AT HOME IN ALMANYA?
TURKISH-GERMAN SPACES OF BELONGING IN WEST GERMANY, 1961-1990

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Born in West Berlin to Turkish Gastarbeiter parents, Filiz Güler spent her childhood in the Berlin neighborhood of Wedding, playing in its parks, attending its public schools, and wandering its streets with friends. She excelled at her studies, graduated from the Gymnasium, and ultimately earned a university degree. Now an adult with a family of her own, Güler lives and works in Wedding as an elementary school teacher, specializing in English language instruction. Güler speaks flawless German, considers religion a private matter, sees Germany as her home, and has a successful career that required advanced education. By most measures, she is the poster child for a well-integrated Turkish German.

At one point in her life, though, Güler wanted to leave Germany. While discussing some of the difficulties she encountered growing up with a different language and culture, Güler admitted: “Beginning at twenty, I really wanted to live in Turkey, I wanted to study there. I had this drive, this desire. It was pretty bad.” With time, that desire diminished, and at present she cannot imagine relocating to Turkey or what her life would have been like had she made the move back then.1 However, the fact that — despite embodying in so many ways the traditional markers of successful integration — she did not feel at home in the place where she had been born and raised calls into question the ways in which the relationship between immigrant communities and host societies is understood and measured.

My dissertation examines this relationship through the experiences of Turkish immigrants and their children in the Federal Republic of Germany from the beginning of Turkey’s participation in the guest-worker program in 1961 to the early years of reunified Germany. More specifically, I focus on integration as a process through which members of the Turkish-German community made themselves “at home” in German society by constructing spaces of belonging within and alongside it. By combining a spatial approach with Alltagsgeschichte, the dissertation shows Turkish integration to be a fundamentally local

1 Filiz Güler (pseudonym), interview by author, 27 May 2009, transcription by Perrin Saylan, Berlin, Germany, 2.
experience, influenced as much by personal relationships and community dynamics as by the larger structural factors such as immigration policy and economic conditions. The field of postwar immigration and multiculturalism in Germany contains a wealth of insightful studies. My dissertation engages most directly with scholarship that investigates the convergence of transnational and local influences on ethnic identity and belonging, such as Rauf Ceylan’s study of Turkish cafés and mosques in Cologne and Patricia Ehrkamp’s research on the Turkish community in Duisburg-Marxloh. My study focuses primarily on the neighborhood of Sprengelkiez in Berlin-Wedding, and relates its history to developments in Germany more broadly. Doing so brings the history of the Turkish-German community into the narratives of postwar Germany and reveals the dynamics of its formation.

Using the framework of space and place to examine integration reveals the reciprocal nature of immigrant settlement and integration. In using this methodological approach, a clearer picture emerges of how, as members of a community on the margins, Turkish immigrants and their children were able to work around established power structures and recreate spaces to address their own wants and needs. In the course of their daily negotiations, members of the Turkish-German community constructed “spaces of belonging” for themselves within their everyday landscapes and the social spaces embedded therein. In my dissertation, I focus specifically on space-making in the workplace, the home and neighborhood, the school, and places of worship as sites of common, daily activity. Often, members of the community used pre-existing spaces, such as the workplace, in ways unintended by the Germans who created and managed those sites. In other cases, they constructed wholly new spaces of interaction. Yet all of these spaces also exerted influence on their inhabitants. While immigrants and their children constructed these spaces to increase their own sense of belonging, they did not result in a linear process of integration. Each space was affected by numerous factors, including its participants, setting, and the reactions of those “outside”; and immigrants and their children engaged in multiple spaces in the course of their daily lives. Consequently, at different times and places members of the Turkish-German community felt varying levels of connection and belonging to German society, as illustrated in the opening story of Filiz Güler.

The results of the convergence of space-making, everyday routines, and immigrant belonging are particularly clear in the context of

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2 Rauf Ceylan, Ethnische Kolonien: Entstehung, Funktion und Wandel am Beispiel türkischer Moscheen und Cafés (Wiesbaden, 2006).


