the development of the complex definition of Germanness over the last two centuries coupled with the large-scale and rapid influx of immigrants has enabled the establishment of subordinate status for the Turkish immigrant population. The four dimensions of contemporary citizenship (as outlined by Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008), legal status, rights, participation, and a sense of belonging, underscore Germany’s paradoxical inclusion of immigrants through legal status and political rights while simultaneously denying them participation and a sense of belonging. The link between full rights as citizens and a sense of belonging reveals that “states are not solely legal and political institutions, but that they also impart cultural or social meaning” (Benhabib, in Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008, p. 156). Despite
exclusionary practices based on citizenship status, the Turkish population has begun to employ alternative ways to define their belonging in Germany society; on an individual level, the use of new and alternative forms of belonging works to reclaim agency, while at the broader level, it can be viewed as a Turkish/Diaspora movement. Fatma came to Germany in her late teens specifically to study in Berlin, where her father had been working as a *Gastarbeiter* for 14 years. Here, she describes her transition from a small village in Turkey to living as an immigrant in West Berlin:

As a woman it was really fun to live in a big city – it was freedom for me. I came from a small village…here there was no social control and in the small village there was always social control. I enjoyed the anonymity … Berlin is a really beautiful city for women…one can go out alone here…that’s why I’ve been here for 30 years.

Fatma calls her transition “fun but also strenuous”; although she moved to Germany to study at the university, she had to first take German language courses in addition to working as a cashier to earn extra money. Upon her arrival, she and her father had to find an apartment large enough for both of them, and within three months Fatma asked one of her older sisters to also join them in Berlin. After taking intensive German courses for six months, she got a job as a cashier. Having a job pleased her father, because it was his plan that she come to Germany and work, not attend university. Fatma emphasized this on-going battle between her and her father:
I had to fight against my family, because my father always wanted me to work [here in Germany]. He was sour that I wasn’t working and even though he didn’t forbid me to pursue an education, he also didn’t support me….it was a long struggle. He would always say, ‘if you had been working, you would have already earned so much money and saved so much money and what do you have now? – absolutely nothing.’

It is clear that although she had more freedom in Berlin, living as a Turkish immigrant created a kind of double life for her. The continuous struggle between her and her father represents the broader context of conflict Fatma found herself in. Although her goal was to leave Turkey to study in Berlin, she still faced familial pressures to pursue a career instead. She said, “I lived both worlds simultaneously, at the university really independent, and at home completely in Turkish, and everything was mixed”. Living simultaneously between and within two worlds reflects what Klopp (2002) identifies as “‘sit[ing] between two stools’ of home and civil society with respect to issues of authority, gender, family, and sex, for example” (p. 103).

Some reject the conception of the Turkish population in Germany existing in between two worlds, arguing this configuration “often functions literally like a reservation designed to contain, restrain, and impede new knowledge, not enable it” (Adelson, 2000, p. 265). Although the common conception of immigrant populations existing neither in their country of origin nor in the country to which they emigrated can be problematic in that it creates a situation where worlds are imagined apart, “suspended on a bridge in perpetuity” (Adelson, 2000, p. 267), Fatma situates herself not just between
but *within both* simultaneously. According to Suhr (1989), the idea of living between two cultures, “of being split” (p. 102), is the most common theme in the literature of second-generation Turkish writers. In his poem “Doppelmann” (“Double Man”) the writer Zafer Şenocak echoes Fatma’s sentiment of being not quite within either world, but somewhere in between:

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I carry two worlds within me
but neither one whole
they’re constantly bleeding
the border runs
right through my tongue. (Suhr, 1989, p. 102)
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This bifocality, a term used by Mandel (2008) to describe multiple and in-between positionings of immigrant populations, can be both destabilizing and optimistic as they relinquish one sense of belonging and create another. This concept of bifocality is echoed in a September 2011 article in the German daily newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*, which highlighted the four major party candidates from Kreuzberg, the Berlin district often referred to as ‘Little Istanbul’ because of its large Turkish population. The article, entitled “*Chancengleichheit in Kreuzberg*” (“Equal opportunity in Kreuzberg”) described the unique situation of four politicians of Turkish descent running against each other. Turgut Altug, a member of the Green Party and subsequent winner of the election, was described in the following manner: “Altug says a piece of his soul feels German, but this soul belongs to him alone, he does not want to be asked if he is German or Turkish” (Loy, 2011, para. 6). The description of Altug’s sense of belonging reveals an identity that is both deeply private and on display for his constituents; while able to claim
Germanness only privately, in the public sphere he is a harbinger of possibility for the Turkish population in Kreuzberg. Although the depiction of his Turkish/German bifocality feels destabilized, the larger message of the article is one of optimism: a sense of in-betweenness is normal for the Turkish population, but it can be harnessed to provide assistance to others.

For Fatma, the destabilizing sense of not quite belonging was long-term: it took ten years for her to really feel good living in Germany. Today, when she travels to Turkey, it is not to visit relatives but rather to vacation in her homeland. Fatma’s pride in being from Turkey is apparent when she describes the country as “a geographically beautiful land, it is in the middle of the world, historically it is where Mankind originated”. Emphasizing her attachment to Turkey, she adds that she came to Germany “to study, not to live and that remains”. Despite having lived in Germany for more than 30 years, Fatma stresses that “I am at home in both countries”. Like Erel (2003) identifies in her interviews with women of Turkish descent in Germany, Fatma argues for an identity that is simultaneously multi-national and devoid of nationalism. Fatma’s argument that she is “at home in both countries” and her self-identification as a Berliner, but not a German, challenges the exclusionary links between national identity and citizenship (Erel, 2003).

After the interview was finished, Fatma described an incident that exemplified her simultaneous belonging and exclusion as a Turkish woman in Germany. She had attended a conference on social work in the western part of Germany and during the conference lunch, a young man approached her and began a conversation with her.
Although he took notice of her accent which marked her as non-German, he was unable to place where she was from (although he desperately tried guessing everything from France to the former Yugoslavia). When she finally told him that she was from Turkey, he got up and walked away without saying another word. Although Fatma told this story with humor, seemingly to emphasize the intersection of her ethnicity, citizenship status, level of education, and gender situated her in a moment where the young man was rendered powerless, there is also something deeper and more distressing at play. The German man finds her exoticism appealing until she reveals her ethnic identity as Turkish, at which point Fatma’s exoticism morphs into the Other. It is clear that her secular dress, educational attainment, and German language ability were in direct contrast to the man’s perception of what a Turkish immigrant woman should be. Fatma’s account of this encounter underscores Kastoryano’s (2002) assertion that “the presence of foreigners has not changed anything in the laws on ‘Germanness’ and German nationality” (p. 60).

Like Fatma, Ayşe is the daughter of a guest worker who left his family in Turkey to work in Germany. She attended school in Turkey through the fourth grade before moving to a city in West Germany to be reunited with her father. She and her two siblings, both younger, were enrolled in a Turkish-German school to aid in their transition. According to Ayşe, “when I came from Turkey I didn’t speak any German, so the German-Turkish school really helped me”. Because of her and her siblings’ inability to speak German, the transition “at first [for all of us] it was very difficult, but later it was like this was our home.” Although she identifies her schooling as the biggest aspect
which aided in her transition from Turkey to Germany, she also speaks about the many times her relatives visited or how every vacation was spent in Turkey. Like Fatma, Ayşe’s claims to identity are tightly intertwined with both her Turkishness and her status as an immigrant to Germany. Although her family’s transition to Germany was eased by her enrollment in a Turkish-German school and her regular return visits to Turkey, it still took Ayşe a long time to feel as if Germany was her home.

Integration as secularization?

Born and raised in Berlin, Yeşim understands her identity in a different way than Fatma. For her, Turkey is not her homeland or a place she even feels comfortable calling home: “my home is here in Germany. Turkey is beautiful and nice and is a beautiful [place to] vacation, but I could not live there. This is my home, Germany.” Unlike Fatma who arrived in Berlin at 18 to attend university, Yeşim was educated in the German school system and attended school in a district of Berlin with a high concentration of foreigners. When asked whether gender played a role in her educational experiences, she stated the following:

Absolutely not. My family is liberal, not so strict. My entire family is integrated. My father has been here for 40 years. We also celebrate Christmas and have a tree. It’s not a real tree but a plastic one. We also give each other Christmas gifts…we celebrate both Turkish and German traditions. Both. I also do this with my own family and my son, who is 2 ½. My husband dresses up like Santa Claus and surprises him with gifts. We also observe Turkish [holidays like] Ramadan
and give gifts then. He is fortunate [to celebrate both]. He can really profit from getting gifts on both holidays – like double gifts! It’s a lot of fun to do this.

Yeşim’s example of her family’s integration is shaped by the intersection of gender, religion, her identity as a mother, and her participation in a consumer society. She understands the interview question about gender playing a role in her education as an implication that identifying as female and Muslim have somehow led to lower familial expectations or fewer opportunities for achievement. Yeşim’s insistence on her family’s status as ‘integrated’ is exemplified by her discussion of the family’s dual celebrations of Ramadan and Christmas. The litmus test of integration thus becomes the ways in which she performs her secularity; paradoxically, this performance involves participation in the Christian rituals of Christmas. The framework employed by Yeşim parallels a 2000 Christian Democratic Union (CDU), a center-right party, publication of their working principles for the Immigration Commission of the CDU party:

A special commitment for us is to preserve, strengthen, and continue to develop the Christian-influenced fundamental values of our free democracy…Without loyalty to the underlying moral concepts of the host country and a corresponding common identity consciousness, our community can neither fulfill its duties nor remind its citizens of their responsibility for everyone’s common welfare…. Consequently, the values of our Christian-Western culture, those shaped by Christianity, Judaism, ancient philosophy, humanism, Roman law, and the Enlightenment, must be accepted in Germany. This does not mandate the abandonment of personal cultural and religious character but rather the approval
of and **assimilation into our value frameworks** (CDU, 2000, pp. 181-182, emphasis mine).

In present-day Western Europe, immigration and Islam have become almost synonymous terms; the rise in Islam in Europe, largely due to immigration, has led to a coinciding of “the immigrant, the religious, the racial, and the socioeconomically disprivileged Other” (Casanova, 2009, p. 142). The rise in xenophobia and suspicion of the Muslim population in Germany in the past decade reveal the complex ways in which citizenship is tied to the construction of secularism and gendered definitions of cultural values; most notably, the connections between full citizenship rights and one’s religion and gender underscore the common assumption in the European community that Islam is not integratable into European standards of democracy (Taylor, 2009). What is striking about Yeşim’s proof of her family’s integration into a secular society is that it relies on the performance of a Christian celebration; the proving of her family’s integration is thus bounded by the ways in which Germany constructs its own version of secularism.

Although secularism, in its simplest form, calls for “de facto if not de jure separation between religion and politics” (Sayyid, 2009, p. 187), each nation-state interprets this call in a distinct way, making secularism a particular experience which is bounded by geographical borders (Modood, 2009). Thus, the denotation that a secular nation-state “should not be in the business of imposing or advancing or privileging any particular religion or religious belief or religion in general” (Levey, 2009, p. 4) is, in actuality, enacted by nation-states in varying and unique ways. In Germany, as in many European nations, the relationship between Christianity and secularism is deeply-rooted, complex, and rarely verbalized (Casanova, 2009). Because Germany’s secular and
Christian identities are so tightly intertwined, Islam is rendered the Other in two contexts simultaneously: to Germany’s Christian roots and to its outward performance of secularity. As Korteweg (2006) has identified in the Netherlands, “integration, then is not (only) about adopting universal liberal values, but (also) about (re)establishing the ethnic basis of the…nation-state, one that is defined via particular gender and religious practices” (p. 149). This form of integration holds “the normative superiority of a purported national core identity” (Korteweg, 2006, p. 163) as its basis, one which is both entirely fictitious and unsustainable. However, Yeşim’s demonstration of her family’s successful integration addresses gender and religious practices and Germany’s deeply-rooted Christian beliefs: the participation in and performance of Christmas in her family (complete with her husband’s characterization of Santa Claus) indicates that they are simultaneously secular Muslims and receptive to Germany’s form of secularism-as-Christianity. In contradiction to the commonly-accepted trope of the Turkish woman, covered, uneducated, and forced into an unwanted marriage, Yeşim’s story reveals the ways in which she performs both her secularity and her integration.

An identity of places.

Like Yeşim, Fatma problematizes the dominant discourse on belonging by emphasizing the differences in self-identification that she and her son hold. Although Fatma was born in Turkey and feels at home in both countries, her son was born and raised in Berlin. Here, she recalls conversations she had with him growing up:

My younger child always says to me ‘I am German’…I can’t even fathom…because German society will never accept that, and then the child will
always have difficulties. Then I always tell him ‘Your mother and your father are from Turkey, you were born in Berlin, you are a Berliner!’ That really worried me because I knew that German society would not accept this, that he would have difficulties. His parents come from Turkey, that is a safer history, I think. Since then, he’s become 14 and says ‘my parents are from Turkey, I was born in Berlin, I grew up in Berlin, I am a Berliner. I am German and Turkish, both mixed’ – this is now what he says.

Stressing regional belonging also plays a significant role in by-passing issues of citizenship; belonging to a place like Berlin or Baden challenges the self-definition of ethnic Germans and troubles not only what it means to be a foreigner but what it means to be German (Schneider, 2002). An identity based on one’s residence in a certain city is a two-fold reclamation of identity: the location serves as the place where they enact their distance from the homeland, but it also enables this separation in the first place. Thus, being a “Frankfurt Turk is a collective project, experienced and lived as part of youth culture” (Römhild, 2002, p. 374). Stressing regional belonging over citizenship status is also a theme in popular music, as hip-hop songs like Advanced Chemistry’s 1992 “Fremd im eigenen Land” (“A Stranger in my Own Country”) stress connections to a particular city rather than the nation-state:

\[
\textit{Das Problem sind die Ideen im System:}
\]

\[
\textit{ein echter Deutscher muss auch richtig deutsch aussehen,}
\]

\[
\textit{blaue Augen, blondes Haar, keine Gefahr,}
\]

\[
\textit{gab's da nicht 'ne Zeit wo's schon mal so war?!}
\]
"Gehst du mal später zurück in deine Heimat?"

"Wohin? nach Heidelberg? wo ich ein Heim hab?"

"Nein du weisst, was ich mein..."

The problem is the ideas in the system:

a true German must also look properly German,
blue eyes, blonde hair, no danger,
was there ever a time when it wasn’t like this?!
“Are you going to go back to your homeland?”
“Where to? To Heidelberg? Where I have a home?”
“No, you know what I mean…”

These lyrics emphasize that being German equates to matching a specific set of parameters, including external characteristics and speech patterns. Although each member of Advanced Chemistry was a German citizen, they were marked as other because of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Italian, Ghanaian, and Haitian). The song lyrics challenge the artificiality of Germanness as a marker for cultural belonging. Not only does the song question the reliance on physical traits to establish one’s status as a German, it allows the listener to participate in the ways in which both minorities and majority populations construct the alternative identity of belonging. The dialogue between a band member and a fictionalized German embodies the tensions which arise from a dominant narrative which constructs the definition of belonging around accents, skin color, and facial features. Thus, while the singer answers the question of returning to his ‘homeland’ by defiantly identifying as a Heidelberger, the larger message of the
lyrics becomes clear: powerless to be included in the definition of Germanness, minority cultures have no other option than to create categories of belonging which are still accessible to them. According to Mandel (2008), even those who do hold German citizenship feel unable to claim the identity of “German” but are perfectly comfortable identifying as “Berliner”; these Turks have “carved for themselves a niche of de facto permanence experimenting with modes of identification less attached to ethnonational categories” (Mandel, 2008, p. 157). This geographical claim of belonging, not to be conflated with claims of citizenship (one can be a ‘Berliner’ without being a ‘German’), is what Fatma describes in her conversation with her son. Although her son was born and has lived his entire life in Berlin, he will never be German. The argument for an “identity of places” underscores that Berlin is not coterminous with Germany (Erel, 2003). Fatma’s emphatic insistence that her son is a Berliner comes not from a place of ethnic preservation but rather from the knowledge that German society would never accept a Turkish person claiming to be German. Mandel’s (2008) interview with Gül, a female of Turkish descent living in Berlin, draws distinct parallels to Fatma:

**Maybe I am a Berliner. But I can’t be a German.** First of all, they won’t have me, they wouldn’t let me call myself that. They think about “blood”; they are so racist how they think of these things…The Germans talk about “integration” all the time, and that now Turks can be citizens. But it is nonsense, since when people ask you who you are, they don’t care about the passport you hold. They see me and know that I am not German. **They won’t let me be German.** (pg. 105, emphasis added)
The insistence that ‘they’ exclude a woman of Turkish descent from being German, either in citizenship status or in a broader, socio-cultural way, echoes Fatma’s own fears for her son’s identity. In Germany, the “right of blood thus perpetuates the status of foreigner from one generation to the next”, so that, as in Fatma’s case, “a Turkish child born in Germany of Turkish parents…remains a Turk both de jure and de facto” (Kastoryano, 2002, p. 61). Germany’s conception of citizenship is based in the legacy of *ius sanguinis*, a citizenship inexorably tied to ancestral lineage. Although the German Constitution’s definition of a German citizen is “one who possesses German citizenship” (http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/), the social and cultural adherence to citizenship and Germanness is extremely complex (Luchtenberg, 2004).

*Figure 4.* “We are one people”: exhibit at the German History Museum, Berlin. Photo by the author.
During the 20th century, Germany citizenship was based solely on the concept of *ius sanguinis*, thus legitimizing the social, cultural, and political removal of rights; these rights were not only granted in full to ethnic Germans, they were also used to reinscribe the German citizen as one who shares in a belonging based on a common culture, religion, language and history. The idea of belonging based on *ius sanguinis* “led to the idea that practically no one could be accepted as German whose family has not been in Germany for centuries…thus, being a Black German seemed to be a contradiction in itself, though there have been Black Germans since the Middle Ages” (Luchtenberg, 2004, p. 247). The citizenship laws today allow for not only *ius sanguinis* but also the more liberal *ius soli*, citizenship based on place of birth; however, although the new citizenship laws are a means of guaranteeing political rights and legal status, the laws have no bearing on the expectations of cultural identity and belonging (Kastoryano, 2002). The change to the law has not altered the thinking of many Germans regarding what it means to be ‘German’ or who can claim the identity of ‘German’ (Goldberg, 2002); despite the new legal definition of citizenship, the German legacy of the *Volk* still holds power, socially and culturally, in the definition of a German citizen.

*Kanak as contestation of marginalization.*

The argument put forth by both Fatma and Mandel’s (2008) Gül emphasizes the connection of Germanness to cultural identity and belonging as a mode of exclusion; this connection leads both women to claim regional forms of belonging, which are external to and autonomous from citizenship status. Likewise, the recent *Kanak* movement among the younger generations of Turkish people in Germany emphasizes the claiming of an
identity not tied to the nation-state as both intentional and as a source of community power. The self-definition of second and third generation Turks in Germany presents an alternative to the dominant classification of Germanness. The term Kanak has been adopted and transformed, particularly through the medium of hip-hop, into a movement that contests the marginalization of Turkish people in German society. The origin of Kanak is nearly impossible to trace, but its pejorative use towards the Turkish population could be equated to the term ‘nigger’ in an American context. Although the original meaning of the word has been obscured, its modern racial definition has been used by Germans in reference to any immigrant population of brown skin (Cheesman, 2004). It was Feridun Zaimoğlu, a Turkish-born German writer inspired by American rap and hip-hop, who coined and marketed Kanak Attak in 1997, thus opening space for a critique about the way Turkish immigrants are denied their voice in German society (Cheesman, 2004). Originating from his book Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtone vom Rande der Gesellschaft (Kanak Speak: 24 Notes of Discord from the Margins of Society), the term Kanak grew into a linguistic and socio-cultural movement (Loentz, 2006, p. 34). Although turning the definition of Kanak on its head allows the Turkish population to bypass the question of belonging, doing so is not a resignation from the claiming of German identity; often it means that these Turkish youth exist somewhere in between and within two cultures (Schneider, 2002). By operating from within the confines of the dominant German discourse to destroy it and redefine Germanness, the Turkish youth culture movement reclaims power within the larger society.
When hip hop arrived in West Germany during the early 1980s, it was seen as a socio-cultural movement begun by a marginalized population. Despite its loss of commercial appeal throughout the 1980s, small groups of hip hop followers remained and in 1988 the first West German hip hop record, *Use the Posse*, was released by the group Rock Da Most. The reunification of Germany ushered in a rise in the popularity of hip hop, especially within immigrant populations. In 1991, the Nuremberg-based group King Size Terror released the first hip hop album in Turkish, entitled *Bir Yabancimin Hayati* (‘The Life of the Stranger’); according to Elflein (1998), this record’s emphasis on lyrics “gave immigrant youngsters a way of discussing what it meant to be a German ‘stranger’ or ‘foreigner’” (p. 257). During this time, neo-Nazi attacks on foreigners escalated across the newly-unified country; asylum seekers were attacked in Rostock and Turkish homes in Mölln and Solingen were firebombed (Soysal, 2004). While various institutions made efforts to ‘educate’ the German youth through hip hop in response to these xenophobic attacks, others, in an increasing effort to separate the hip hop movement in Germany from German nationalism, used their music to foster an understanding of multiculturalism by critiquing the construction of immigrants as foreigners (Elflein, 1998).

Islamic Force, one of the original Turkish hip hop groups in Germany, also adopted this term when they changed their group name in 1995 to Ka.Nak (Soysal, 2004). In Turkish, this term can be ‘Kan Ak’, or blood is flowing; according to Soysal (2004), the name suited the group well, as “its emphasis was on being human” and “included the definitive rap metaphor, blood, unmistakably alluding to ghetto conditions” (p. 77).
Other groups like Fresh Familee sexualized the term and its racial implications in their rap “Sexy Kanake”. Young Turks outside of the hip-hop movement have also begun referring to themselves as “Kanak-stas”, a combination of the American term “gangsta” and “Kanak” (von Dirke, 2004). After Feridun Zaimoğlu, a Turkish-born German writer, coined and marketed Kanak Attak in 1997, the term Kanak grew to embody a multitude of Turkish socio-linguistic movements (Cheesman, 2004). A multi-ethnic network of activists worked under the name Kanak Attak to provide messages of social justice (Cheesman, 2004). By adopting this racially-charged word and by using various media, this group attempts to address issues of “othering” and xenophobia in Germany.

Constructed outside of the national myth of German citizenship based on blood, young Turks employ Kanak as a collective means at achieving social transformation. Adopting the term Kanak creates a fissure in the German social order, a site which not only operates as social antagonism but also bypasses questions of belonging. The term Kanak has been adopted and transformed into a movement that contests the marginalization of Turkish people in German society, but this movement runs much deeper than a discursive practice. The Turks who employ Kanak have, in effect, challenged Germany’s social order and its deeper epistemological underpinnings by forcing them to redefine Germanness. It is here, within the space created by Kanak, that democracy has interrupted consensus (the Kanak Attak’s main page, www.kanak-attak.de, even asserts “democracy instead of integration”). The Turkish re-appropriation of Kanak has robbed the word of its racist power, further destabilizing the construction of Germanness (Cheesman, 2004). By turning the classification of ‘belonging’ on its head,
the Turkish population in Germany is thus redefining what it means to belong; by appropriating a racial slur, *Kanakization* has led to a new self-identification of the Turkish population.

Kanak Attak offers a platform for Kanaken from different social areas [who] are sick of the easy switching between cultures recommended by postmodernists. Kanak Attak wants to break the assignment of ethnic identities and roles; the 'we' and 'them'. So our project is caught up in the whirlpool of contradictions concerning the relation of representation, difference and the ascription of ethnic identities.

Nevertheless: we compete for a new attitude of migrants of all generations that we want to bring on stage, independently and without compromise. Whoever believes that we celebrate a Potpourri out of Ghetto-HipHop and other clichés will be surprised. We sample, change and adapt different political and cultural drifts that all operate from oppositional positions. We go back to a mixture of theory, politics and cultural practice. This song is ours. (Kanak Attack Website, www.kanak-attak.de)

Not only does the organization challenge citizenship as it has been constructed by the nation-state, it also interrogates the belief that a multicultural society can be formed simply through tighter controls on immigration and more restrictions to the rights of foreigners already in Germany. Identities are socially and politically constructed through the processes of group formation and individual and shared experiences. Because they
are formed in relation to other people, identities are relational and interdependent (Ehrkamp, 2006). Additionally, it is through discursive practices that representational identities are formed; thus, representation of Turkish immigrants in the media can serve to create a positive image or reinforce already existing stereotypes (Ehrkamp, 2006). In the case of Kanak Attak, their aim is to work against the common ‘Kanakization’ of immigrant populations in Germany by operating from within the space of the racial slur. Rejecting all forms of identity politics allows the group to adopt “Kanak so as to invert Kanak” (Soysal, 2004, p. 79), thus destigmatizing and reclaiming the term for themselves. In employing other definitions of belonging outside the realm of political citizenship, the Turkish population in Germany is thus redefining what it means to belong; for the first time, *ius sanguinis* plays no role in the self-identification of the Turkish population. By deconstructing how Germans classify ‘citizens’ and ‘others’, these alternative forms of belonging lead not only to a re-evaluation of what it means to be Other but also to a deeper interrogation of what it means to be German (Mandel, 2008).

**The Use and Significance of Language**

In October 2010, Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke to a gathering of young members of her conservative political party, the Christian Democratic Union, about the state of immigration and integration in Germany. She supported her claims that the multicultural approach in Germany had “failed, utterly failed” with the argument that immigrants refused to live peacefully alongside Germans and that they rejected learning German, a skill which would help them succeed in the educational system and provide
expanded career opportunities (Siebold, 2010). Merkel added that, although immigrants should learn to speak German, "we should not be a country either which gives the impression to the outside world that those who don't speak German immediately or who were not raised speaking German are not welcome here (“Merkel says German multicultural”, 2010, para. 7)." Merkel’s focus on language as a key determinate to immigrants’ willingness or ability to integrate into German society is not new to the integration debate; in 1979, Heinz Kühn, who had recently been appointed to the newly-established post of the commissioner of foreigner affairs, released a memorandum outlining key priorities to integration, including that “foreign teachers would have a special understanding for the languages difficulties and the family background of the children” (Kühn, 1979, p. 248). Similarly, the president of the European Language Council outlined the necessity of learning German in a 2001 publication, stating that because “language is the key to understanding the culture, the way of life” it is crucial that “those coming here from elsewhere already speak German or else soon learn it” (Mackiewicz, 2001, p. 279). Although the first guest workers from Turkey arrived in 1961, measures to provide language training and education to the children of guest workers were not initiated until 1971 (Castles, 2000). The plan, drafted in 1971 and revised in 1976, allowed non-German speaking students to receive a German education while simultaneously preparing them for return to their country of origin (Castles, 2000).

For the Turkish population, language is inseparable from their self-identification, and they demand its preservation, whether through its use in the home or in a bi-lingual education school program (Kastoryano, 2002). In a cross-national study of Turkish
immigrants in France, The Netherlands, and Germany, Ersanilli and Koopmans (2011) found that among first and the in-between generation (children of guest workers who were born in Turkey) Turkish is the dominant language in all three countries. Their studies also identified that the use of the host country’s language increases with the following factors: attainment of higher education; being currently employed; and being female and unmarried (Ersanilli & Koopmans, 2011). In Berlin, the Association of Parents of Students encourages a bi-lingual program in the city’s school, one which integrates the Turkish and German speakers in the classroom and in the curriculum, instead of the more common form of bi-lingual education which separates out the language learner from the classroom. For Fatma, this type of language training is most effective: “What’s right is that the children need to be together with the German children. Every language has equal value, this is important – culture and language together. Naturally this observation has been criticized…”

The long-term economic and societal effects of an immigrant population that is under-educated and under-employed cannot be disregarded: in 1999, the unemployment rate for immigrants in Germany was 20 percent, twice that of their native German counterparts (Yurdakul & Bodemann, 2006b). The corollary to such numbers is two-fold: there is a tendency within the Turkish population to withdraw from mainstream society, creating what is described as a Parallelgesellschaft (parallel society); additionally, the government also retreats from the push towards multiculturalism towards what Brubaker (2003) calls a ‘return to assimilation’. This concept does not mean returning to the practice of conformity to the dominant society, but rather toward
the “normative and analytical concern with the nature and extent of emerging similarities in particular domains between populations of immigration origin and ‘host’ populations” (Brubaker, 2003, pp. 42-43); essentially, the expectation is that if the immigrants want to be a part of a new society, they have to “do their share” (Wikkan, as cited in Yurdakul & Bodemann, 2006b). This share can be anything from the removal of a headscarf in public to learning the national language. In a similar vein, Gramling (2009) identifies an emerging trend in the German social and political spheres away from previous conceptions of Germannness as situated around *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli* and towards a new definition which centers on language: “*ius linguarum* or ‘right of languages’” (p. 131). Rather than blood or place of birth as a prerequisite for belonging, *ius linguarum* acknowledges society as being pluralistic but “resorts to segregative strategies...in order to minimize the effect of multilingualism on public life” (Gramling, 2009, p. 131), which has a distinct effect on native and non-native German speakers and even international students seeking to study in Germany. Like Gramling’s focus on language as the primary category in issues of belonging in the German context, Hansen-Thomas (2007) offers a historical tracing of the ways in which German language ideology has been in operation since the Middle Ages. She characterizes Germany as “an imagined community where language subsumes national identity and Germannness” and argues this “poses difficulties for would-be members by limiting rights and freedoms” (Hansen-Thomas, 2007, p. 261). A strong sense of the significance of German language to immigration appears to operate as a mechanism of exclusion, placing less value on non-native speakers both in and outside of the educational system.
Within the German school system, there is a strong correlation between the educational attainment of immigrants and German language proficiency (Holdaway, Crul, & Roberts, 2009; Söhn & Özcan, 2006; Pásztor, 2008), but it does not indicate the reasons for significant overrepresentation of immigrant populations in the lower educational tracks or their continued lack of performance on international achievement studies like the Program on International Student Assessment (PISA). While some examine the lack of educational achievement from a systemic perspective, citing both the PISA outcomes which indicate a strong correlation between family social origin, parental educational attainment, and student achievement, and the structure of the German educational system as being innately unequal (Auernheimer, 2006; Söhn & Özcan, 2006), others maintain a stance which situates immigrants as the ones who maintain primary responsibility for integration and language acquisition. Paralleling Merkel’s stance on the failure of multiculturalism in Germany, Beckstein (1999) supports the rejection of the multicultural project by maintaining that “peaceful coexistence” among multiple cultures relies on both “the acquisition of the German language” and immigrants who “must devote themselves to our state and its societal and constitutional order and value system” (p. 304). While Beckstein (1999), who served as the Bavarian interior minister, does maintain that the educational level for immigrant populations needs improvement, the onus falls entirely on the non-native population to increase their “willingness to make extensive use of the numerous offerings available” (p. 304).

Although those who address the question of integration in Germany identify language as a crucial step in educational and economic advancement, they fall on a larger
spectrum which situates the state and the individual immigrant at opposite ends. In the more conservative rhetoric, individuals take on full responsibility of successful integration into a ‘host’ society; from this perspective, only through cultural assimilation, which includes surrendering citizenship to other countries, can immigrants ‘prove’ their loyalty to the German nation-state. In this case, the ideal German citizen is not only included as an active member in state society but is also “a bearer of German culture and language, and an engaged participant in the political life of a community viewed as worthy of his or her ultimate loyalty and sacrifice” (Barbieri, 1998, p.21). According to Todd (2006), this debate centers on the conception of integration and assimilation. The key distinction between these two processes is that integration carries a focus of binding together groups with differing cultural practices in an effort to remove conflicts between them, while assimilation is more understood as the removal of differences that act as a barrier to cultural homogeneity; thus, “integration falls more readily into the realm of government action, whereas assimilation emphasizes the adaptive act of the migrants in relinquishing an old identity for a new one” (Barbieri, 1998, p. 48). If integration, which can be understood as the ability to internalize the value systems of society, is the main goal of the German nation-state regarding its immigrant population, then it is crucial that they are granted access to the values of the institutionalized values system (Goldberg, 2002); this institutional access includes political rights and representation and claims to educational opportunities afforded to other populations in the school system.

While the political rhetoric surrounding language acquisition as a tool to integration and economic and educational success in Germany revolves around the
construction of the immigrant as one who resists learning German and who chooses their own language to the detriment of their cultural belonging, the women with whom I spoke offer an alternative narrative. Not only do the women contest the dominant narrative of the ‘reluctant immigrant’ through their work with their respective organizations assisting other women with language courses and homework tutoring sessions, they also embody a different narrative of the immigrant, one which places language at the center of both integration and cultural preservation. The women’s identities as Turkish, immigrants (or of Turkish descent), mothers, and members of organizations which seek to empower minority women contribute to their placement of language as a crucial marker of their belonging in Germany. Stressing German language acquisition as a tool to economic and educational attainment while simultaneously uplifting their native language underscores their belief that “conformity to this society will certainly make their lives easier but will also remove the richness that life offers the wanderer between worlds” (Zaptçioğlu, 1993, p.348).

**Language as an intergenerational link.**

Both Ayşe and Fatma discussed the use of language through references to their children, indicating that both Turkish and German play a central role in their educational achievements. Ayşe, who was soft-spoken and reluctant to elaborate on her answers during the interview, became animated with pride when discussing her children’s language abilities. She has three sons, two in their mid-twenties and one in his mid-teens, one of whom lives in Munich and the other two in Berlin. Unlike Ayşe, who attended a
Turkish-German school with teachers from Turkey, her three sons attended German-only schools in Berlin. She stated that:

They [3 sons] attended just a German [language] school – at home we still speak only Turkish, but outside the home we speak German…it’s always good to know and to be able to speak many languages.

Because her sons attended a German-only school in Berlin, they were able to receive instruction in a third language (Turkish is not represented in German-only schools, even as a second or third language option), and today can speak English conversationally. It is clear that Ayşе places value on learning not just Turkish but also German and English. Not only do these languages offer her sons the opportunity for economic advancement, they work to resituate the power that is often removed from a population unable to speak the language of the majority. Despite their home being located in a heavily-populated Turkish neighborhood in Berlin, the message Ayşе has given to her sons is to preserve one’s cultural heritage while also acquiring new languages which give access to higher levels of economic and educational achievement. Her job at the Turkish women’s organization reinforces this message: while she works with Turkish-speaking women to fill out documents and learn basic German, the underlying message of the organization is that these important steps can be accomplished without one forfeiting their linguistic heritage.

Fatma spoke at length about the structural and educational issues in Berlin schools, particularly those which deal with language differences. Although Fatma arrived in Germany as a teenager prepared to study at the university, German language
acquisition was still a major difficulty; her father, a Turkish guest worker, paid for German language courses because “he was aware of the importance of learning German”. Despite their conflicting reasons for her enrollment in the language courses — “his intention was for me to work and I had other intentions – I wanted to study” — the connection between learning German and higher levels of income and education was clear. Like her father, Fatma also understands the connection between success and language acquisition. When I asked Fatma if she believed the teachers receiving a more quality multicultural training would help non-native speakers in the classroom, she replied:

They [the children] only need their native language supported…my children are bilingual. They know both German and Turkish and can speak [German] without an accent…that is an ideal condition, an ideal situation, that one opens up these opportunities to these children. And for society this is a chance, an opportunity – these children know the language, why aren’t they being supported in the school?

According to Fatma, there are about 50 schools in her district of the city in which the lessons are taught in another language alongside German. Of those schools, only one is a Turkish-German school; because it is a private school, it is not only costly to staff and run but also to enroll. From Fatma’s perspective, the schools in Berlin promise native German speakers that they will acquire at least one language that will be advantageous to them, but non-native speakers do not see their language reinforced by the language policies in the school system, so not only do they end up tracked into schools with lower educational outcomes, they are not given the opportunity to learn English, French, or a language which could benefit them educationally or economically.
Fatma’s children had attended the one Turkish-German language school in her district, and she was able to outline its pedagogical practices in detail: in the first year, the children are separated and given instruction based on their native language, so that native German speakers are taught in German and Turkish speakers taught in Turkish. In second grade, this concept is reversed, which means that both Turkish students and German students are given instruction in a second language. Although the students remain mixed for courses like art, music, and gym, they are separated like this through the ninth grade, at which point the students are re-integrated with each other and attend all subjects as a mixed student body. Because of this attention to both German and Turkish, Fatma’s children were able to read in Turkish within two months; although she describes them struggling more with the German instruction, she emphasizes that all children perform at higher levels when they are given instruction in their native language.