4 Sprengelkiez is home to a diverse population of long standing, and as such has seen and weathered the same social, political, and economic storms of other, better-known districts and cities. At the same time, it has been almost entirely overlooked by researchers, save for a study conducted by a local historian, Ursula Trüper, in the 1990s.


Primary and secondary schools have been sites charged with expectations, symbolic importance, and practical challenges in connection with the growth and belonging of the Turkish community in German society. When Turkish families reunited with their relatives working in the Federal Republic and settled into residential neighborhoods, Turkish children and youth began attending German elementary and secondary schools. This development presented both political and pedagogical issues for West German governmental and educational authorities as they grappled with the question of whether to prepare these children for a life in West Germany or a return to their Heimatland. While the answers to this question ranged across the spectrum according to the political make-up of the individual Länder, the federal government, the media, and the public largely agreed that the school constituted the most important site for promoting the successful integration of foreign children into German society.

In the early 1970s, sociologists, political scientists, and other scholars interested in migration began examining the contemporary situation of Gastarbeiterkinder, focusing on the influence of the politics of the guestworker program on educational policy as well as the practical challenges of and for the second generation in German schools. While some early studies presented a relatively positive tone about the potential of the school as a site of integration for Gastarbeiterkinder, by the end of the 1970s most social scientists saw the persistent adherence to the idea of the rotation principle (if not the actual practice) as detrimental to the quality of the education of foreign students and their ability to integrate into German society. The studies that followed in the 1980s and 1990s continued to highlight challenges to the education of the second generation as a key element of continued social isolation and examined the consequences of decreased funding and the designation of foreign children as “special problems” for the school system. Whether focusing on health, social conditions, and family socialization or the structural factors of the German school system and labor market, more recent scholarship has generally concluded that students with migrant backgrounds underperform in comparison to their German peers. Their relatively poor performance in school, researchers have argued, whatever its cause, has put immigrants' integration into German society at risk.

Even as the discourse around school and education brought to the fore real challenges to the German educational system and its educational institutions.

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8 See, for example, Herbert R. Koch, Gastarbeiterkinder in deutschen Schulen (Köln: Königswinter am Rhein, 1970). Koch drew on his experiences and the data he had collected as a school inspector in Düsseldorf.

9 The rotation principle refers to the stipulation in the Gastarbeiterprogramm that migrant laborers serve in the Federal Republic for a limited time and then return to their country of origin, to be replaced by new Gastarbeiter.


11 Joyce Marie Mushaben, “A Crisis of Culture: Isolation and Integration among Turkish Guestworkers in the German Federal Republic,” in Turkish Workers in Europe: An Interdisciplinary Study, ed. İlhan Başgöz and Norman Furniss (Bloomington, 1985), 125-150.


students, it obscured the complex interactions between teachers, students, administrators, and parents. While numerous examples exist of low achievement in classrooms with high percentages of non-German students, stories of students with migrant backgrounds achieving some degree of academic success also abound. My research, which is one of the first historical studies of the subject, explores the reciprocal influences between the second generation and their schools from the 1970s to the early 1990s, revealing how the school served simultaneously as a site of inclusion and exclusion, furthering the second generation’s sense of conflicted belonging.