Although Lale, like Fatma, is the daughter of a Turkish guest worker, her experiences reveal the ways in which language in intricately tied to one’s cultural identity and sense of belonging. Lale was raised in Turkey until her fifth year of formal education, when she and her siblings immigrated to Germany to join her mother and father. Because both of her parents were guest workers in Berlin, Lale was raised by her Macedonian grandparents who spoke little Turkish and were illiterate. Despite these hindrances to her learning, Lale excelled in the classroom and, after a year of a language preparation course in Berlin, was able to enroll in a Hauptschule. Throughout her experiences, language, although significant in her educational achievement, was not the biggest factor in her success:
I was here, and my parents could read, write, etc, but [when] I was in Turkey with my grandparents and they couldn’t read, write, or speak [Turkish]. Despite this, I always received very good grades. I believe that school is more important than where one’s family comes from.

When I asked her about the experiences of children of Turkish descent in Berlin schools today, she replied:

Language is the smaller problem, I believe, especially for the children who were born here and grew up here. Language isn’t the problem, the idea that they shouldn’t be together or that they’re ignored is worse…they are isolated [in the school].

For Lale, her experience as an immigrant who was placed into an integration course upon her arrival in Germany has shaped her perception of the role language plays in a student’s educational attainment. Because she overcame what research describes as major obstacles to one’s academic advancement (raised by grandparents who were illiterate in her native language; immigration to Germany; her subsequent placement in a language integration course which she was required to complete before entering German public school; parents who spoke Turkish and not German in the home), Lale perceives the major issue in education not from the perspective of language representation but from the segregation and isolation of Germans and non-native speakers (Söhn & Özcan,, 2006). While research clearly identifies the language spoken in the students’ home as a key factor in academic advancement, it also reinforces the image of the Turkish immigrant as one reluctant to learn German, even to the detriment of the next generation’s educational and economic advancement. What Fatma and Lale reveal is a tension between this
rhetoric and the individual experiences of immigrants in German schools. Like Fatma, Lale’s son attended Turkish-German primary school before transferring to a German-only school. She stated:

At home Turkish was spoken, in school German…Learning Turkish at home, I believe, allows them to learn another language even better, because when one really knows their native language they can learn another language that much better.

The belief that learning one language at home will assist in the successful acquisition of a second language has been widely debated; those supporting a multicultural standpoint take the view that children of non-dominant cultures must also be represented both in classroom pedagogy and curriculum. However, others maintain that instruction in one’s native language, or even speaking a different language in the household, is a questionable practice for both integration and academic advancement:

The standard argument is that mastery of the first language is allegedly essential for the acquisition of the second language. But must we not first of all delegate this responsibility to the parental home, despite the complications?...That they be able to deal with open society. And learn German: read it, write it, speak it. (Gaschke, 2001, p. 371).

Here, Gaschke conflates a student’s language ability with secularism, Western values, and their ability to “deal with open society” (p. 371). Like with Merkel’s assertion that immigrants refused to learn German and thus contributed to the failure of the multiculturalism project in Germany, Gaschke reinforces the trope of the ‘reluctant immigrant’ by placing the onus of language acquisition on the immigrant family. What
the conservative, anti-multiculturalism rhetoric and the women’s individual experiences reveal is a pervasive disconnect between those who have experienced the educational system as immigrants and those who seek to find a solution before identifying the real problem. The intergenerational linkage supporting the significance of language to the Turkish immigrant population highlights the necessity of addressing language as an educationally complex issue: while language spoken in the home can contribute to a student’s educational achievement, so also can a country’s language support program and its implicit policies regarding minority language representation in the classroom (Holdaway, Crul & Roberts, 2009).

The politics of language.

The belief that schools in Germany should enable students to learn German through their native language is not a new concept. In 2008 and again in 2010, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan suggested that the German government should establish Turkish-medium high schools and universities (“Erdogan calls for Turkish schools”, 2010). Although the calls for Turkish schools in Germany were rejected by German government officials, including Merkel herself, Erdogan suggested that students who learn in Turkish would be better able to acquire German language skills. Fatma also questioned the exclusion of certain languages in the German school system:

There is no value placed on [the migrant children’s] mother tongue – there are German-English schools, German-French schools, why aren’t there German-Turkish schools?
This quote reveals that Fatma sees a lack of investment in Turkish language schools as a reflection of the broader socio-cultural context: Turkish people are undervalued in society and underrepresented in occupations which require higher education. Seen as a minority language, Turkish language schools are viewed as an expense without any tangible returns. Although the organization with which Fatma, Ayşe and Lale are associated states in its mission that “integration begins with language acquisition” and offers a number of German language courses and training opportunities, these initiatives are not reflected at the state level. For Fatma, there is a clear connection between the perceived value and economic return of a language and its curricular representation:

I think that people don’t want [these types of schools] because they think these children will return to their home country anyway. [They think] ‘why should we invest so much money in migrant children when they’ll just return to Turkey permanently anyway?’ One comes to this conclusion – 50 years have passed and still this problem. But in the meantime, this mentality has changed within politics. One would like to invest in these children – today in Berlin, 40 percent of the children under 18 are migrant children! 40 percent! And when one doesn’t invest in these children, the future is ruined!

Although the idea that proficiency in German is essential for a student’s academic achievement, there are no studies on immigrants in Germany and the relationship between their school performance and language proficiency (Söhn & Özcan, 2006). For Fatma, statistics and research would only reinforce the inequalities of the school system she sees on a daily basis. The reality that, 50 years after the first Turkish guest worker arrived in Germany, the school system still has policies in place which treat the Turkish
population as a temporary guest is indicative of the role education plays in social
mobility. According to Holdaway, Crul, and Roberts (2009), what is of profound
importance in determining “different life chances of social groups” is how “different
societies legislate for education and how their educational policies enshrine issues of
equity and distributional justice” (p. 1384). The intertwining of politics and beliefs about
an individual’s role in the process of integration becomes central to the discussion on
language representation in the educational system:

People think that the migrant children can’t speak German well because they
speak their mother tongue. For this reason people would like to make speaking in
their native tongue forbidden. When one forbids their language it means that
[their language] is inferior, that they are inferior. This feeling is indirectly caused
by this [these beliefs]. And when the teacher says ‘no, you can’t speak [your
language] here, naturally one doesn’t feel like they are equal. When we don’t
help to mediate this with these children, this is my opinion, that these children are
a piece of this society, they are this society, as long as we don’t help these
children, they cannot better their accomplishments.

For Carens (2006), any country espousing a commitment to the liberal democratic
principles of equality and freedom “will sometimes require immigrants to change and
sometimes require the receiving society to change” (p. 36). More than just legal,
political, and institutional concepts must be taken into account under this definition of
liberal democratic justice. The ways in which these structures play out culturally and
individually and how they contribute to developing a certain “public culture, one that sees
immigrants as full members of society and treats them with respect” (Carens, 2006, p. 37)
is critical to creating an atmosphere conducive to integration. Based on Fatma’s perspective, the ways in which the educational system perceives the Turkish language and, by extension, Turkish-speaking students, is as a hindrance rather than an opportunity. Combined with the conservative discourse which has dominated the integration discussion since Merkel’s election as chancellor in 2005, the political discussion surrounding the significance of non-Germans in schools reveals a government vehemently opposed to these ideas, instead placing blame for the perceived failure of integration solely on the immigrant population, rather than in the potential shortcomings of the German school system (Korteweg, 2006). Although there are few exceptions, including a recently-elected representative from the heavily-populated Turkish district of Kreuzberg, the approach has been one of caution and insistence that the best approach to integration is through students speaking only German (Siebold, 2010).

Figure 5. Kreuzberg election poster in Turkish. Photo by the author.
During my field research in Berlin, there was immense coverage of and excitement for the upcoming local elections. In a district that is heavily populated by people of Turkish descent and other minority groups, there were four Turkish candidates vying for the same elected position, a first in Berlin’s history. This representation across the four major parties (Green, Left, Christian Democratic Party, and Social Democratic Party) held a lot of meaning in an area where around 50 percent of the residents hold German citizenship, and from this 50 percent about half are naturalized citizens (Loy, 2011). When I asked Fatma about the upcoming elections and the Turkish candidates’ stances on the current state of education in Berlin, she replied:

In relation to the two-language education, they now say ‘the German language is important to know’ but this doesn’t mean that the other languages should be left behind…they are learning Chinese. That can be good for German children, but I’m not so sure about Turkish children!”

Figure 6. Turgut Altug’s election poster: “Kreuzberg for all of us.” Photo by the author.
The winner of the local district election was Turgut Altug, a member of the Green Party. According to his website (Altug, n.d.), Altug was born and raised in southern Turkey and came to Germany to write and complete his doctorate. Despite his status as an immigrant and his location as a representative of a district that contains a constituency with a large proportion of people of Turkish descent, Altug’s election platform spoke little of educational and language opportunities. One section, entitled “A Good Educational Policy is the Best Integration Policy”, described his political stance in the following way:

National and international studies show that the educational chances for children in Germany depend heavily on their social status…every child who cannot find their place in society due to a poor education, is a loss for the future of our city. From my work in environmental and nature education projects, in kindergartens and schools, I know many children who are spoken of in the studies, personally. I do projects with them like: Our School Saves Energy, Solar Children, Nature as a Second Language, etc…children need support and the right approach - then they can and will want to learn. It is therefore particularly important to me that we need more educational staff with intercultural competence…(Altug, n.d., emphasis mine)

Altug’s platform on the educational situation of Berlin’s low-income and non-native population situates the debate away from language and on to structural aspects of the system. It is possible that this aversion to placing language as central to integration politics has to do with both his political party and his status as a Turkish immigrant: because environmental issues have always been central to the Green Party’s platform, a
discussion on language in schools seems incongruent, and because Altug is himself an immigrant from Turkey, albeit with a different educational status as many other Turkish immigrants, placing emphasis on Turkish language use as a means for integration could reify his position as just another ‘reluctant immigrant’. In 2010, the *Berliner Zeitung*, a central-left newspaper in Berlin, wrote an article about Altug’s bilingual environmental center, which aims to provide training to adults and children on city gardening, trash and recycling, and general environmental information in both Turkish and English (Schmid, 2010). The article describes Altug’s children’s curriculum, Nature as a Second Language, where children in day care and elementary school can “explore nature and deepen their German expertise with words like basil, caterpillar, or bumblebee” (Schmid, 2010, para. 4). Although this article reveals that Altug works with the non-German speaking populations to further their German language skills, this goal is secondary to increasing their knowledge of the environment. This example underscores Fatma’s earlier statement that although certain languages, projects, and curriculum have been created or adapted to include more representation of minority languages and cultures, the politics reveals that many times, these measures are either ineffective or made to benefit the German population.

In a city where unemployment remains twice as high for immigrants as for Germans and is highest among those of Turkish descent, and the estimate for immigrant students who complete the entrance exam for university is 3.3%, language becomes a necessity that should be more than just debated or used as a political platform in elections (Mueller, 2006; Schittenhelm, 2009). Furthermore, the complexity of the language issue makes it much more difficult to confront with broad statements like Merkel’s stance that
it is the responsibility of the immigrant to learn German. The structure of the school system is ill-equipped to provide the language training needed, including taking German dialect and the dialect of the student’s native language into account (Castles, 2000).

According to Castles (2000), furthering the educational prospects of Turkish and other minority groups in German schools would destroy the underclass of workers that has benefitted the “interest of powerful sections of West Germany’s ruling class” (p. 61).

Instead of segregating the non-native German speakers in language courses or in other schools altogether, a school in Wedding, a Berlin district known for its multiethnic inhabitants, has instituted a “German Guarantee” course. This primary school is the first in Berlin to implement a course exclusively for children with a good knowledge of the German language (meaning children with German heritage) (Köhler, 2011). For Castles, as for the politicians and the women with whom I spoke, German language acquisition can be an agent of social, educational, and cultural change: while the women see its significance in the lives of Berlin’s children, the politicians resist, allowing the immigrants to bear the brunt of the responsibility and the brunt of the educational inequalities.

(Retrospective) Attitudes Toward Educational Experiences

For Tülay Usta, Chairman of the Turkish Parent Association, the Moabit Primary School is not an individual case. “It doesn’t matter if the concept now is called the German-Plus course, the Lap-top course, or the Nature Studies course, it’s all to justify segregated classes”, she says. Most would separate the children of non-German origin. “Integration looks different [than this]”, Usta criticized. (Köhler, 2011, para. 8)
The above quote was taken from a September 2011 article in the *Berliner Morgenpost* entitled “We don’t want to lose German parents”. The article highlights two Berlin primary schools, one which has developed a course specifically for native German speakers and the other which is a combination of a Montessori program and a regular public school. The second school, a primary school located in Berlin’s central district of Moabit, on paper appears to have a mix of both German and non-German students. However, the article points out that about 90 percent of the students in the regular classes are of a migrant background, while in the Montessori section of the school, it is only about 20 percent, with those students coming from mostly Eastern Europe and Asia (Köhler, 2011). A parent in the article responded to this segregation: “It can’t be that almost only German students sit in the Montessori classes, while my son, who has an Arabic father, must learn in a class where 22 out of the 24 students are not of German origin and the majority come from socially vulnerable families” (Köhler, 2011, para. 7). While the intent of this article is to highlight two unique school programs which have been instituted to circumvent Berlin’s foreign student quota in the classroom, these stories of isolation and discrimination are not unique to the primary schools. The women I interviewed, regardless of their own level of educational satisfaction, unmistakably identified the educational situation of immigrants and students of non-German origin in Berlin as a tool for segregation, discrimination, and isolation. Students, teachers, and parents came together before the Berlin elections in September 2011 to protest the state of education in Germany. According to the September 11 article entitled “On the street for more class”, printed in the *Tagesspiegel*, a newspaper with libertarian leanings, the demonstration centered on issues of teacher stress, understaffing, and unsanitary
conditions. Full color pictures of teachers with signs and a young boy with an umbrella that read “no more stinkin’ toilets anymore!” highlighted the complaints of teachers being forced to work more hours for less pay and students who go to school in buildings not conducive to learning (Hecht & Jacobs, 2011).

What was missing from the debate on what changes were needed in German schools was a discussion of the educational conditions of immigrants and students of Turkish heritage. Despite the article outlining that education was overlooked in the upcoming Berlin elections because most of the people affected were of migrant background, it focused mostly on the needs of the German students, saying that educational reform which placed the German tradition of education secondary to fixing inequalities makes teachers, students, and parents groan (Hecht & Jacobs, 2011). From these articles, it is clear that problems with the educational system have a distinct correlation to one’s ethnic, social, and immigrant status. Although two of the women I interviewed were satisfied with their educational experiences, they also recognized the uniqueness of their situation as compared to the larger immigrant population. The pattern which emerges reveals a tension between individual experiences and the women’s knowledge that, regardless of their individual experiences the collective im/migrant experience in school is one of inequality, and the political discourse, which situates these systemic, curricular, and pedagogical exclusions as something that is ‘typical’ or ‘expected’.

According to Article Seven in the nation’s Grundgesetz, education falls under the supervision of the individual Länder, or states; however, education is a shared responsibility between the states and the federal government, where parliament passes
laws and sets the education budget and the Ministries of Culture and Education work on setting the curricula, planning the development of the educational system, and regulating aspects of school organization such as class size and teaching loads (Schümer, 1999). Originally, the stance in Western Germany regarding the children of guest workers in the educational system developed on the basis that their presence was temporary, their return to their country of origin imminent, and their need for German education was minimal compared to their need for educational assistance to aid in their reintegration to their home country’s school system (Geiger, 2003). This belief contributed to the development of policies which promoted segregation of immigrant children and native German students through language courses and specialized ‘integration’ curriculum (Castles, 2000). By the 1980s, when it was clear that the return of guest workers and their children to their country of origin was a failed vision, the educational policies in the schools adopted an assimilationist stance. The educational system phased out native-language courses and most forms of special instruction, replacing them with curriculum and pedagogy that was meant to hasten their assimilation into German society (Geiger, 2003). Although there was the appearance of inclusion within the school, the exclusionary policies toward guest workers remained in place outside school walls. Geiger (2003) provides an example of this inclusion/exclusion binary:

In the social studies class a child of Turkish descent is taught the procedures of elections on the city or national level, and in order to get full marks this pupil has to reproduce this in tests; his parents however have no right to vote, nor will he himself have this right when he comes of age. And the same discrepancy could
also be expressed in rules of correct behavior: the egalitarian status during classes is lost as soon as the bell rings…(p. 151)

Although these curricular choices could have been initiated with the intent of addressing differences in the classroom by instead focusing on a model which makes difference invisible, the consequence is that children of non-German origin have been rendered hyper-visible in their inability to fully participate in the political, social, and educational system. The concept of intercultural education is rare outside of pilot programs; some teachers regard their duty as “the realization of cultural normalization” (Alleman-Ghionda, 2001, p. 21), a philosophy which allows schools to choose the path of “intercultural abstinence”. When these policies are examined from a cross-national perspective through assessment exams, the correlation between social and ethnic origin and achievement levels is higher in Germany than in any other country (Auernheimer, 2006).

The results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) exams, which are conducted every three years and sponsored by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), revealed not just inequities between German and non-German students but a distinct lack of public spending by the nation itself (Cox, 2009). Due in part to the PISA results, which some called “embarrassing” for Germany and its educational system, the educational policies and practices have shifted to be more inclusive of the minority populations, including developing an integration summit and a National Integration Plan (Cox, 2009; Faas, 2008). Although these initiatives reveal movement toward a more encompassing approach to education, they have played out mostly at the state level and have yet to play a large role in policies or curriculum at
individual schools. An article on the English-language German news portal *The Local* published the results of a recent research conducted on the educational opportunities, fairness and excellence of the schools in Germany. The study, which used data collected from the Institute from Quality Development in Education, the German Federal Statistics Office, and the PISA exams indicates that “children faced different regimes of unfairness depending on where they lived” (“German schools”, para. 5). Children in states like Berlin, which offered more equality of educational opportunities to students, were unable to provide a quality standard of education, while states which had higher standards, like Bavaria, provided a unfair system of education to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The man who commissioned the report is a current board member for Bertlesmann, a multimedia corporation which includes companies like Random House, commented on the results:

> We believe the state is responsible for creating an equality of opportunities in schools, but it is not doing that enough. The readiness of the state ministers to discuss equal opportunities transparently stands at about minus 100. (“German schools”, para. 9 and 10)

This report, coupled with the PISA results and the women’s own educational reflections, reveal an educational system that remains characterized by its tracking procedures and its underrepresentation of minority students in the higher tracks. Echoing Auernheimer’s (2006) assertion that “the ‘institutional discrimination’ of migrant children is promoted by the functional logic of the selective German system” (p. 87), I maintain that the complexity of the needs of minority students coupled with the strictly-structured and highly-tracked educational system creates a cyclical negative perception of
the Turkish population: the structure itself sets barriers for educational achievement, which in turn limits students’ access to higher educational opportunities, which reinforces the perception of an immigrant student as unwilling and unable to fully participate in German society, both within and outside of the school. Each woman who participated in the interviews described their education in ways which fit this cyclical model. Whether they recalled their experiences as positive or negative, what was evident was the way in which the women situated themselves within the larger educational process. As with the use and significance of language, the women viewed education as not only a necessity for economic and social advancement, but also as an opportunity for the German government to put their rhetoric of integration into action by finally allowing the children of Turkish descent to have educational representation. In this way, the women again dispel the image of the reluctant Turkish female immigrant, one who is covered and uneducated. Despite their varying levels of educational attainment (two women graduated after tenth grade and two women received university degrees), these women understand what higher levels of educational attainment mean for a woman of Turkish descent and work in multiple ways to embody the message of its significance.

**Higher education and ‘wide-awakeness’: Lale and Fatma.**

Both Lale and Fatma, daughters of Turkish guest workers and immigrants to Germany, achieved university diplomas in Berlin; however, their paths through the educational system reveal both overlapping frustrations and unique situations where they found educational support. According to Schümer (1999), education is under the control of the individual German states, which allows them to create specific policies for the educational needs of their students. While some states, such as Bavaria, separate out
students who do not speak German as their native language, offer them German as a second language, and follow the curriculum of their country of origin, other states (like Berlin) take a different approach (Schümer, 1999). The official policies in states like Berlin focus on integrating students into the mainstream German classroom as soon as they are ready. They offer language preparation courses for a maximum of two years if the students need assistance learning German. Additionally, Berlin and other states have set “foreigner quotas” in the classroom, stipulating that no classroom can have more than 30 percent of “foreign” students, 50 percent if they have relative fluency in German (Schümer, 1999). While such policies exist on paper to benefit all students in the classroom, these guidelines are sometimes discarded, resulting in classrooms which have been segregated based on ethnic background, immigrant status, or language ability (as in the earlier example of the Berlin primary school where 90 percent of the regular classes were attended by students with migrant backgrounds).

Lale attended primary school in Turkey until fifth grade when she moved to Berlin to be reunited with both of her parents who were in Germany as guest workers. While her parents were working in Germany, she and her siblings were being raised by her grandparents who were of Macedonian descent. Neither of her grandparents could speak Turkish with any fluency, nor were they literate. When she arrived in Germany, she was placed in a ‘preparation class’ because she did not speak any German; all seven of the students in her class were from Turkey:

In my experience, when I attended elementary school, there were many more workers who had just recently come from Turkey and who hadn’t been in the country for very long. They always had calculated that they must go back [to
their country of origin]...then they made the decision to remain in Germany, but
their children were still in Turkey and in the educational system in Turkey. In my
time, there were many in a similar situation to my own. Naturally it was
meaningful to have a preparation course.

Lale’s own experiences parallel the historical accounts of the shift from guest workers as
the ‘economic miracle’ in the 1960s to their existence being an economic burden during
the recession of the 1970s. According to Chin (2007), it was during the recession that
they government enacted a number of policies, including restricting access to entrance
into Germany, in an effort to persuade the guest workers to return to their country of
origin. These efforts backfired and the “foreign laborers – especially Turks – applied for
visas so their families could join them” (Chin, 2007, p. 10). Worbs (2003) outlines the
dramatic increase in numbers of Turkish immigrants during this time: whereas the
number of Turkish guest laborers remained between 400,000 and 600,000 between the
1960s and the 1990s, the numbers of Turkish people in Germany rapidly increased from
652,812 in 1971 to more than one million in 1975.

Because Lale’s parents were recruited during the height of the guest worker
movement in Germany, she experienced an educational system that was ill-prepared to
receive or educate immigrant students. Both the schools and the workers themselves
believed the laborers were temporary employees in the country who would return to
Turkey, but, as Lale outlines, many decided to stay in Berlin and send for their families
instead; because of this seemingly sudden shift from temporary worker to permanent
immigrant, it was regarded as necessary to have preparation courses in place for the
children of guest workers, in some cases with at least one year of separate instruction.
Although for Lale a course which enabled her to learn German was “meaningful”, others regard such measures as enabling “the school system to avoid confronting the consequences of migration and acknowledging the need for reform” (Auernheimer, 2006, p. 76). When I asked her about the role ethnicity played in her educational experiences, Lale reflected more on the requirement placed on her to do a year of preparation courses:

“I think yes, by all means [did ethnicity play a role]? For example, after elementary school [in Turkey] I had to do a year of preparation courses. This was school politics – this had separated German and Turkish students…now this isn’t really possible in [this district of Berlin], between then and now in this community the majority has become immigrant children in the schools. But where I went to school we weren’t the majority, we would like to have been mixed together but we were separated. I don’t find that to be sensible.

Although assisting immigrant students in learning German to ease their integration was the official goal of the integration courses, the methods employed stood in direct contradiction to its goal (Geiger, 2003). Based on her experiences, segregation of the student population continued after Lale’s transition into the German schools, which is indicative of Germany’s educational contradictions: on one hand, the government pushes for a policy of integration, with the onus placed on the immigrant population, but on the other hand, the educational system is a model of student isolation and self-fulfilling prophecies. The shifting of the image of the immigrant as a welcome part of cheap labor to a cultural threat and economic drain was felt in the schools: until the late 1990s, “migrant workers and their children were often perceived as inferior and addressed by
terms such as ‘guest worker’ or ‘foreigner’” (Faas, 2008, p. 110). Lale offered a comparison to the current situation in Berlin primary school and her experiences:

Primary school is very, very important and here [for immigrants] it’s really bad. For example, I was in school in Turkey until the 5th grade. Yes, I had [German] language problems, but I could do math, read, and write. Here I’ve seen that they don’t go as far [in school]…it’s still this way today. Many of the teachers don’t think it’s worth it [to help migrant students]. I find that primary school is really important but very bad.

The comparison between Lale’s experiences and the contemporary situation for migrant children in Berlin schools allows one to question whether the new policies and integration initiatives have made any kind of positive change at the individual level. While Faas (2008) acknowledges that the country has taken a step forward by beginning to collect data on the correlation between educational achievement and social origin, the results from both intra-national and cross-national comparisons reveal students with a migrant background are performing significantly lower than their native German peers, with an average educational deficit of up to one year. Studies which do analyze educational achievement in German schools often lead to the conclusion that parental influences, languages spoken in the home, and later enrollment of migrant children into the school system can explain the achievement gap (Alba et al., 1998; Ammermueller, 2007); again, Lale’s educational experiences reveal a different story:

They always say, both in school and in politics, regardless of whatever topic they’re discussing, ‘the parents, the parents, the parents’ are bad or they’re migrant children and that’s why, but [my experiences] can’t confirm that! I was
here, and my parents could read, write, etc, but I was in Turkey with my grandparents and they couldn’t read, write, or speak [Turkish]. Despite this, I always received very good grades. I believe that school is more important than where one’s family comes from. And that [what is said in schools and politics] is false and it stinks a little of racism.

Although she was an immigrant in the school system, one whose parents had left her in the care of her grandparents who were illiterate in Turkish, Lale excelled in her courses both in Turkey and when she arrived in Germany. Because of her language difficulties, however, she became more segregated from her German counterparts, until she found herself struggling to advance into the Gymnasium. Lale’s description of her school experiences is indicative of a system that is ill-equipped to offer the most effective educational assistance for immigrants, resulting in students who feel isolated and inferior. Her insistence that the continued blame being placed on the family because of their ethnic or immigrant status “stinks of racism” parallels the debates occurring at the individual school level and in broader policy decision making. Gaschke (2001) asserts that:

a large portion of foreign parents do not seek an education for their children based on enlightened ‘neutral worldviews’. Instead, especially with daughters, they scrupulously monitor adherence to religious codes of behavior, which often is tantamount to a virtual segregation from societal contact generally considered normal. (Gaschke, 2001, p. 369)

While Gaschke (2001) views the educational and language barriers as the fault of the culture of the children’s families, Köhler’s (2011) article outlines that often the problems within schools are a reflection of the broader societal issues. Based Köhler’s (2011)
concept, separating students based on their native language, even though the school justifies this by taking out the native German speakers for special German lessons, reveals that little has changed in the structure of education since this form of segregation began in the 1960s. Although the article quotes a school expert who warns that “The difference between special classes [those with a low number of students with a migrant background] and regular classes does not need to lead to segregation” (Köhler, 2011, para. 3), the more normalized this segregation becomes, the more minority students will suffer. Although the significance of education to Lale’s family is categorized as an exception, she believes that student achievement has just as much to do with the educational system as one’s social origin.

After her year-long preparation course, Lale transitioned into the German educational system where she continued to experience segregation and isolation because of her ethnicity and status as an immigrant. She was placed in the Hauptschule, which is often referred to as ‘the school for leftovers’ and is acknowledged as the least prestigious and demanding of the three educational tracks (Auernheimer, 2006; Alba, Handl & Müller, 1998). Lale said she was placed in the Hauptschule:

because I had problems with the German language and because I was new here.

Seventh through tenth grade I was at the Hauptschule and through ninth grade all of the students were from Turkey. In the tenth grade there were two German students in the class, along with an Iranian student and a student from Africa, but all the others were from Turkey.

According to Alba et al. (1998), transition from Hauptschule to the Gymnasium track is extremely rare; additionally, there is a distinct correlation between ethnicity and track
placement, so that while approximately one-third of German students are placed in the *Hauptschule* track, two-thirds of Turkish students are. While this difference can be attributed to many factors, including student language ability, educational level of parents, and social class status, the results of this track placement indicate that “most of them [immigrant students] appear destined to leave the school system with the most minimal of credentials or perhaps no credentials whatsoever” (Alba et al., 1998, p. 130). While Lale’s experiences highlight the regimented tracking system, she is also an exception to the assertion that rarely do students in the *Hauptschule* track transition to the highest track. She left *Hauptschule* after tenth grade and switched to a largely Turkish *Gymnasium* in Kreuzberg, the district of Berlin often referred to as “Little Istanbul”. Lale estimated that fifty percent of the students in her class were of migrant backgrounds, but when I asked her if her peers had any influence on her educational choices, she replied “…not many of the children continued on [to higher education] at the school I attended.”

Although the *Gymnasium* track offered Lale more educational options, the transition was very difficult:

> Most of the time I had good grades and good relationships [with the teachers]. The problem happened when I changed schools in 10th grade. In the first year after I switched schools I had really extreme problems, because all of the other students were much further along [in their studies]…at the Gymnasium I had a hard time the entire time.

Lale’s recollection of her transition to *Gymnasium* and the subsequent difficulties she experienced parallel an interview Schittenhelm (2009) conducted with a woman of Turkish descent in Germany:
Her transition to the *Gymnasium* resulted in her not only achieving the Abitur, but also continuing to be an outsider. In her *Gymnasium* school class, where for a long time she was the only student with an immigrant background, she was again only partly included in her peers’ informal relationships. Yet, unlike the school environment, she perceived university later on as an inclusive field…

(Schittenhelm, 2009, p. 9)

In their interviews, both Lale and Fatma discuss their experiences at the university as generally positive and inclusive, a shift from Lale’s feelings of isolation and inadequacy she felt in secondary school. Like Schittenhelm’s (2009) description of another Turkish woman’s educational experiences, Lale clearly welcomed the shift from *Gymnasium* to the university: “then I studied at [a university in Berlin] – that’s the school that has the highest number of foreign students…I always said I wanted to study there.” Her drive to excel in education enabled her to overcome language difficulties and her being tracked into the *Hauptschule*. She reflected on her comprehensive educational experience in Germany at the end of our interview:

Like I said before, the school that I attended when I first came here was basic, but then later I had many difficulties through when I finished with school. One always had to do so much, and although I always got good grades and I accomplished my academic studies, but one realizes that there were so many deficiencies in what I should have been learning that I could never catch up. I find that to be a real pity.

Lale was a product of Germany’s educational policies toward immigrant students, as she attended both a year of integration courses and schools which were highly segregated by
immigrant status. These practices placed her on an educational track with many other Turkish students, one which leads to highly-gendered vocational trades which are often low-wage positions. Lale stated repeatedly that she valued education and was a good student who often earned high marks; however, based on her language ‘deficiency’, she was forced to struggle even more to achieve a place at the Gymnasium. The ‘deficiencies’ which Lale speaks of are those embedded in the structure of the highly-tracked educational system which rarely allows for movement to a higher track. Embedding inequalities in the system and structuring it in such a way where these inequalities appear both normal and the fault of the individual herself underscores Maxine Greene’s assertion on the role of schools in the matter of mystification:

> Much effort is expended in convincing people that the system does indeed satisfy not only common appetites but the artificial needs continually being created. When it does not, the dissatisfied are usually convinced that satisfaction will come in time. In spite of doubt and cynicism, the public appears to remain convinced that existing arrangements are perfectly ‘natural’, even in their insufficiency, and geared to the eventual fulfillment of what people need and desire. **The schools, like the mass media, play an important role in reinforcing this conviction.** (Greene, 1978, p. 56, emphasis mine).

While Greene (1978) outlines how schools work to normalize inequalities but should instead be moving towards a system which de-mystifies such structures, Lale’s experiences underscore Germany’s continued struggle with educating children of migrant backgrounds. The PISA exams have illuminated the results of the sorting mechanisms and some effort has been made since the first exams were administered in 2000; however,
what remains to be solved is “how children can be prepared to face mechanisms of exclusion from the early stages of their schooling to higher education…” (Schittenhelm, 2009, p. 15).

Lale’s educational experiences underscore an imperative that is echoed in Fatma’s reflections on her own schooling. Unlike Lale, Fatma received most of her education in Turkey where she lived with her mother and siblings until she was almost 18, at which point she reunited with her father who was working as a guest laborer in Berlin. Because of his employment in Germany, Fatma and her three siblings (one brother and two sisters) were all supported financially in their educational pursuits. Despite her parents’ own educational attainment, with her father having a fifth-grade education and her mother a third-grade, her parents emphasized the importance of education for both the girls and boys. When Fatma arrived in Berlin, she had a specific intention of getting a degree in social work from a highly-regarded university in Berlin; however, it would take more than a decade for this goal to become reality. Her father’s impetus for funding of German language courses for her when she first arrived in Berlin was two-fold: as a recent immigrant himself, he understood the necessity of knowing German, but he also wanted Fatma to learn German so she could enter into the workforce and not the university. After her language course, Fatma was given a place at the university, but she had to first fulfill certain educational requirements. Like other students who were not educated in the German system, her secondary education and Abitur exam was not equivalent to the entry requirements for German universities; as a result, she had to spend an extra year ‘equalizing’ her training before beginning her time at the university.
Once enrolled at the university in Berlin, Fatma described her experiences as being “really positive”. Although in her everyday life outside of school she had more negative interactions, both the students and the professors at the university were supportive; in fact, Fatma became close with a professor who was well-known in Turkey because of his work with Turkish students and his research on intercultural relations. His reputation within the Turkish community coupled with Fatma’s feeling that he understood her well allowed them to develop a mentoring relationship which affected Fatma’s educational and career aspirations. Another aspect of life at the university was the vast representation of Turkish students. The coup in Turkey led many university-aged Turks to flee to Germany after completing their Abitur in Turkey; the representation of Turkish students on campus allowed for a more positive educational experience for Fatma.

Although Fatma had begun describing her experiences as mostly positive, when I asked her about the role her ethnicity played in her educational attainment, she replied that she had many difficulties at the beginning of her transition to the German system of education. While she had grown accustomed to the highly-regimented Turkish system, she struggled with independence at the German university:

There [at the university] I had problems, independently studying, independently thinking…to have a mind of my own was for me very difficult, from a totalitarian [education] system to a free-thinking system. Part of the difficulty Fatma faced was having to work to earn money for both her studies and her family while she was also enrolled in school, something that is not common in the Germany context. She stated that even though she continued to live with him, she
had no financial support from her father during this time; additionally, the university offered no language tutoring or support for non-German speakers. Because of these difficulties, it took Fatma ten years to complete her university education. Like Lale, Fatma’s reflections on her education were at best ambivalent: “I couldn’t fully concentrate on my studies, I would say, and I wasn’t completely satisfied with my studies. I finished my studies, but I still wish that I had learned more.” Both women were hesitant to state they were satisfied with the education they had received in Germany, even though they both had earned their university diplomas from highly-respected German institutions. Fatma pondered the hypothetical situation of her having been educated in the German system during our interview and concluded that:

If I had gone to school in Germany (now I can say this in retrospect), I don’t know if I could have gone on to study [at the university], if I had been here from the beginning. One can see today, here in Berlin, the situation of migrant children in schools. Only 10% of migrant children today, today, only 10% go on to the university.

The recognition of the exceptionality of their educational achievements that both Fatma and Lale exhibit highlights their ambivalence toward the current situation for children of migrant backgrounds. In addressing the contemporary problems they see in Berlin schools by referencing their past educational experiences, Lale and Fatma exhibit what Maxine Greene (1978) would call a “wide-awareness of sorts” (p. 55) which enables them to “resist the cynicism and powerlessness that silence as they paralyze”. As Erel (2007) has outlined in his work with women of Turkish descent, their stories provide a challenge to the often tacit assumptions that are found in migrant research. A
contrast to the reluctant immigrant, they provide an alternative narrative to the political discourse and academic literature which situates Turkish immigrant students with parents who have low educational achievement as deficient, their educational achievement beyond the lowest vocational diploma rare at best.