**I. The School as a Site of Struggle and Conflict**

The debate over the role and responsibilities of school in the lives of children with migrant backgrounds began years before Turkish students started filling the seats in German classrooms. In the early to mid-1960s, the rapid growth in the numbers of Gastarbeiterkinder in schools across the country, combined with debates about the developing European Community and reform movements regarding the German educational system, prompted politicians at the federal level to take an active interest in educational policy. Initially, the majority of politicians, as well as the Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs, held to the idea of the rotation principle and concluded that if Gastarbeiterkinder were to be educated in German schools, they should be prepared to reintegrate into their country of origin. This perspective shifted in the late 1960s and early 1970s as people began to recognize that many Gastarbeiter were extending their stay and bringing their families to live with them in West Germany. Under the SPD/FDP coalition, the federal government adopted a dual strategy of encouraging the return of migrant workers to their countries of origin while promoting the integration of Gastarbeiterkinder into German society through education in the German school system. Despite the Anwerbestopp of 1973, which terminated the recruitment of new guestworkers, politicians began to recognize the significant growth and diversification of the immigrant population. This led them to increase their reliance on the German school system as the site of Gastarbeiterkinder integration and a tool to combat ghettoization of ethnic minorities and improve their position in the labor market. The economic downturn and increasing conservatism, however, shifted the discussion from the integration of Gastarbeiterkinder to questioning immigrants’ ability and desire to integrate into German society. Such

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15 The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz) is a federal body that issues policies to the Länder regarding education but does not have the power to enforce its suggestions.
sentiments were especially popular within the CDU/CSU, which came to power in the Bundestag in 1982. While the government continued to view schools as important weapons for combatting ghettoization and the growing unemployment levels of “foreigners,” the tenor of the debate — at least at the federal level — had grown more critical. During this time, the Länder were designing and implementing their own educational policies, resulting in a variety of approaches to the education of Gastarbeiterkinder. West Berlin’s strategy regarding “foreign” student education soon began to follow the premise that the second generation needed to be equipped to lead successful lives in Germany. School officials based their program on the goal of the quickest possible integration of migrant children into the German school system. Migrant students were placed in classes with German students and had additional German language instruction in smaller, separate classes. The program in West Berlin also adhered (or attempted to adhere) to a 20 percent cap of “foreign” students in each German classroom, and until the 1980s, left teaching of the children’s native languages to the consulates and embassies of the sending countries, while supplying those classes with facilities and maintenance. Despite their good intentions, Berlin school officials thus failed to incorporate their students’ languages and cultures into the education process, breaking the connection between home and school. In addition, the practical implementation of the 20 percent cap meant that those “foreign” students who exceeded the quota were educated in separate classes, entirely composed of other foreign students. Finally, Berlin schools experienced high dropout rates among their students with migrant backgrounds. In 1976, the chief administrative official of education estimated that 60 percent of “foreign” students left school before finishing their studies.

The personal narratives of Turkish-Germans reveal how these and other challenges made schools a site of conflict and struggle. One of the first struggles the second generation faced was overcoming the language barrier. While some had the opportunity to learn German as children on the playground or from childcare providers, many others entered school with little or no knowledge of the language, as their parents spoke their native language with them at home. Moreover, those who had attended school in Turkey had to adjust to a different educational system. Not being able to fully participate in class negatively affected their ability to learn their lessons and often worked to isolate them from their fellow classmates.

16 For an in-depth study of the influence of political developments on the development of educational policy regarding Gastarbeiterkinder, see Brittany Lehman, “Education and Immigration: Federal Debates and Policies in West Germany, 1960s-1980s” (Master’s Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2010).

17 Rist, Guestworkers 226-228.

18 Rist, Guestworkers, 226-232.
Being in one of the many Ausländerklassen mitigated the social isolation these second generation students felt from their peers but also hindered their ability to learn German, despite the additional German language classes given there. “At the time, we were guestworker kids,” Sprengelkiez resident Bilge Yılmaz reflected, comparing her generation with her children’s, “we didn’t have very good German, because all of us Turks were in one class.” Although some officials, including Berlin’s Schulsenatorin Hanna-Renate Laurien (CDU), claimed that “reine Ausländerklassen” (pure foreigner classes) did not lead to isolation from German society, few of those interviewed mentioned having close friendships with Germans in their schools. Filiz Güler counted it as an advantage that, though she was in a “reine Ausländerklasse,” her best friend was Albanian, which forced them to speak German with each other. If caught speaking Turkish during class, Güler and her classmates had to put a penny in a jar as a symbolic punishment.