“You only have to want it”: Yeşim and Ayşe’s educational reflections

Unlike Lale and Fatma, who graduated from university, Yeşim and Ayşe completed their educational experiences after receiving their tenth grade diploma. Although leaving the educational system after tenth grade reveals they share some commonalities, their schools, status as Turkish women, and the decades when they were enrolled differ greatly. Unlike Lale and Fatma, who presented highly critical views on the educational system, Yeşim and Ayşe understand their school experiences as the results of luck. The schools allowed them to achieve their leaving certificates and become gainfully employed; while both speak with some regret about the possibilities they could have had if they had been placed on the Gymnasium track or continued to higher education, they seem to acknowledge their situations as better off than many other women of Turkish descent in Berlin.

Yeşim is the only woman of Turkish descent I interviewed who was born in Germany. Both of her parents were immigrants from Turkey who had settled in a district of Berlin with a high population of Turkish, Arabic, Iraqi, and other Muslim immigrants. Yeşim attended primary school in this district and later was placed on the Realschule track, which she graduated from in tenth grade. The Realschule is the intermediate track between the Gymnasium and the Hauptschule and provides students with the foundation to continue either on a path towards more demanding vocational training (in fields like
administration and engineering) or towards further education which could provide access to institutions of higher education (Schümer, 1999). Although there is a greater representation of non-German students on this track than the Gymnasium track, they are still underrepresented in comparison to their German peers. While 41 percent of German students acquired a diploma from the Realschule in 1999, only 29 percent of students with migrant backgrounds did during the same year (Auernheimer, 2006). According to Yeşim, her classes were often comprised of students with migrant backgrounds: “80 percent of my class [in primary school] was Turkish or Arabic, although in the upper grades there was a mix of German, Polish, everything.” The ethnic background of her school friends was similar: “80 percent [of my school friends] were Turkish, 20 percent were German… I also had Croatian, Serbian, and Iraqi friends. Those were all of my friends, but my best friends, my closest friends, I had about 4 or 5.” Her family supported her throughout her schooling, financially and also by providing assistance with homework and studying:

My parents supported me [throughout my education]. They always said, ‘do it, do it, do your best!’ Their wish was naturally that I would go on to study [at the university], go further in my education – these are particular wishes that parents always have for their children.

When I inquired about the role her ethnicity played in her schooling and how she believed the teachers had perceived her, not only did Yeşim indicate that her ethnicity “played absolutely no role [in my education]”, she stated that:

My teachers were always completely satisfied with me. I was always very active, I would help organize, plan, and help with things like small trips and field trips.
I’d help organize breakfasts that we had, I’d go shopping…We drank coffee together…my teachers were always very much like older sisters…my time in school was really nice.

Although 90 percent of her teachers were German, Yeşim categorized their relationship as being more like sisters than student-teacher. Because of her age and status as a second-generation woman of Turkish descent, Yeşim experienced a school system vastly different than the one Lale encountered when she arrived from Turkey. Rather than a curriculum and school structure set up to prepare immigrant students to return to their country of origin, during the 1980s German schools shifted their focus to intercultural education. In part, this curriculum was meant to focus on preparing all students for life in a culturally-diverse society and to be more representative of multiculturalism (Faas, 2008). These attempts at curricular modification, including Berlin introducing multicultural education as a cross-curricular theme, were often overshadowed by the more conservative educational stances which focused on Germany’s role within the European community, thus reaffirming the German/foreigner binary (Fass, 2008). The field trip planning and organizing social events indicates a high level of school involvement, but it also reveals that while a deep social relationship may have developed between her and her teachers, the mentoring did not extend into academics. Her description of the ways in which her teachers perceived her center specifically on non-academic events like shopping and drinking coffee. While these relationships could be viewed as deep bonds where the student seeks social and emotional stability from a teacher, it also places the student in a role that does not challenge the educational or societal status quo but instead reinforces it. Yeşim was educated at the *Realschule*, the
middle of three tracks, which meant that she could have sought higher education (whether vocational or continued classroom education which leads to the university); instead, her relationships with her teachers guided her on a path which fulfilled her social needs but did not challenge the “insufficiencies of the culture” (Greene, 1978, p. 57). When I asked Yeşim to categorize her overall educational experience, she stated that:

I can only say positive things about my educational experience. I was lucky, but that’s how I feel. I was very lucky. I had a really wonderful time in school.

Although Yeşim left the school system after finishing her Realschule diploma in tenth grade, she categorizes her experiences as “lucky”. Based on PISA results and other research conducted on the accessibility of educational opportunities for immigrants and second-generation students in Germany, Yeşim’s career as a businesswoman for an office communications firm where she has worked in the financial section of her company is not a common career path for children of Turkish immigrants (Duru-Bellat et al., 2008). While Duru-Bellat et al. (2008) emphasize that “more often, working-class students also choose not to pursue further education than their more privileged peers” (p. 355), there is nothing to indicate why or how this choice is made. Although studies conducted in Germany and cross-nationally reveal that Germany’s educational system continues to relegate students to tracks based on ethnicity, immigrant status, and social class, often eliminating at an early age any chance for educational access, Yeşim characterizes educational achievement as being the sole responsibility of the individual:

The schools fulfilled my needs fully. The schools in Berlin and in Germany really offer a lot. They leave it to you what you do outside of school…either you
learn and you make yourself into something or you do nothing and you fall downwards. Here, everything is given to you – you only have to want it.

Yeşim had both parental support and close relationships with her teachers and classmates. Unlike Lale, who felt isolated and discriminated against on the basis of her immigrant status, Yeşim was included in social and extracurricular activities, from assisting in the planning of field trips to playing a number of intramural sports. Does her experience uncover a shift that is occurring within the educational system, where teachers have come to adopt an intercultural classroom model, or does it reveal that, despite her close relationships with her teachers, students continue to be relegated into positions which do not require higher education? Were her teachers, through activities like shopping and field trip planning, providing non-formal educational opportunities or creating a self-fulfilling prophecy? Does Yeşim’s assertion that it is up to the individual to take advantage of the opportunities provided to them indicate that she passed the ‘sink or swim’ test or that she was never even tested? What is clear is that Yeşim defines her own success within the school system not in terms of academic achievements or access to higher education but rather her perceived ability to integrate and be accepted socially and culturally by her German educators. While Lale and Fatma challenged the normative assumptions of Turkish women by striving to achieve higher education, Yeşim threatens the very notion of what it means to be Turkish and/or German, “to be the bearers of specific values, languages, rights, and social practices” (Mandel, 2008, p. 7). Her sociocultural challenge confronts not just the discourse that frames the Other but also how it characterizes Germans. Her inclusion into the social realm of her German teachers is an
experimentation of sorts, a dipping of the toe into the blurred boundaries between German/foreigner, citizen/non-citizen, and Christian/Muslim.

Both Yeşim and Ayşe attend school through tenth grade; although they describe their overall experiences in the educational system as positive, Ayşe’s schooling is both indicative of the historical moment and the ways in which Turkish immigrant women were regarded within German society. Like Lale and Fatma, Ayşe is the daughter of a Turkish guest worker who was recruited during the guest worker movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Unlike the other women, she never received schooling in Berlin; after completing fourth grade in Turkey, she and her family reunited with her father in a small city near Dortmund. Although she and her siblings spoke no German, they were not placed in a preparation course but rather in a Turkish-German school with native Turkish teachers. Her friends and classmates in the school, all of them Turkish, initially assisted Ayşe with her homework until she was fluent enough in German to complete both her own homework and tutor her younger siblings. Ayşe said that “when I came from Turkey I didn’t speak any German, so the German-Turkish school really helped me”. Although the first guest worker treaty was between Germany and Greece and signed in 1951, education for the children of guest laborers was not compulsory until 1964 (Faas, 2008). During this time, non-German students were educated in a number of ways, including allowing their country of origin to send educators who could teach the children in a setting outside of the normal German school system. The school that Ayşe and her siblings attended was a Turkish-German school set up specifically for the children of guest workers to maintain education in their primary language so returning to their country of origin and transitioning into the school system there would be less strenuous.
Despite other initiatives being introduced, this type of separate education remained quite popular as Germany continued to refute the claims that it was a country of immigration (Faas, 2008).

Children who were born and received some formal education in Turkey prior to arriving in Germany are sometimes seen as the ‘in-between generation’; while the first generation consists of the guest workers themselves, a reference to the second generation in academic literature typically indicates the children of Turkish immigrants who were born in Germany and received all of their education within the country (Worbs, 2003). Finding data on the ‘in-between generation’, which would include Fatma, Lale, and Ayşe, is rare since compulsory education for children of guest workers had just been enacted and the government still believed they were temporary migrants in Germany. Comparative data on the children of Turkish immigrants, which includes only German-born children and children who arrived in Germany before beginning formal schooling, indicates that children of Turkish immigrants in German schools are achieving much lower educational qualifications than those in the Netherlands. Only 14 percent finished the Gymnasium track and only four percent earned a university degree; in the Netherlands, these numbers are at least two times higher (Crul & Schneider, 2009). When the data is examined based on gender, Turkish females in the Netherlands on preparatory tracks for higher education has more than doubled, and while the same population is making modest strides in Germany, the Turkish women in the workforce still occupy mostly traditional female positions with a high female clientele (hairdresser, child care worker, shop assistant) (Crul & Schneider, 2009).
When Ayşe finished her formal schooling after tenth grade, she worked as a cashier for two years before moving to Berlin. Although she wanted to be a flight attendant as a child (she did not meet the height requirements as an adult), she ended up working as a saleswoman in different places in West Germany and Berlin. When I asked her if she was satisfied with the schooling she received, she replied that:

Yes…without learning, one can’t accomplish or achieve…one must learn something. School is always good.

Although Ayşe’s stance indicates she sees education as an important aspect of advancement and economic success, especially for her three sons, she was hesitant to elaborate or reflect on her own educational experiences in any critical way. It was only when she indicated that gender had no role in her education, and I responded by asking if her enrollment in a Turkish-German school contributed to that, did she indicate any kind of dissatisfaction with the school system:

Yes, if I had begun my education in a German school, this might be really different…another career, another language…even better German speaking.

While Yeşim’s assessment of her educational experiences reflect her status as a second-generation woman of Turkish descent experimenting with her social identity, Ayşe’s position indicates that, despite her positive evaluation of her schooling, it in fact left her unfulfilled. Although she has transitioned from being a saleswoman to a position at the Turkish women’s organization, assisting new members with paperwork and helping translate documents, her hypothetical statement about what would have been different had she been educated in a German school indicates a longing for an education that

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empowers and arms young immigrant women with the necessary tools to pursue different educational or career paths.

Far from the “wide-awakeness” exhibited by Lale and Fatma, or Yeşim’s challenge to the societal status quo, Ayşe’s agency is restricted by her language capabilities and educational qualifications. In her current occupation she is able to provide the assistance to immigrant women that she was never given; thus, she works to assure that other women will not reflect on their education with longing or regret. Despite the occupational limitations resulting from leaving the educational system after tenth grade, both Ayşe and Yeşim have become active members of organizations which work to open access to educational and occupational opportunities. Through this work, and by finding careers which challenge the normative assumptions that Turkish women are solely wives, mothers, and confined to their homes, these women force a re-examination of the limitations of the education system what it means to be Turkish woman in Berlin.

**Higher education and the Abitur as arbiter of educational attainment.**

The path to the Abitur, the exam required for entrance into a German university, is arduous, highly structured, and difficult to navigate. The road to German higher education begins as early as the fourth grade, when children are tracked into three types of institutions: the Gymnasium, the Hauptschule, and the Realschule. According to Schümer (1999), “the Gymnasium remains the usual route to university studies” (p. 33), and students’ schooling at this level is completed after seven years if they successfully pass the Abitur. There is a distinct correlation between entrance into the Gymnasium, the track which is the most direct route to higher education, and parental educational
attainment, social class, and social origin; in fact, the majority of the students enrolled in Gymnasium are from middle class backgrounds and have at least one parent who obtained a Gymnasium diploma (Auernheimer, 2006). Additionally, because track recommendations are based on a combination of teacher evaluations, student performance, and parental input, parents who do not understand the structure of the school system, were themselves raised in a different educational structure, or are unable to successfully communicate with their child’s teacher find themselves at a disadvantage (Mandel, 2008). Because of these highly-regimented prerequisites, only about 3.3 percent of students of non-German heritage qualify to take the Abitur (Schittenhelm, 2009). According to Annika, the social worker intern at the second organization I worked with, students finish their studies in 10th grade and then have two to three years to take their exams. Most of the students she works with decide to take the Abitur in 11th grade. Those students who successfully complete the Abitur are then qualified to study at a traditional university, a university of applied sciences which offers a more limited range of study options, or can choose to enroll in a two-year vocational program (Duru-Bellat, Kieffer & Reimer, 2008). Each of these three options place the qualified student on a clear path to an upper-middle class career.

Annika, who interns as a social worker at the second women’s organization I worked with, discussed the ways in which their organization perceives and assists female students with the Abitur:

All of our girls take the Abitur exam. That is something that the parents also find to be very important – they don’t want their daughters to be unemployed. Here we have a course for the 10th grade to help prepare them for the exam, and then
we allow the girls to have a lot of practice...we try to take some of that stress away and enable them to relax, but at the same time give them help.

Although the number of regularly-attending females in their organization is small (around 10 who come every day, 20 who come occasionally), the goal that every girl takes the Abitur supports the organization’s mission of empowerment and independence. Annika outlined that getting parental involvement and support at the organization is sometimes difficult and that oftentimes the organization only knows the girl and not the parents, but in this case, the organization and the parents seem to be in agreement on the significance of their daughters taking this exam. Because Annika is in her early twenties and still a student, she sees herself as being able to provide more assistance to the girls preparing for the exam than her other colleagues. She states that “I believe it’s good that I’m not too far removed from when I took the Abitur. I can maybe give them more help than my colleagues because of this.” Due to the major educational changes which occurred after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of East and West Germany, Annika explained that that entrance process into higher education has changed dramatically and that her colleagues, who are in their 30s and 40s, might have experienced a less rigorous process than the current one. Despite the opportunity presented to Germany to revisit their educational policies and procedures, there is no indication of substantial changes to the inequality in access to higher education in the past two decades; in fact, when entrance into higher education and the choice of field of study was investigated, “social origin had significant effects even after controlling for academic ability” (Duru-Bellat et al., 2008, p. 365).
Because the first organization I worked with focuses on not just young women but on all women of Turkish heritage who require educational and social assistance, their support has a different focus than the other organization. Although during our interview Fatma described the current state of education “for girls is better than for boys in Germany”, there are still social and cultural issues which hinder their educational pursuits. When she came to Germany 30 years ago to pursue her education at a university in Berlin, only four percent of the migrant children passed the *Abitur*. Today, it stands at ten percent; for Fatma, “not much has changed in 30 years!” From her perspective, the core obstacles girls of Turkish descent face in pursuing higher education are two-fold: structural inequalities within the German system and cultural and familial pressures:

The support from the family and society…that’s where the problems come from. Also from marriage, the expectations from the family, that they marry and have children…this is where the difficulties arise…even to simply have a job, not to go to Uni.

Although Fatma insisted that the girls with whom she works have had no problem passing their *Abitur*, they are unable to make the transition into higher education:

For many girls, because this [sexual relationships before marriage] is forbidden, although they would like to continue their education, this is an incentive to pursue a relationship and marry instead…this is difficult because they are in conflict with their parents.

By giving free homework assistance to girls through the 10th grade and by having full-time social workers who give advice on family conflicts, opportunities for furthering
education, and domestic violence, Fatma’s organization attempts to offer assistance for both hurdles girls can face when considering higher education. According to Fatma, it is extremely difficult to separate the parental control from the social issues; although in a city like Berlin the pressure presents itself differently than in a small village, in the neighborhood surrounding the organization the expectation that the girls marry someone that the family knows and accepts (or someone that the family actually chooses) still exists. For girls who decide to pursue higher education, it is oftentimes a path of isolation and exclusion; although they are open to a wider-range of career opportunities, “female immigrants with educational qualifications tend to be marginalized” (Schittenhelm, 2009, p. 4), both by their German counterparts who are pursuing a similar educational path and by those with immigrant backgrounds, who often end up in low-wage jobs that are highly vulnerable to market trends. In an interview printed and published by the Turkish women’s organization, the two founding members, A. and F., spoke about the significance of the services they offer to females of Turkish descent:

A. : It is our principle as a woman’s organization to never tell anyone what they should do. Each woman decides for herself, and after she has reached her decision, we seek to help her.

F. : …We want to strengthen their awareness and help them to stand on their own two feet…the economic autonomy of these women is very important. This must be emphasized. It doesn’t matter how self-aware a woman is, if she doesn’t have any income, she has allowed herself to become fallen. (“The multicultural association”, 2003, p. 15)
Both organizations stress the importance of continuing education; additionally, both highlight familial pressure and structural issues which could potentially hinder female students from entering into higher education. According to Mandel (2008), those who leave the school system without higher training or qualifications will risk becoming marginalized economically and socially; because of their restricted access to educational opportunities throughout their time in school, “the children of immigrants do not achieve integration into the labor market due to this configuration of structural obstacles” (Mandel, 2008, p. 168). While these organizations offer homework assistance, tutoring, and counseling services to young women of migrant backgrounds, these programs are not effective without parental education and a shift in focus within the school system. For Fatma, the communication between students, families, and classrooms, while at times precarious, is essential for educational success:

Germany needs to reflect on the boundaries between groups of people…and when children can’t graduate, then one must reflect on that as well…why aren’t they successful? What is the cause? These children, they aren’t dumb! Their experience in kindergarten is that their mother tongue isn’t equal [to German]…it’s inferior….Turkish, Arabic, these languages are forbidden. One wants to see them accomplish something here.

While results from the PISA exams and other educational assessments speak to how widespread the structural and curricular deficiencies in the German educational system are, these women’s organizations are fighting against the statistics through providing educational and psychological support, empowering young girls to strive for higher education. Resisting the commonly-accepted trajectory for Turkish females
(Hauptschule and then either unemployment or a low-wage position), these women are putting in place steps which can lead to new possibilities for this particular population; however, their work within their communities and as individual advocates can do little without changes to the current structural inequalities. While Germany has begun to make some modifications at the federal level, what remains unchanged is the risk that young women of Turkish descent become a product of, rather than an actor within, the system of education.