Even after second-generation students knew German well enough to participate more fully in classroom activities, German as a subject often proved a persistent challenge. An examination of the Abgangszeugnisse from a Wedding secondary school in the mid- to late-1980s reveals a Turkish-German student body with diverse academic strengths and weaknesses. A significant minority — averaging about one-third over the course of six years — earned a “4” (the equivalent of an American “D”) or worse in their German courses. Lale, who attended another Oberschule in Wedding, lamented her ongoing struggle with German grammar, which started in primary school and continued to plague her in eighth grade. She liked geography and history, she told her German interviewer, but she hated German. This struggle with language could also affect otherwise high-achieving students in the more advanced levels of the German school system. Filiz Güler, armed with ambition and a stack of report cards littered with 1’s (the equivalent of American A’s), proceeded to a Gymnasium with the official recommendation of her primary school. Once there, however, the academic challenge set her back on her heels. The subject matter was harder, the expectations higher, and Güler felt that language made the Gymnasium a greater challenge to her than to her German classmates:

But in the Gymnasium I noticed that it was just difficult, because of language barriers I’d say ... somehow something was missing from the vocabulary, I noticed that in German. I would think, oh I want so much more, I want to express
myself between, and the essays, why aren’t they coming together? Why do I always get a 4? Then I looked at one of my German friends and thought, hmm ... she gets 1s and 2s. And so I thought, yeah, maybe they have it a little bit easier.24

While Güler felt motivated to do well in school and had parents that supported her education, this was not the case for all young women. For some, the struggle they experienced at school was partly the result of conflicting expectations, lack of interest, or lack of support. Families, and sometimes also the young women themselves, considered school unnecessary or a distraction from their duties to the family or from their futures as housewives and mothers. Güler remembered that some of her classmates in the Grundschule did not care about their progress in school: “They wanted to get married as soon as possible,” she explained.25 Lack of motivation could lead to young women leaving school before they received the training necessary to prepare them for the German job market. Deniz, for example, left school at age fourteen after the ninth grade without doing an Ausbildung to run away and marry her boyfriend.26 While some young women voluntarily left school early, others, like Azra Demir’s eldest daughter, were kept home by their parents to take care of the household. Demir expressed regret over the decision, but explained that it was a common practice in the neighborhood and no one had told them school attendance was mandatory.27

Difficulties with language or parental expectations were not the only sources of conflict at school, however. Güler’s transition from Grundschule to Gymnasium reveals another challenge encountered by the second generation at school: conflict with their teachers and fellow classmates. Sometimes this conflict was spurred by teachers’ different (and discriminatory) expectations of their “foreign” students compared to their German ones. Though Güler had received the official recommendation of her school to proceed to the Gymnasium, a few teachers cautioned her against it, saying that it might be too difficult for her. “[I have] also heard that from others, that it’s said to so-called children with a migration background, ‘hmmm, careful, I wouldn’t recommend the Gymnasium to you.’”28 Lale told her interviewer about a French teacher at her school — also a foreigner, the young woman pointed out — who “looks at me like she’s never seen a Turk before, as if I’m her enemy.”29

24 Güler interview, 9.
25 Ibid., 8.
26 Deniz (pseudonym), interview by Ursula Trüper, 12 December 1992, transcription, DLSA, MMA, Berlin, Germany, 1.
27 Azra Demir (pseudonym), interview and transcription by Hatice Renc, 9 March 1993, DLSA, MMA, 10. The local Grundschule did, however, send a letter to their home, saying they must send their second daughter to school.
28 Güler interview, 2.
29 Lale interview, 8.
Though none of the second-generation interviewees felt that *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* (xenophobia) was a daily event during the school day, many found that their fellow students could be quite blatant in their displays of hostility and xenophobia. Deniz described an incident in sixth grade when some of the German students in the class next to hers told the Turkish students that they all needed to “go away.” “Actually, I like Germans,” Deniz added, “but when they say something like that, I don’t know [laughing] what they have against Turks.”30 Being laughed at for mistakes made in class31 and called names like “Scheiss-Ausländer” and “Scheiss-Türke”32 were other ways the second generation experienced hostility at school. When Emre and a group of friends stirred up trouble at their *Oberschule*, it was the sole German participant — the young man was careful to point out — who turned them in, resulting in Emre being expelled from school.33 Such events, even when not clearly motivated by xenophobia, led many Turkish-German students to feel cut off from their teachers and classmates more generally; they set the groundwork for further misunderstandings, conflict, and distrust.

Turkish-German youth also struggled with exclusion and discrimination at the *Berufsschule*, both on an individual and an institutional level. Many who completed their studies at *Haupt-, Real-, or Gesamtschulen* and wanted to continue with an apprenticeship found positions difficult, if not impossible, to come by. For some, the problem was a legal one. In 1974, the federal government passed a law barring foreign youth who immigrated from that year on from receiving work permits. Immigrant youths would have to wait five years before they could apply for the permit, which was required not only for employment but also for apprenticeship positions.34 Thus, despite legal immigration, part of the migrant population was barred from obtaining legal job training and employment. In a 1981 report, the Federal Ministry of Education and Science concluded that only one quarter of all foreign youth at the ages of compulsory vocational training (between fifteen and eighteen years of age) were continuing their education or had obtained an apprenticeship. For those who immigrated to West Germany as teenagers, this statistic rose to 50 percent.35 Politicians, social scientists, and the media increasingly began to link the difficulties foreign youths had in securing apprenticeships to failed integration and a perceived growth in youth violence.36 Though a 1990 report from the Federal Ministry of Education and Science emphasized the positive trend of increasing numbers of “foreign” youth enrolled in vocational training,37 the press continued...
to stress the relationship between lack of opportunity for foreign youths and their participation in organized violence. Discrimination and conflict in the school system, which the lack of opportunity for apprenticeships illustrated, led *ausländische Jugendliche* into a life of crime.

While second-generation students were often on the receiving end of hostility in school, this was not always the case. Turkish-German students, like their fellow classmates, also instigated conflict. Teachers documented these classroom conflicts in students’ files, report cards, and letters to parents. Most cases were relatively minor, for example, students being distracted during lessons or not turning in their homework. Some students received reprimands and letters home for getting caught breaking school rules, such as smoking on school grounds. Still others, however, were more actively disobedient and challenged authority. Despite receiving positive evaluations throughout the *Grundschule*, one young woman’s behavior took a different turn once she reached the seventh grade. At first her rebellion was relatively small and passive; she stopped paying attention in class and turning in her homework. By eighth grade, however, her challenges to teachers’ authority became more aggressive, including throwing erasers during class and insulting the teacher. Thus, like their German peers, second-generation students sometimes contributed to the space of conflict and hostility within the school even when they did not create it.

Students and teachers were not the only participants in this space of conflict. Parents, too, found the school to be a site of struggle and even hostility. In some cases, these struggles stemmed from Turkish parents’ own limited schooling or lack of understanding of the German school system. Prior to 1972, the Turkish educational system consisted of primary, middle, and secondary schools, with only five years of primary school education being compulsory. A diploma was awarded upon the successful completion of each level. The German system not only required longer attendance but also had a more complicated series of tracks and diplomas. One *Realschule* principal explained such conflicts with the following example: a Turkish-German student’s parents were upset with the school, because they wanted their son to be a doctor and, apparently, did not realize that the type of *Oberschule* their son attended did not allow for that possibility.