**Gendered Cultural Identity**

Turkish women now live in our cities as unassimilable, strange bodies. It is no wonder that they provoke prejudice…They walk humbly two steps behind their husbands, and even relinquish the particular domain of women – shopping for food and clothes – to their husbands or children. They contradict every imaginable image of the woman: they do not do justice to the traditional role of an efficient mother…much less do they meet emancipated demands in their own ways of life. (von Paczensky, in Chin, 2007, p. 165)

Deficits in integration have blocked out many of the success stories…Another problem is in regards to the…role of the woman. So many have adopted the headscarf law from the Koran. Experts believe, however, that traditional and cultural values are more important motives [to Turkish women’s difficulty with integration]. The same is true if women are not allowed to choose their own spouses. (“Turks in Germany – more than Döner and Islam”, 2011, para. 1 and 4).
The first quote is taken from the forward to a 1978 book entitled *Die verkauften Bräute: Türkische Frauen zwischen Kreuzberg und Anatolien* (Sold brides: Turkish women between Kreuzberg and Anatolia). The forward, written by Susanne von Paczensky, an activist for women’s rights, sets up the common trope of Turkish women that existed in Germany during this time period: one who was subservient, uneducated, and in need of emancipation. Chin (2007) uses this example not only to indicate that the discomfort regarding multiculturalism was not just restricted to the conservatives, but also that under this construction of integration, Western women had to “extricate non-Western women from customs and practices deemed illiberal or even destructive” (p. 165).

The second excerpt appeared in the *Nordamerikanische Wochen-Post* (North American Weekly Post), an American newspaper written in German that has been in circulation since 1853. Although printed 33 years after *Die verkauften Bräute*, the article echoes similar questions regarding the ability of female Turkish immigrants to integrate successfully into German society. Entitled “Türken in Deutschland – mehr als Döner und Islam” (“Turks in Germany – more than Döner and Islam“), the article highlights the struggles the Turkish population has faced on their path to integration since their arrival during the guest worker movement of the 1960s. The article’s text is relatively short and is dominated by two photographs which are meant to capture the essence of the story. Although the title indicates the article will substantiate that the Turkish population is more than Döner (a Turkish dish made of roasted meat that has been cooked on a vertical spit, similar to a Greek gyro) and Islam, the photographs play up the common imagery of
the Turkish men and women in Germany. The larger photograph is of a Turkish *Imbiss* (snack stand) in Berlin’s Kreuzberg district, complete with a dark-haired mustached man carving Döner meat off the spit. The second photograph shows a woman wearing a headscarf, her face obscured by the Turkish and German flags she is holding (“Turks in Germany– more than Döner and Islam”). These photographs not only reinforce the common perceptions of the gender roles within the Turkish population, they work with the text in creating a discourse which sets the blame for the difficulties of their integration on the perceived oppression of women and their performance of their religiousness. The feeling of suspicion about the Turkish population’s ability to integrate, particularly in regards to their gendered religious practices, is underscored within these texts. Although their religious practices and beliefs exist along a continuum, with many secular Turkish women not even wearing headscarves, ethnicity and religion have come to overlap in particular, and oftentimes problematic, ways for the Turkish community in Germany (Levey, 2009).

A point of contention that continually emerges from discussions regarding Muslim immigrants and their in/ability to conform to a liberal democratic system is how women are viewed and treated within the religion, which seems to suggest that “cross-cultural conflict appears on the scene largely when it concerns issues of relations between the sexes, or of women’s and girls’ roles in particular communities” (Todd, 2006, p. 283). As much as ethnic and ideological concerns regarding immigrant communities have framed past debates, so do questions about gendered cultural practices today; “and as much as issues of ethnicity and ideology reflected then-present global fissures, so
gendered practices today tell a story of deeper global, cultural, and religious fault lines” (Jacobson, 2009, p. 304). The focus on the “perceived victimization of migrant women” (Rostock & Berghahn, 2008, p. 349) has created binary categories between Turkish women and others who know “what is ‘right’ for the ‘poor migrant woman’” (Beck-Gernsheim, in Rostock & Berghahn, 2008, p. 349). These dichotomous categories construct the Turkish woman as a backwards, uneducated, and oppressed victim; this ‘othering’ reifies Said’s (1978) concepts of Orientalism as ultimately “a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”)” (p. 43). According to Rostock and Berghahn (2008), gender has become a litmus test for integration and belonging in Germany, arguing that the oppressive actions done in the name of Islam, such as honor killing and wearing headscarves, “substantiate the idea that Islam in general and Muslims in particular are not (yet) part of German society” (p. 346).

The portrayal of gender as the ultimate decider of a group’s ability to integrate is a common theme not just in popular literature and the media but also in governmental and academic discussions of the role multiculturalism plays in integration. According to Ehrkamp (2010), the push for multiculturalism that was seen in political discourse gave way to a call for immigrants to adhere to the German Leitkultur (guiding culture) in the early 2000s, during the same period when the citizenship laws were fundamentally changed. Although the citizenship laws changed in 2000 to allow for citizenship outside of the ius sanguinis law, which had previously been the sole path to citizenship, the prevalent view is still that “integration should precede naturalization” (Rostick &
Berghahn, 2008, p. 350), meaning immigrants should ‘prove’ their desire and ability to integrate by relinquishing certain ethnic practices, whether that means learning German or removing headscarves. Setting gendered religious practices as the marker for belonging resituates other categories of identities; although Turks can be recognized legally as Germans, they remain de facto a foreign and unintegratable population. The political discourse parallels recent qualitative research which Schneider (2001) conducted with German citizens. In these interviews, Islam and the Turkish culture “merge to a prototypical image of ‘cultural incompatibility’ with Germanness: women and school girls wearing scarves, political or religious fanaticism and patriarchal oppression combines with juvenile machismo” (p. 365). In this way, citizenship has less to do with legal status and everything to do with external definitions of belonging and the perception of one’s compatibility with Leitkultur and the German Volk, the imagined definition of Germanness.

Leitkultur conveys the notion of a culturally homogenous society, one which “hinders the acceptance of diversity within a democratic frame and demands assimilation” (Luchtenberg, 2004, p. 261). Whereas the earlier call in politics for multiculturalism (mostly from the Green party) would grant equal status to other religions and cultures, German Leitkultur’s goal is cultural assimilation into the dominant German culture; this concept not only informs but reinforces Germanness as the exemplar of what it means to be a citizen (Ehrkamp, 2010; Mueller, 2006). In present political discourse, multiculturalism and cultural diversity are terms that only appear as negative terms or to emphasize difference (Ehrkamp, 2010). The debate surrounding Leitkultur drew
nationwide attention when Friedrich Merz, a member of the Bundestag, advocated that
the Basic Law in Germany espouses core values by which all immigrants must live,
including gender equity and a willingness to learn German (Göktürk, Gramling & Kaes,
2007).

Integral to our system of freedoms is the position of the women in our society,
which was achieved only after decades of struggle…cultural coexistence and
mutual enrichment through cultural experiences from other countries come up
against their own limits, where basic consensus toward freedom, human dignity,
and equality is no longer observed.

Coexistence with foreigners thus has its consequences. People of different origins
can shape their future together only on the foundation of commonly accepted
values…Whether it is the identity of our country, the constitutional patriotism, or
even the liberal guiding culture that has shaped us, the immigration and
integration of foreigners, which we want to and must promote, need to be oriented
toward commonly held, valid standards. (Merz, 2000, p. 314, emphasis mine)

The tenets of a German ‘guiding culture’ situate German culture as not only being
homogenous, but that its principles are superior to those of the immigrants’ cultures; no
matter how vague the cultural differences are, they become markers for clearly bounded
categories, so that no matter how similar the ‘other’ is, they are still seen as different
(Murphy-Shigematsu, 2004). Static notions of other cultures, particularly Muslim and
Turkish, are central to establishing these “valid standards”, thereby condemning entire
groups of people as unfit or unable to integrate (Ehrkamp, 2010). Referencing the non-
existent rights of women in other countries emphasizes (and exaggerates) the equality and liberation of German women, again underscoring a static notion of the female immigrant as oppressed, her culture and her body both in need of westernizing.

Fulfilling certain prerequisites and establishing specific “valid standards” enables the nation-state to disregard multiculturalism as a project that enables immigrants to remain segregated while uplifting the tenets of a German ‘guiding culture’ as a more active framework towards inclusion (Göktürk, Gramling & Kaes, 2007). Although the idea of a nation enforcing guiding principles based on imagined notions of belonging appears counter to the tenets of a liberal democracy, the central tenets of linguistic and political acculturation have nevertheless become absorbed as part of the 2005 Immigration Act. In this way, “exclusionary notions of citizenship as belonging might restrict the allocation of status and rights to immigrants and affect their participation in society” (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008, p. 156). Implicitly or explicitly, the exclusionary discourse surrounding a German guiding culture sets both de facto and de jure limitations on who does and does not belong, particularly in regards to the female immigrant.

The 2005 Immigration Law established new immigration guidelines for those entering the country and reinforced existing stances on the integration of migrant populations in Germany. The law, the first comprehensive law of its kind, was a compromise between the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats. Although it was written, in part, to address the demographic issues causing a decline in the number of working-age Germans and to strengthen the immigrant workforce entering the country by granting settlement permits to highly-qualified workers (researchers, management staff,
specialists), it also established specific standards for the integration of the immigrant population that has been in Germany for decades (Clarence, 2009). Although the new immigration law recognized gender-specific persecution, this legislation was not passed without harsh criticisms which claimed that women were vastly underrepresented in the decision-making process (Rostock & Berghahn, 2008). Three key areas of this new law which have specific impact for women of Turkish descent and Muslim women in Germany need to be more fully developed by the government: first, while the law stipulated required language and integration courses for all current immigrant in Germany, it does not address the complex issues many women face in completing such a requirement; second, the new law mentions women and provides basic statistics on their participation in education and the workforce, but leaves unaddressed the ways in which this population needs particular support; third, like other political rhetoric, the law places little focus on the social and cultural environment to which the immigrants are asked to integrate (Clarence, 2009). The Federal Ministry of the Interior published an extensive explanation of the law in which was included the governmental definition of integration:

Integration is a long-term process intended to ensure that all lawful and permanent residents are included in German society. Legal immigrants should be able to participate fully in all areas of society, on equal terms wherever possible. Immigrants are obligated to learn the language of the country in which they live and to know, respect and uphold the German constitution, German laws and the basic values of German society. (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2011, p. 198)
As with other political discourse on the role of language and education in the integration of immigrants, the Federal Ministry of the Interior outlines the steps of integration as primarily the responsibility of the individual rather than the state. Adopting the “basic values of German society” insinuates that immigrant are required to perform within the guidelines that are steeped in a Christian and western perspective. Rostock and Berghahn (2008) also point out that the law has used recent cases of gender oppression and abuse, including honor killings, forced marriages, and headscarves as a way to enforce restrictions on new immigrants to Germany; in this way, “gender is utilized to argue against the civil recognition of migrants” (p. 357).

Before the law was drafted, the Central Council for Muslims in Germany issued a statement outlining their beliefs regarding integration for the Muslim community in Germany:

The goal must be a culture of recognition and togetherness in equality, in which the fundamental rights and duties of the Basic Law will be accepted on the basis of difference. Cultural differences – for examples, wearing a head scarf – must be tolerated and accepted by the social majority. The disappearance of individual heritage – and identity – must not occur under integration, because this development would lead to a false equation with assimilation. (Central Council for Muslims in Germany, 2007, p. 185).

Gender, religion, and immigrant status again become the main point of contention surrounding the ways in which integration is measured. For the Central Council, an immigration law which requires women to surrender their head scarves in the name of German values is a law which conflates integration with assimilation, a forcible removal
of difference. The intersections of gender and religion serve as a means for systematically excluding certain cultural practices that are constructed as undesirable or incongruent to a “secular” (Christian) society, which in turn constructs that religion or culture as incompatible with German life. The demand for the immigrant population to relinquish its cultural and religious practices as a prerequisite for enjoying equal treatment disavows the basic tenets of a secular nation-state; in doing so, the nation-state co-opts the gendered body as an example of Muslims’ inability to integrate, reinforcing the foundation of German citizenship as one built on a Christian and patriarchal structure.

The common trope of Turkish immigrant women which appears in political discourse, academic research, and pop culture serves to render this population as homogeneous, religiously conservative, and reluctant to adapt to German culture. While honor crimes, forced marriages, and gender oppression have become major issues in the German political and feminist agendas, painting all Turkish women’s identity with the broad brushstrokes of patriarchal cultural oppression serves to render invisible the oppression these women experience outside of these communities and at the hands of Germans themselves (Clarence, 2009; Rostock & Berghahn, 2008; Rottmann & Marx Ferree, 2008). According to the Forum for Female Migrants in Berlin (2009), female migrants do experience different problems than their male counterparts:

Women experience the migration process differently than men. This has to do with their social and familial interests and commitments, with their possibilities and limitations. Their channels for integration in the receiving society are different. (Forum Berliner Migrantinnen Projekte, 2009, p. 9)
A 2003 interview with the two founding women (F. and T) of the first Turkish women’s organization in Berlin highlights a similar response when asked why they have not joined their efforts with German women organizations:

   F: We have worked closely with them; we define ourselves as an international association. But we are women migrants…

   T: We have specific problems that differ from those experienced by German women; there are rights they have already achieved that we are still fighting for.

   (“The multicultural association”, 2003, p. 14)

The situations faced by migrant women in Germany differ not only from their immigrant male counterparts but also from their German female counterparts; however, these difficulties unique to this immigrant sub-group are often overshadowed by the research on males or by the assumption that rights for German women translated into rights for all women living in Germany. The interviews discussed in the following section highlight the gendered tensions both within Turkish culture and between the Turkish and German women’s movement; while these tensions underscore the need for work within the Turkish community, they also point to the belief of cultural superiority held by Germans, and even feminist Germans. The women I interviewed discussed very different gendered experiences; for some, gender played a major role in their decision to pursue education and their career working with other immigrant women, while others claimed gender had little effect on the construction of their identity. Those who spoke of the current situation for Turkish females in Germany painted a picture of a population yearning for social
recognition and support, but who faced a landscape which remained ambivalent towards their role in German society. These women’s personal backgrounds and current work within their women’s organizations reveal that, although women of Turkish descent face unique challenges in Germany, their experiences must be contextualized not only within religious, gendered, and immigration categories of identity, but also society writ large.

“The motivation did not come from Germany but rather from Turkey”: The role of culture in gendered decision making.

The role gender plays in the measurement of belonging in German society imposes a standard of equality on immigrant populations which is not only artificially constructed and thus impossible to achieve but also a standard which Germany itself often fails to attain. While the European Union has increasingly made gender equality a main focus of their core values in attempts to ensure fairness and protection both within the workplace and civil society, debates around gendered religious rights of populations considered non-European forms a multi-faceted question about citizenship rights and gender equality (Rottmann & Marx Ferree, 2008). Despite these measures and changes encompassed in the German Immigration Act of 2005, the construction of the gendered immigrant remains one which falls short of the secularity and modernity measure of belonging. The women I interviewed offer an alternative understanding to the dominant construction of the gendered and ethnicized identity which places women as the passive receivers of, rather than actors and resistors within, society. Like Schreiber (2008) identified with her work with Turkish women entrepreneurs, these women show that “boundaries along the categories of gender and ethnicity are not inflexible but must be
considered as constructed and negotiated depending on the context” (p. 505). Paralleling the Turkish female entrepreneurs, the women I interviewed have attempted to move the understanding of femininity into a new context, challenging the common assumptions of Turkish Muslim women’s role in their community. In what ways are women’s decision making affected by their status as the immigrant Other in German society, and by their claims to belonging based on their ethnicity?

Fatma was almost 18, the oldest age of immigration among the women I interviewed, when she left Turkey to live in Berlin with her father. Even before she left Turkey, she was adamant about pursuing higher education in Berlin, a path strongly influenced by her older sisters. Fatma’s two older sisters always wanted to have careers and never wanted to be just housewives. She described her relationship with her sisters by saying that “their souls were our souls…they created a path and we followed”. Although one of her sisters had to stay in Turkey because she was too old to emigrate under the family reunification laws, her second oldest sister joined her in Berlin just two months after her arrival. She, like Fatma, wanted to study at a university in Berlin, but had problems with her passport and was forced to return to Turkey. Today, both of Fatma’s older sisters attended institutes of higher education in Turkey and are employed, one as a teacher and the other as a secretary. The driving force to pursue higher education for Fatma and her three sisters also affected her outlook on the traditional role of the woman in Turkish culture:

I don’t believe I could stay in the house [as a housewife] – If I had wanted to be a housewife, then I didn’t I have come to Germany to do so.
Her time at the university in Berlin affected this outlook in two ways: not only did it cement her passion for social work and assisting immigrant populations, it also empowered her to make different decisions in her personal life. Because Fatma studied at the university and had received higher education, she felt she was able to find a “better man”, one who was more secular and progressive. Her level of educational attainment coupled with her career allowed her to seek out a man with similar traits: “that’s what I wanted, that’s why I always said I never want to be a housewife.” Although her parents achieved low levels of education, with her father leaving school after the fifth grade and her mother after third grade, Fatma states her drive for higher education and a like-minded husband had nothing to do with Germany’s concept of feminism and women’s rights: “This motivation did not come from Germany but rather from Turkey.”

Fatma’s assertions reveal a positionality that is at once at odds with the dominant narrative of Turkish immigrant women and in line with research on the relationships between religion, educational attainment, and migration. Using both their own qualitative research and previous quantitative data, Eilers, Seitz, and Hirschler (2008) found an inverse relationship between level of educational attainment and intensity of religiousness for Muslim adults in Germany; the findings for other religious groups, especially Christians without a recent migrant history, revealed that there was a positive correlation between level of education and religiousness. Although there was also a relationship between place of birth and religiousness of Muslims, the researchers stressed that “clear-cut statements on the salience of religiousness among young Muslims imply the danger of essentializing religiosity to a stable and rather homogeneous entity” (Eilers
et al., 2008, p. 115). While gender attitudes are related to an individual’s social background, with better educated, younger females holding more egalitarian views, the perception of Turkish immigrant women as oppressed by her Muslim beliefs and thus unable to be fully integrated is still the dominant belief in Germany. Research conducted by Diehl, Koenig, and Ruckdeschel (2009) on gender equality and household duty sharing found that “religious individuals hold more conservative gender role attitudes than more secular individuals among both Turks and Germans even if relevant social background characteristics are taken into account” (p. 297). The correlation between religiousness and non-Turkish populations is often overshadowed by the perception that Islam is an inherently oppressive religion; this view not only disregards similar patterns within the dominant culture, it conflates religion and ethnic origin to such an extent that secular beliefs are rendered silent.