In other cases, parents entered into an ongoing conflict between their children and the school’s teachers or administrators. When Elif’s teacher sent her to the principal’s office for refusing to stop eating

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Parents also countered school officials’ expectations and decisions in order to advocate for their children’s improved educational opportunities. One of the first tasks Gülen Yeğenoğlu took up when she moved to Frankfurt was to seek out a school she felt would best equip her son for their new life in Germany. Once she found such a school, she met with its director and counselor as well as the teacher whose class her son would attend to argue the case for her son’s admittance. In addition, Yeğenoğlu maintained contact with them as her son progressed through his education. When his son’s teacher wanted to move him from the Gymnasium to a Hauptschule, Behçet Algan went to school to discuss the proposed change with the teacher and refused, politely, to have his son moved. “My son stayed in the Gymnasium and finished with a 2.4,” Algan recounted. “Now he studies law. Unfortunately, I have to say that many foreign families were affected by such problems. ... Whoever fought, won. Whoever did not fight, those children were sent to the Hauptschule.”

II. The School as a Place of Opportunity

One reason the school could be so full of conflict was precisely that the participants involved realized the potential advantages this site could offer the growing number of children with a migrant background. The earlier examples of Yeğenoğlu’s and Algan’s advocacy, even as they reveal the difficulties “foreign” children faced in school, illustrate parents’ perception of the school as a highly significant place for the well-being of their children. Although most parents originally intended to spend a limited amount of time in Germany, many lengthened their stay out of consideration for their children’s...
futures. According to a 1973 survey in the Ruhr region, 31 percent of parents considered their children’s education a motivating factor in their decision to extend their stay, while 55 percent said their children’s occupational interests influenced their decision. 61 percent wanted their children to continue schooling, while 24 percent preferred for their children to be involved in an apprenticeship. In 1974, a more extensive survey in Cologne found that 32 percent of parents regarded the Abitur (university-entrance qualification) as their children’s educational goal, 31 percent wanted their children to complete an apprenticeship or certification from vocational schools, while 12 percent would have been satisfied with the Hauptschulabschluss (granted at the end of tenth grade). A similar survey a year later among the Turkish community also indicated that a significant number of parents were staying longer than intended out of concern for their children’s education; women in particular gave great weight to vocational and professional training for their children.

The statistical evidence that their children’s education was a major motivating factor in parents’ decisions to lengthen their stays in Germany is borne out by the narratives of first-generation parents. Thus, Hadiye Akin, recalling her husband’s plan to leave Germany after three years, remarked: “But then the children came. And ... if the children are in school, you can forget about going back.” Such a statement is common in the first-generation’s stories. Nermin Özdl exhibited pride in her children’s scholastic achievements, which included a university education for each of them. She explained her own supportive role as going to every parents’ meeting and inviting her children’s teachers to her home for tea. Through their participation in school life, first-generation Turkish immigrant parents opened up new opportunities for themselves as well. Especially at the Grundschule level, teachers invited students’ parents into the classroom to contribute to and join in special festivities, which allowed Turkish parents to become more familiar with the school itself and brought them into contact with other parents.

For members of the second generation, the spaces of opportunity they encountered and created within the context of their primary and secondary schools enabled them to form and maintain friendships and other social relationships similar to those they experienced in their neighborhoods. Some made friends quickly, easing the transition into this new site and setting a positive tone for the rest of their career at school. For others, the transition was decidedly rockier.
but ultimately successful. Students also cited examples of teachers and administrators who helped them to feel at home and succeed in school. When asked about Ausländerfeindlichkeit, ten-year-old Timur talked about a teacher who was “so nice” and “ashamed of Nazis” and people like them.53 The context of the boy’s statements shows the connection he made between the positive relationship he had had with his teacher and his sense of belonging at school in general. Similarly, Emre’s respect for his principal helped him to feel more comfortable at his new Oberschule, despite the circumstances of his transfer.54 This type of space proved especially important for young women, for whom the home could be a stifling or even abusive place.

Positive relationships with teachers and fellow students often had more tangible benefits than an abstract sense of belonging. Friendships with fellow classmates meant assistance with schoolwork, protection from bullies, and help learning German. When Lale started taking swimming lessons as part of her fourth-grade curriculum, she was so inept that she nearly drowned. A school friend helped her learn to swim, and by the end of the year Lale was the second-best swimmer in her class.55 Teachers, too, provided tangible support and assistance. One of Elif’s teachers, upon learning that her student wrote poetry, put her into contact with a Frauenladen where Elif gave a reading that led to an invitation to share her poetry on a television show.56 When Filiz Güler struggled with particularly difficult schoolwork at the Gymnasium, she would call a former teacher of hers from primary school who was always ready to help.57 Thus, some of the connections the children of immigrants forged at school offered them skills and support that helped them develop personally and enabled them to operate more successfully in that space.
The school also offered more formal avenues for these children to consider and prepare for their lives once they finished their required schooling. For students who attended a *Haupt-, Gesamt- or Real*-schule, a *Betriebspraktikum* (internship at a company) formed a part of their formal instruction. Students were given a variety of professions to choose from, some of the more popular being in the fields of healthcare, customer service, industry, and manufacturing. Such internships exposed student participants to possible future occupations, taught them some of the skills they would need to succeed in those positions, and sometimes also helped them to make contacts in that particular industry. Other students participated in a *Lehre* (apprenticeship) and *Ausbildung* (job training) that served a similar function. Those involved in apprenticeships also had to attend courses at a *Berufsschule*, where they would learn skills that were not part of on-the-job training. Bülent Kaplan began his *Lehre* at age fifteen, one of two Turks among the forty apprentices. Between his responsibilities at the company and the *Berufsschule*, he did not have much free time but still enjoyed going to a bar with his Turkish and German colleagues and sometimes playing soccer.

Large businesses, like Siemens and AEG-Telefunken, coordinated with *Berufsschulen* in order to bring “foreign students” into their apprenticeship programs, often highlighting this fact in their company newspapers. In a 1982 *Siemens Mitteilungen* article, two of the young Turkish–German *Azubis* (*Ausbildende*; trainees) interviewed described the types of jobs they were training for and what positions they hoped to hold in the future. In the early 1980s, Siemens also instituted a *Benachteiligten-Programm* (program for the disadvantaged) at its Frankfurt branch that focused on bringing young Germans without a *Hauptschulabschluss* and “foreigners” (which included both those born in Germany and those who had moved there recently) with language difficulties into an apprenticeship program. Through this training program, apprentices learned either telecommunications or electrical-systems installation. Turkish–German students knew that such formal training was essential for success on the job market. Güler explained what she saw as the attitude of her generation, saying, “one thought, I must find a place in German society and that only happens through education.”

In the second generation, young women who did not want to live and work like their parents, especially, took advantage of the educational opportunities. After Aylin completed her *Realschulabschluss*, she

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59 Bülent Kaplan (pseudonym), interview by Ursula Trüper, 14 June 1993, audio cassette, DLSA, MMA.
61 “Trotzdem sind wir Fremde hier,” *Siemens Mitteilungen*, December 1986, 3-page article, unpaginated, SCA.
62 Güler interview, 7–8.
continued with an apprenticeship as a foreign-language secretary. It would be a good career, she thought, that would allow her to be independent of her family and the need for a husband. Sanem, who was sixteen years old and dating a man seven years her senior at the time of her interview, was adamant about finishing her education and training and starting a career before getting married. Her reasons for wanting a career were both practical and personal: What if her husband got sick? Then they would need her income. But more important was her desire to put her training into action and have an interesting life. “The main thing is,” Sanem explained, “if someone asks me, ‘what are you,’ I say ‘yeah, I’m a trained retail saleswoman,’ I’ve got something [to fall back on]. And I don’t say, ‘yeah, I finished 10th grade, and now I sit at home.’ Then why did I go to school for ten years? For nothing. For nothing at all!” Many Turkish-German women thus seized the opportunity education afforded them to attain financial security and independence.