Fatma’s discourse surrounding the label of ‘housewife’ established a discursive hierarchy of women’s roles that is paralleled in research on Turkish women entrepreneurs in Germany (Schreiber, 2008). This excerpt of Schreiber’s (2008) interview with Aynur, a lawyer and general manager of a law firm, is similar to Fatma’s connection between educational attainment and finding a spouse:

Yes, yes, a typical Turkish man, ehh, one has, I have, or rather, society thinks of a, eh, man that wants a housewife, who wants a woman to do the chores, to take care of the kids…who always stays in the background and, eh, always pushes her husband in the foreground. And that was different with my husband. He always supported me. (Schreiber, 2008, p. 501)
Like Aynur, Fatma’s level of education enabled her to seek a relationship with someone who was more secular and supported more non-traditional gender roles. In both Schreiber’s (2008) interview with Aynur and my interview with Fatma, the women simultaneously reinforce and stretch the limits of ethnic and gender stereotypes of the ‘typical’ Turkish housewife and husband. While calling attention to the confinement of the housewife’s duties, Fatma emphasizes her role as an advocate and social worker, revealing that ethnicity and gender intersect in varying and unique ways and dispelling the common assumption that all Turkish immigrant women are oppressed by their male relatives.

The issue of housework as a measurement of gender equality is a common topic for both researchers and women of Turkish descent. Diehl et al. (2009) used data gathered by the German Federal Institute for Population Research on German and Turkish couples’ division of household chores and their reported levels of religiousness to extrapolate connections between religious beliefs, ethnic origin, and gender equality. Their results indicate that while couples of Turkish descent are less approving overall of gender equality than Germans, level of educational attainment and level of religiousness increase egalitarian attitudes. A main focus of the Turkish organization with which Fatma is associated is household chores and women’s role in the home:

An important concern of the association is in regards to the complete acceptance of women’s often unpaid work. Household work is mostly completed by women – a fact that has long been shown through the feminist movements of the past 30 to 40 years…
And the men who hide behind their excuses, that they simply don’t have the talent for household work, don’t they accept the principle of an egalitarian division of labor? So, if they only had the talent, then they would help tackle it… maybe the solution lies in offering courses in household work especially for men! (“The multicultural association”, 2003, p. 22-24).

Fatma’s construction of the Turkish housewife, while seemingly in line with what research and Turkish women’s associations typify, is used to juxtapose her status as an university-educated secular immigrant with the common image of the confined woman whose main task is to do her husband’s bidding. The solution to the perceived cultural incompatibility of Turkish people in Germany often offered is to develop a course for women, whether on culture or language, to assist in their integration. By inverting this ‘quick fix’, the Turkish women’s association’s mocking suggestion that men need to take education courses on household work emphasizes that foolishness in the belief that all practices can be unlearned or disciplined out of a population.

Fatma’s belief that had she wanted to be a housewife, she could have remained in Turkey in conjunction with the Turkish association’s statement that feminist scholars have researched issues of gendered household labor for four decades reveals a multi-layered problem: first, the feminist movements towards egalitarian models of labor have been a movement largely of and for the dominant German culture, a clear indication that feminists must be wary of how a “focus on gender can lead to claims to cultural superiority” (Rottmann & Marx Ferree, 2008, p. 504). Second, Fatma’s stance that her construction of gender roles and her own gendered identity came from her older sisters in Turkey is indicative of the ambivalence towards the calls across ethnic groups for gender
equality in Germany. It is clear the struggles that are still being fought within minority sub groups in Germany are not only battles that German feminists believe they have already won, but that the fight is playing out largely in isolation from other feminist and gender movements. In this way, it is clear how Fatma has been empowered by the Turkish women in her life, and continues to be empowered by the collective struggle both within Turkish and across other cultures.

Like Fatma, Lale came from a family with low educational attainment; additionally, while Lale’s parents were working in Germany, she was being raised by her Macedonian grandparents who were illiterate in Turkish. Despite what many would consider educational disadvantages (low educational achievement of both her parents and grandparents; raised by relatives who were illiterate in her native tongue; immigration to Germany at a young age), Lale matriculated through the school system in Berlin and to the university: “Then I studied at [a university in Berlin] – that’s the school that has the highest number of foreign students…I always said I wanted to study there.” Even though she knew at which university she wanted to study, Lale had a more difficult time deciding on her career plans: “When I was a small kid, I wanted to be everything possible, from a pilot to politician, a doctor – everything…” Because of her indecisiveness, she had to take a semester off before beginning her university education so she could better choose a field of study. Although Lale emphasized that gender played a clear role in her educational attainment, it did not mar her drive for a university education but rather reinforce it: “Yes, absolutely [gender played a role]. In my job search, in my studies…whenever I think back, I think about [being a] woman.”
In my family, no one went to the university, but I got to know women here who had been to the university…from my close circle no woman had a university education. In Turkey things were different and there was more contact with educated women, but here we were a working family…they could have done it here, but there were just no possibilities. In a similar manner as Fatma, Lale situates the impetus for her drive for higher education as coming from her relationships with educated women in Turkey, contrasting those encounters with the working-class Turkish women in Germany who were unable to pursue educational advancement because of their social status. Even the occupations she dreamed of becoming when she was a child (doctor, pilot, and politician) are male-dominated in both Germany and Turkey. Far from the image of a homogenous Turkish culture that is deeply religious and gender-conservative, Lale’s inspiration to pursue higher education not only complicates this perception but also problematizes the German feminist discourse which situated Turkish women as the Oriental Other, in need of emancipation. Lale and Fatma drew their motivation to pursue higher education, to stretch the common perception of gender, and to challenge the perception of Turkish female immigrants from women in Turkey who were relatives and mentors. Consequently, these women highlight that although Germany has emphasized gender as playing a pivotal role in the creation of Germanness, the country is far from accepting Turkish women’s experiences as non-homogenous and far from realizing their own role in the perpetuation of gender inequalities, particularly when gender intersects with ethnicity and immigrant status (Rostock & Berghahn, 2008).
Ambivalence toward gendered cultural experiences.

Although each woman I interviewed was intimately connected to a female immigrant association through their work, volunteerism, or even as a former member in their youth, their reflections on the role of gender in their lives and the lives of other women of Turkish descent varied greatly. While Fatma and Lale spoke extensively about their inspiration from women in Turkey as a model for their beliefs on higher education and gendered household tasks, Yeşim and Ayşe showed both ambivalence towards and difficulty in naming the ways in which gender influenced their educational experiences. Annika, the only woman I spoke with who was not of Turkish descent, emphasized that having an organization devoted to girls of migrant backgrounds was important because:

some of the parents would not allow them to go to other places, that means go to school and then back home. But the parents have so much trust in [this organization], and they say, “okay, yes, my girl is allowed to come here” and can participate in activities, a few trips…

Later during the interview, I asked Annika, who was in her last semester of her social work degree and had worked extensively as an intern with this organization and another in Berlin which worked specifically with girls, about what issues or problems were specific for the girls with a migrant background. In addressing the specific ways which ethnicity, gender, and immigrant status intersect to create particular difficulties, Annika became much more hesitant:

In principle, I can’t say that there is one problem, that that is the problem, there are individual experiences…Many times it doesn’t matter if the girl is Turkish or German or wherever they might come from – the issues are similar. For others,
it’s a matter of being raised very traditionally, where the parents might be very strict. That is where we attempt, that is the point where we try to work. There is yet another barrier or … how do I deal with it when my parents are of one mindset and I have a different opinion. That is where we try to strengthen the girls and have them fight to change things. One can’t always be successful, but despite this…[we try]…so they are not taken down.

Contrary to statements from the Turkish women’s association, which works closely with German women’s groups while also recognizing the specific needs of its own members, Annika takes a more ‘color blind’ approach, insinuating that girls of all ethnicities have similar struggles they must overcome. While different from the German feminist approaches of the 1980s and 1990s, which viewed the situation of Turkish migrant women as “an articulation of thresholds between West and East” (Chin, 2007, p. 166), viewing struggles of migrant women through the lens that all women face the same issues as the dominant culture works to erase the unique oppressions constructed by the intersections of their identities. Oftentimes the ‘color blind’ approach to multiculturalism is perceived as an inclusiveness for all, regardless of their ethnicity, race, or gender; however, such a stance supports the taken-for-grantedness of the status quo and allows for the given to be accepted as the inevitable (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Although in reference to classroom educators in American schools, a similar statement made by Lisa Delpit (2001) can be generalized to include any population which works with disadvantaged youth:

In her book *White Teacher* Vivian Paley openly discusses the problems inherent in the statement that I have heard many teachers – well-intentioned teachers –
utter, “I don’t see color, I only see children.” What message does this statement send? I would like to suggest that if one does not see color, then one does not really see children. Children made “invisible” in this manner become hard-pressed to see themselves worthy of notice. (Delpit, 2001, p. 208)

Annika is an example of a well-intentioned, passionate intern who cares a great deal for the girls in her organization; however, her statement indicates a hesitancy to speak on issues of gender and ethnicity, focusing instead on the universalism of the struggles faced by teenage girls in Germany. While certainly there are overlapping concerns and hurdles for this age group, a focus on embracing the “brilliance of their legacy” (Delpit, 2001, p. 208) rather than a universal ‘color-blind’ approach could assist the organization in understanding the cultural nuances specific to each girl. Annika later stated that the girls are “individual” but experience wide-reaching problems; such an acknowledgment enables educators and social workers to take their first step in knowing each child individually while working towards removing the blinders that reinforce the color-blind approach.

Both Ayşe and Yeşim display a similar hesitancy towards admitting that gender played any role in their educational attainment. While Ayşe’s only comment on gender playing a role in her educational attainment was regarding her current job at a Turkish women’s organization (“it’s good to work with other women, it’s really nice”), Yeşim is more elaborate in describing how gender did not influence her educationally. Yeşim, the only interviewee of Turkish descent who was born in Germany, described her school-age extracurricular activities in the following way: “I did a lot of sports – kickboxing, soccer, basketball. I played soccer with nine boys and two girls”. Later in the interview I asked
Yeşim whether gender had played a role in her educational experiences and she replied, “Absolutely not. My family is liberal, not so strict. My entire family is integrated. My father has been here for 40 years.” She continued to answer the question about gender by describing the ways in which her family celebrates both Christmas and Ramadan, with her husband dressing as Santa Claus and her two year-old son receiving twice the amount of presents. These answers indicate Yeşim’s understanding of the role of gender as it intersects with her Turkish identity; she supported her statement that gender was not a factor in her educational experiences by giving evidence to the contrary, both in her extracurricular choices and in the private sphere of her household. Conflating secularity with gendered practices, Yeşim attempts to prove that her family is integrated because they were not a conservative religious family. In research conducted with immigrant populations of Asian descent in America, Mahalingam, Balan and Haritatos (2008) highlight the tendency for immigrant populations to create idealized beliefs about gender. Although they identify these beliefs as constructing immigrant females as chaste and virtuous and immigrant males as more responsible and harder working than their non-immigrant counterparts, Yeşim reveals a differing construction of idealized gender beliefs. Overlapping secularity, ethnic identity, and gendered norms, she stretches the measurement of gender as a litmus test for integration so far that it becomes invisible, as if to say, “I’m so integrated that I don’t even think about gender”. In doing so, Yeşim shows that “marginalized social groups cope with their marginalized social experience in complex ways. The social marginality and hegemony they encounter profoundly influence their need to construct positive idealized representations of gender” (Mahalingam et al., 2008, p. 328-329).
Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

At the Intersections of Resistance

In the early 1960s we brought the guest workers to Germany. Now they’re living with us. ... Of course the multicultural approach -- living side by side, being happy with each other -- this approach has failed, utterly. That is why integration is so important, those who want to participate in our society must not only comply with the law and follow the constitution, but above all, must learn our language. (Merkel, in Helmy, 2010, para. 2)

Angela Merkel’s 2010 speech to the young members of her conservative Christian Democrat party (CDU) highlights the tenuous relationship with cultural differences in Germany society which the government continues to have, despite the Turkish population having been in Germany for more than 50 years. In 1998, over ten years before Merkel’s speech, when the country was precariously perched on the threshold of new citizenship laws, Zafer Şenocak, a popular writer of Turkish descent, offered reflections on the state of Turkish-German relations in an article entitled “Aber das Herz schlägt noch türkisch” (“But the heart still beats Turkish”):

Even after forty years of continuous immigration, Germany still clings to the illusion that it’s not an immigration country, that the multicultural society is a condition that one can magically vanish with a few pithy slogans. Politicians have
failed to develop mechanisms to shape the immigration process in a way that is acceptable to the majority of Germans…

Germans and Turks in Germany have come closer to each other than people think. All the problems that are currently associated with the failure of multicultural society have to do with this closeness and with the realization that this closeness is not necessarily accompanied by the disappearance and assimilation of all that is foreign. (Şenocak, 1998, p. 1)

When set in conversation with Merkel’s 2010 speech, it becomes clear that the discourse surrounding multiculturalism and issues of belonging in German society have created a discourse of exclusion and difference constructed around the Turkish population, and specifically the Turkish female population. While Merkel asserts integration attempts under an agenda of multiculturalism have failed in large part because of immigrants’ reluctance to adapt to and adopt German culture and values, Şenocak states that the nation cannot both maintain its stance of being a non-immigration country and attempt to adopt the philosophy of multiculturalism. The tension between these perspectives underscores the ambivalence of the nation-state towards their minority populations and illuminates the marked silence of the Turkish women’s voices that are excluded from these conversations.

The absence of women of Turkish descent within the German context is apparent not just in the academic literature but also the highly-regimented and tracked German educational system. Although more than 50 years after the arrival of the first Turkish
guest worker, educational inequality continues to be rampant, with rates of second-
generation immigrants as low as 3.3% in German universities (Schittenhelm, 2009).
Often the higher education training females of Turkish descent receive is through
vocational training, which itself is highly-gendered and tracks women into jobs that have
a high risk of unemployment and are vulnerable to market trends. While the government,
through its 2005 Immigration and Integration Law, has officially taken the stance that it
is the onus of the immigrant to integrate by learning German and by parents enforcing the
importance of education for their children, others maintain that Germany’s program is
one of assimilation rather than integration and that the educational underachievement is
due to structural deficiencies, not the deficiencies of the immigrant population.

Guided by these tensions, this dissertation had two main foci: first, the ways in
which Turkish women’s educational experiences were guided by (positively or
negatively) personal choice, cultural pressures, and educational policies and immigration
laws that were passed as the state and national level, and second, if an analysis of
documents and cultural artifacts parallel or diverge from the individual narratives.
Framed by intersectionality as the methodology, the dissertation explored overlapping
categories of identity to examine the ways in which gender, ethnicity, culture, immigrant
status, and religion converge in particular ways to influence women’s educational
attainment. Further questions explored how women navigated and made sense of the
artificially-constructed categories of Germanness and Turkishness within the educational
system to resist marginalization and the implications of the failed project of
multiculturalism on education for Turkish immigrant women. In total, in-depth semi-
structured interviews were conducted with five women who were connected to two
different women’s organizations in Berlin. Four of the women were either Turkish
immigrants or women of Turkish descent and one was a German social worker intern
who was currently working with one of the organizations. In addition to the interviews,
documents and cultural artifacts like newspaper articles, immigration and education laws,
hip-hop and poetry produced by the Turkish population in Germany, and local election
platforms were analyzed.

Discussion of Findings

Previously, researchers conducting studies on the Turkish immigrant population
in Germany have noted the educational achievement discrepancies between Turkish
students and their native German counterparts (Alba et al., 1998; Auernheimer, 2006;
Crul & Schneider, 2009; von Below, 1997). While research on the educational
inequalities within the German educational system is extensive, little data and academic
research exists on the ways in which this affects women of Turkish descent or their
navigation of the educational system. This dissertation put individual women’s
narratives regarding their educational experiences in conversation with the official
discourse, educational policies, and cultural artifacts to illuminate the ways in which
these broad structures operate at the individual level to affect educational attainment.
Chapter 4 offered an extensive discussion of the four emerging themes which were
identified from the women’s interview data: laying claims to belonging; the use and
significance of language; retrospective attitudes toward educational experiences; and
gendered cultural identity. Each woman spoke to these themes in unique ways, but despite the differences within their narratives, the research reveals that their educational experiences counter the dominant narrative of the Turkish immigrant woman as the ‘reluctant immigrant’. Through their emphasis on the importance of education and language acquisition, their self-identification which pushes the boundaries of citizenship and the nation-state, and the ways in which they make sense of their own educational attainment, these women present direct contradictions to the discourse that places the immigrant at fault for the failure of the multicultural project in Germany. This dissertation contributes to the emerging literature which has attempted to deconstruct the dominant narrative of the Turkish immigrant woman and displace the reductionist view of this population (Erel, 2003). This is the first time the problem of Turkish women’s experiences in German higher education have been considered, particularly from a qualitative project framed by intersectionality; despite being the first study to explicitly address the intersections of identity and context for this immigrant sub-group, the results reveal emerging themes which can be used as a guide for future research.

It is not surprising that the women I interviewed challenged the boundaries of identity and belonging by situating their claims to identity in unique ways. The ways in which they self-identified not only disrupts the hegemonic categories of identity but also reveals nuanced overlaps between gender, language, immigrant status, and culture. According to Erel (2003), literature on citizenship generally excludes any conversation of gender, instead offering a one-dimensional perspective that is typically male. An understanding of the ways in which gender plays a role in meaning making of citizenship
not only reinforces the necessity of an intersectional approach, but it also takes into account the ways in which “communities are defined and negotiated within ethnocized and gendered parameters” (Erel, 2003, p. 163). Fatma’s reflection on the ways in which she constructs her own identity and guides her son’s demonstrates that claims to belonging often exist outside of the citizenship and nation-state discourse:

My younger child always says to me “I am German”…I can’t even fathom…because German society will never accept that, and then the child will always have difficulties. Then I always tell him, “Your mother and your father are from Turkey, you were born in Berlin, you are a Berliner!”… That really worried me because I knew that German society would not accept this, that he would have difficulties. His parents come from Turkey, that is a safer history, I think. Since then, he’s become 14 and says “my parents are from Turkey, I was born in Berlin, I grew up in Berlin, I am a Berliner. I am German and Turkish, both mixed” – this is now what he says. Fatma’s description of conversations she has had with her son reveal a complex and somewhat paradoxical construction of identity built from the intersections of gender, immigrant status, geographic location, and ethnicity. While she refutes any claims to belonging constructed on citizenship status, she is perfectly comfortable identifying as a Berliner. As Schneider (2002) identifies with one of his interview respondents, Fatma employs her ‘Berlinness’ “in order to legitimate her sense of belonging, but avoiding the explicit mention of ‘Germanness’” (p. 17). Fatma’s narrative parallels other research, hip-hop, literature, and poetry produced by immigrants in Germany which maintain that an immigrant identity is much more nuanced than the common imagery of immigrant
populations suspended perpetually in between two cultures and not fully of either (Adelson, 2000; Mandel, 2008; Schneider, 2002; Suhr, 1989).

Employing alternative forms of identification, including laying claims to regional belonging, bypasses the contentious form of belonging built on citizenship status, enabling them to resist marginalization conferred onto them by the dominant discourse. In such an imaginary space of citizenship and belonging, “Turkish migrant women in particular are juxtaposed to German women, whose lifestyle is seen to embody Western democracy and liberal values. In this view, German women constitute the symbols of the free and democratic constitution” (Erel, 2003, p. 157). This sidestepping around the long-held understanding of what it means to belong in German society also operated within the women’s educational experiences and reflects the incongruity between the ways in which Turkish immigrant women are typified and their actual experiences.

I found that the Turkish immigrant women I interviewed regarded education and German language acquisition as an integral and vital part of their and their children’s economic and social advancement in Germany. These results correlate to and extend previous qualitative studies that were conducted with immigrant women in Germany which found that education was viewed as central to their success; however, the women also confronted extremely difficult roadblocks to attaining the education they wanted (Mandel, 2008; Schittenhelm, 2009), including Erel’s (2003) life story of Nilgün, who “had to resist classification as a low achiever by her teachers in order to achieve qualifications enabling her to study” (p. 158). Although Fatma indicated she and her father had constant struggles due to her insistence on pursuing and completing her
university education rather than joining him in Germany with the goal of finding immediate work, she and the other women indicated financial, emotional, and practical support from their parents and siblings.

The critiques of their educational achievements fell largely on the German educational system which, because of their immigrant status or their language capabilities, either tracked them into lower educational tracks with little opportunity for educational advancement or placed them in Turkish-German schools where the teachers were from Turkey and the entire school population consisted of the children of Turkish guest workers. These accounts parallel the existing literature on the ways in which the German educational system functions as a sorting mechanism to maintain the educational status quo (Auernheimer, 2006; Duru-Bellat et al., 2008; Faas, 2008). Lale’s own educational narrative speaks to the discrepancies between the official discourse which places the onus on the individual immigrant and the reality of what is occurring at the individual level:

They always say, both in school and in politics, regardless of whatever topic they’re discussing, ‘the parents, the parents, the parents’ are bad or they’re migrant children and that’s why, but [my experiences] can’t confirm that! I was here, and my parents could read, write, etc, but I was in Turkey with my grandparents and they couldn’t read, write, or speak [Turkish]. Despite this, I always received very good grades. I believe that school is more important than
where one’s family comes from. And that [what is said in schools and politics] is false and it stinks a little of racism.

This quote exemplifies the complexities of the relationship between educational policies which target immigrant children, official discourse about the state of immigrant children in German schools, and the individual experience of the daughter of a Turkish guest worker who, despite being a non-native speaker and being placed on a non-university track, still achieves a university education. Not only do Lale’s experiences parallel other accounts from Turkish women in the German educational system, they exemplify the need for an intersectionality approach to adequately identify and describe the ways in which state structures both maintain and construct power relations even at the level of the individual student (Mandel, 2008; Schittenhelm, 2008).

This dissertation underscores the importance of applying intersectionality as a methodological frame, not only to expand the boundaries of intersectionality but to adequately capture the relationships between categories of identity, individual experiences, and larger socio-cultural and historical structures. Intersectional scholars have questioned whether there is a practical use for intersectionality beyond its common use as theoretical tool to understand the ways in which categories of identity operate in tandem to create new oppressions; indeed, some even assert that intersectionality “has now reached the limits of its potential” (Conaghan, 2009, p. 21). By framing the in-depth interviews and document and artifact analysis within an intersectional methodology, this dissertation has taken up the critiques which challenge researchers who use
intersectionality to get at the complexity of multiplicity and to expand the borders of the theory by examining inequalities “in relation to dynamic processes of social ordering, both at the ‘local’ and ‘global’ level” (Conaghan, 2009, p. 42). Yeşim’s response to a question about the ways in which gender played a role in her educational attainment illustrates the utility of an intersectionality approach:

Absolutely not. My family is liberal, not so strict. My entire family is integrated. My father has been here for 40 years. We also celebrate Christmas and have a tree. It’s not a real tree but a plastic one. We also give each other Christmas gifts…we celebrate both Turkish and German traditions. Both. I also do this with my own family and my son, who is 2 ½. My husband dresses up like Santa Claus and surprises him with gifts. We also observe Turkish [holidays like] Ramadan and give gifts then. He is fortunate [to celebrate both]. He can really profit from getting gifts on both holidays – like double gifts! It’s a lot of fun to do this.

Although addressing a question about the role of gender in her educational experiences, Yeşim provides an answer which illuminates the complexity of identity, particularly for marginalized social groups. An analysis which consisted solely of gendered identity would fall flat, showing nothing more than her insistence that gender did not play a role in her education because her family is “liberal, not so strict”; however, an intersectional analysis reveals the textured layers of Yeşim’s identity which are intricately connected to the ways in which the dominant discourse constructs gendered Turkishness. The excerpt reveals the overlapping categories of gender, religion, belonging, and ethnicity against
the broader structures of Turkishness, Germanness, and the social construction of the immigrant Other. We see that gender does not exist as a static category of identity, nor is it performed in isolation; rather, to understand gender in this context, we must also understand the historical, cultural, and social contexts of performing both Muslim and Christian holidays as a measurement of her gendered belonging. Understanding her individual experiences in relation to structures of power provides a more nuanced understanding of Yeşim’s situatedness (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999). Although limited in its scope, this dissertation provides initial responses to the critiques that intersectionality can only be employed as a theory, that it falls short of its promise to ‘map the margins’, and that it continues to fixate on identity politics and ignore the broader context in which these categories are constructed (Conaghan, 2009; Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999; Mahalingam, 2008).

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

This dissertation provides preliminary evidence that Turkish women’s individual educational experiences counter the commonly-held conception of the Turkish woman as the ‘reluctant immigrant’ who refuses to learn German or further her educational attainment. These women’s narratives reveal active participation within the educational system and an emphasis on educational attainment and language acquisition which spans at least three generations. Furthermore, gender, immigrant status, and ethnicity converge in particular ways for each of these women, reinforcing the necessity of an intersectionality perspective to examine the relationship between categories of identity
and educational attainment. The limitations of this dissertation include its small number of participants, the short time in the field, and the methodology of intersectionality, which has simultaneously furthered and limited the scope of the research. While these aspects have worked to limit my dissertation research, they should be seen as opportunities for future lines of inquiry, particularly the way in which this approach can be used with immigrant populations in other contexts; additionally, because this dissertation is the first time this line of inquiry has been taken up specifically through an intersectionality approach, the direction of this research can be used as a guide for future projects.

While I chose to employ in-depth interviews with a small group of women to adequately capture the individual effects of educational and immigration policies, the women I spoke with were all connected to organizations which worked to empower immigrant female populations in Berlin; this connection to organizations which celebrate women’s heritage and work to increase their self-esteem played a role in the kinds of experiences these women had. Additionally, because the number of participants was small and were drawn from the same general geographic location, the results should be interpreted with caution, since women of Turkish descent outside the city of Berlin could hold differing educational experiences, particularly within the more conservative areas of Germany. Additionally, the participants of Turkish descent were all children of guest workers, with many of the women indicating their parents had little more than an elementary education. There is evidence that a familial background with lower educational attainment and social status played a role in the women’s educational experiences, particularly in the ways they were tracked in the school system. Future
research should include a larger sample with varying ages, not just the children of guest workers but younger generations who are currently enrolled in the educational system; in addition, consideration should be given to Turkish immigrants with higher educational attainment or those who came as skilled, white-collar workers. Another aspect of the women’s identity which could contribute to differing findings was their unique ‘generational’ positioning as immigrants. Children of guest workers born in and educated in Turkey, the Turkish women (excluding Yeşim) occupied a unique status as the 1½ immigrant generation. In between guest workers and children who were born in Germany, these women experiences contribute to the perspective of those who had the opportunity to receive formal education in both countries. As such, this ‘in-between’ generation can offer a comparative educational reflection in ways which guest workers and children born in Germany cannot. Including participants with these traits will enable the researcher to more fully examine the intersections of ethnicity, social class, gender, and immigrant status (Mahalingam et al., 2008). In addition, because of the limitations of my resources, I was only able to remain in Berlin for two weeks. While this time frame was enough to gain initial access and build rapport with the community gatekeeper, it is imperative that future researchers who follow this line of inquiry remain within the community for an extended period of time. Not only will this work to build trust and enable the researcher to gain access to additional respondents, it will enable a deeper understanding of the ways in which these women construct and navigate their identities.

My dissertation employed two methods, in-depth interviews and document and artifact analysis, which enabled me to glean information about the German school system
and its structure in very particular ways. Because I was unable to access official school
documents and records or gain entry into local schools for classroom observation or
interviews with teachers, my data is limited to what the women discussed in their
interviews and the available documentation. Future research should consider the ways in
which employing other methods like school and classroom observations and interviews
with parents and their children could increase an intersectional understanding of gendered
experiences in the German educational system. While the results of this dissertation
cannot be generalized to the Turkish population in Germany, these methodologies could
be employed with similar immigrant populations throughout the European Community,
including The Netherlands and Austria, in an effort to identify specific educational
patterns and emerging themes. Similar patterns might also be identified with other
immigrant Muslim populations in Europe, especially those in France and Great Britain.
Additionally, a comparative analysis between the educational experiences of Turkish
women in Germany and immigrant populations in other areas of the world could also
yield overarching themes. Researchers who wish to extend the findings described here
should also consider research with Turkish males in Germany or females from other large
immigrant groups, such as Greeks or Italians. Such data could strengthen the unique
findings of this dissertation and extend the use of intersectionality to show the particular
ways in which the categories of identity overlap to form unique experiences for different
groups. A final key area of research which was not addressed in this dissertation is the
application of these individual accounts to local and national policy, curricular, and
educational decisions. Researchers who take up this line of research should consider the
ways in which qualitative interviewing in general, and women’s narratives in particular,
can contribute to educational change at the local and national level. At the very least, curricular and pedagogical alterations should be considered based on students’ individual educational attainment and their self-reporting of the ways in which they have been treated within the school system.

While an intersectionality approach to this research has provided a space for the women’s experiences to be more adequately understood and has supported the need for an approach which does not treat categories of identity in isolation, its strength can also be its limitation. When a researcher takes up intersectionality as their methodology, it places particular responsibilities both on the researcher and the research itself; this includes an adequate and textured analysis of the categories of identity, both historically and contemporaneously. The danger, however, is that as the research brings forth more categories, their examination becomes more superficial. Researchers who employ intersectionality as a framework for their research project must be attentive to not only representing both the context and the individual categories in their analysis, but also providing the adequate depth, as the risk becomes that a superficial treatment could reinscribe stereotypes or operate to render a population invisible.

Three significant trends emerged from the interview data which also point to future paths for continuing research with the Turkish women’s population in Germany. First, there was a positive correlation between women’s educational attainment and their level of dissatisfaction with the educational system, such that the higher the level of education completed by the women, the more likely they were to critique both their own
experiences and the current state of the educational system in regards to students of
migrant background. Contrary to my expectation that women who had achieved higher
educational attainment would be more invested in the system and thus have a more
positive outlook towards Germany’s education, I found the opposite to be true. More
research needs to be conducted to adequately describe this emerging pattern, including a
consideration of other methods which could more adequately inform this trend, such as
cross-national comparisons with other female immigrant groups’ access to and
experience with higher education. Future research should consider whether longer
exposure to the inequalities in the German educational system is correlated to the
women’s dissatisfaction and resistance. Institutes of higher education, including their
mission statements, official stances towards immigrant and non-German populations, and
resources offered to Turkish and other minority students, should be examined to trace
possible links between the women’s dissatisfaction and the ways in which the universities
constructed their educational experiences (for example, Fatma described how many
lectures at her university were conducted in English, a language she does not understand.
As Turkish students, their foreign language in school is German and as a consequence,
many students are not given the opportunity to learn English. This linguistic
disadvantage has far-reaching consequences, particularly at a university which commonly
uses English in their lectures.)

Second, as mentioned previously, each woman made explicit the ways in which
the importance of educational attainment and language acquisition were linked cross-
generationally, not just between themselves and their children but also between their own
parents and siblings. This cross-generational linkage is especially worthy of note for two reasons: first, the women I interviewed indicated their parents were largely uneducated, with many of them completing their formal schooling in Turkey before the sixth grade; and second, the women indicated that the motivation to pursue German language acquisition and higher education did not stem from their experiences in Germany but rather from Turkey. Future research should include extensive in-depth interviews with different generations of women within families to trace this trend and more fully describe the ways in which it plays a role in the educational attainment of Turkish women in German schools. Another line of inquiry would be to trace this educational motivation back to Turkey by conducting in-depth interviews with women in Turkey to identify any patterns which emerge in both the immigrant Turkish population and those still living in Turkey.

The third unexplored trend to emerge from this dissertation involves the central role of the organizations in the lives of the women I interviewed. While most of the women I spoke with worked within the respective organizations in some capacity (providing social services, homework and tutoring assistance, and general administrative services), there were also indications that they had been connected to similar organizations while they were still in school. According to Erel (2003), women’s roles within their communities are often constructed around their identities as mothers and wives, thus only “in relation to and depending on men” (p. 160). Organizations which cater exclusively to the female population, such as the two I worked with in Berlin, force a reimagination of the gendered constructions of identity and stretch the common
conception of an ethnicized female immigrant. Researchers who continue this line of inquiry should consider the ways in which non-formal centers of education, such as these two organizations which cater specifically to women of migrant backgrounds, contribute to the empowerment of populations which have been traditionally disadvantaged in the formal educational system. The combination of tutoring, language assistance and homework help with educated female role models of similar cultural backgrounds could work in providing young students with motivation to pursue higher education. Conducting ethnographies with these organizations could yield data which supports the hypothesis that immigrant female organizations with strong female role models provide motivation to their young members to continue in their educational pursuits.

**Conclusion**

What factors have led to the educational attainment of Turkish immigrant women in the German educational system and how have they navigated the socially-constructed categories of Turkishness and Germanness? This dissertation suggests that, despite their individual level of educational attainment, these women’s definition of belonging, significance they place on language acquisition and education, and their gendered cultural identity dispel the dominant classification of Turkish women as reluctant immigrants who maintain social, cultural, and educational distance from German society. Their ability to stretch the boundaries of citizenship and identity through alternative classifications of belonging show the ways in which they negotiate the rugged, uncharted, and often lonely terrain of identity. Far from the reductionist view often held of the Turkish female
population in Germany, which places them as victims of an oppressive and traditionally patriarchal culture, each woman provided unique perspectives on educational achievement, gendered family dynamics, and their self-identification (Erel, 2003). Taken holistically, the findings in this dissertation provide a critical lens into the complex and often misunderstood educational experiences of Turkish immigrant women in Germany.

The results of this dissertation are not simply about affirming Turkish women’s continued underrepresentation in the German educational system; rather, they engage women’s voices to reveal the surprising outcomes of their educational situations and foster of an understanding of their particular ways each woman constructed a unique agency to combat the imposition of identity. The most important result to emerge from the data is that the women themselves never identifies as oppressed or victimized; surprisingly, those who expressed frustration with the system and who offered the most critique were the women who had completed a university education. My assumption entering into this research project was that the women who had achieved higher education would be less critical of the system since they were more invested in it; however, I found the opposite to be true. Although the women who had finished formal schooling in 10th grade were less critical of the educational system, they also surprised me with the amount of agency they held. Yeşim felt empowered by her assertion that she and her family were successfully socially integrated into German society, while Ayşe’s sense of agency within her Turkish community was directly connected to the work she did with the Turkish women’s organization. While I expected the women with whom I spoke to feel largely isolated, marginalized, and hesitant to identify in any way with the
Berliner society, each woman expressed her sense of belonging as being explicitly tied to being a particular type of Berliner, a kind of hybrid self-reclamation of identity far from the idea of the Turkish woman as a reluctant immigrant.

While these findings are not generalizable to the Turkish female population in Germany, nor are they able to speak for each gendered experience in Germany’s school system, they do provide an extension of the existing literature on educational attainment of immigrant populations and fill an existing void by addressing specifically the Turkish female population. Additionally, while this dissertation does not provide suggestions for policy and curricular changes for the German system, it does lend credence to some researchers’ positions that the academic underachievement of Turkish women has more to do with the dysfunctionality of the educational system and less to do with commonly-held assumptions about immigrant culture.

In the end, this dissertation issues a challenge to those who pursue research with populations who have been traditionally underrepresented (and misrepresented) by the dominant discourse in their society and by academic discussions which render such populations one-dimensional and static. An approach which includes voices that have been silenced is critical to both understanding the complexities of the issues and seeking to change them. This challenge can be felt in the women’s words below:

With our work we are building bridges between the female migrants and German society. We overcome barriers that impede our access to our rights and to regular services…and they make it clear that here in Berlin there are too few
migrant- and women-specific facilities and services! (Forum Berliner Migrantinnen Projekte, 2009, p. 31)
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