III. The School as a Space of (Cross-) Cultural Education and Socialization

One of the opportunities that schools presented for both students and teachers was to create a space of cross-cultural education. The student body and, in later years, the teaching staff constituted an increasingly ethnically diverse population that rubbed shoulders on a daily basis and spent a significant part of their waking hours together. This close proximity, along with the school’s mandate to equip its foreign students for a successful transition into German society, provided the conditions for the development of spaces within the school in which students and teachers, whether purposefully or by accident, could learn about each others’ languages, customs, and traditions. Sometimes these interactions led only to shallow exchanges or the perpetuation of stereotypes. Interviews with some German administrators and teachers, for example, revealed highly generalized knowledge based on perceived religious differences: “Turks” celebrate Ramadan, do not eat pork, and women sometimes wear headscarves. Other encounters between second-generation students, their classmates, and their teachers through formal instruction and informal social activities did result in spaces of cross-cultural education, however limited they may have been.

Most of the intentional, structured cross-cultural education occurred within the context of the classroom, as educators worked to fulfill...
their role as teachers of German language and culture to their foreign students. The classroom exposed these students to a new educational system with different lessons, expectations, and ways of interacting than in Turkish schools. Since most Turkish-German students grappled with the challenge of learning a new language, language-learning became one of their first spaces of cultural education. In many cases, Gastarbeiterkinder received special German-language instruction. At a primary school in Sprengelkiez, these additional classes consisted of four to five students who would be taken out of their regular class for a few hours each week for German lessons. Early language instruction was fairly piecemeal, stitched together by teachers in response to an immediate need rather than as a result of training and preparation. By the mid-1980s, however, teachers and some school administrators had begun to address the situation more systematically, developing more efficient and effective strategies for teaching their foreign students German language and culture.

Particularly in the 1970s and stretching into the 1980s, however, German schools also concerned themselves with equipping Gastarbeiterkinder for their family’s return to their country of origin, even though that prospect was becoming increasingly unlikely. For the children of Turkish immigrants, this task was to be accomplished by teachers from Turkey who held special classes in German schools. Selected by the Turkish government, these teachers were generally strong supporters of Kemalism and thus secular nationalists. Their classes, conducted solely in Turkish, consisted of Turkish-language instruction, geography, history, and other subjects, opening up another space of cultural education. Since few students had received formal education in the Turkish language, or Turkish history, politics, and culture, these Turkish classes constituted a space of cross-cultural education for the growing numbers of Turkish-German children for whom Turkey was their Heimatland but not their home.

German teachers also found themselves affected by these new cross-cultural spaces. Some teachers even learned Turkish in their efforts to successfully communicate with and teach their foreign students. For some, this occurred primarily in the context of their own classrooms during the course of their lessons. Ute Schmidt, a preschool teacher, described her shock at the number of “foreigners” in her class when she first started at a primary school in Sprengelkiez. “But it was exciting and interesting,” she said, recounting her experiences. She began by learning how to pronounce all of her students’

66 Maja Herbert (pseudonym), interview by Ursula Trüper, 16 June 1993, audiocassette, DLSA, MMA.
67 Ruth Mandel, “A Place of Their Own: Contesting Spaces and Defining Places in Berlin’s Migrant Community,” in Barbara Daly Metcalf, ed., Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe (Berkeley, 1996), 155. “Kemalism” refers to the political ideology championed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and adopted by the Republic of Turkey, which, among other platforms, advocates a distinct separation of religion and the state.
68 Güler interview, 13-14.
names correctly and soon she was learning Turkish words. “I have to say ... I can’t say a whole sentence correctly,” she confessed, “but I can understand a lot of words. I had to, because I, when I tested the kids, whether they named colors or numbers or their body parts, I had to learn all of that.”

Schmidt grew close to many of her students, enjoyed warm support from their parents, and remained in touch with a number of them even after her retirement.

Other teachers enrolled directly in Turkish-language classes to equip themselves for the challenge of a multicultural classroom. When Sabine Müller started teaching in West Berlin in the mid-1970s, a quarter of the students in her first class were the children of immigrants. Some, she recounted, spoke German very well, while others struggled. “That meant I was confronted with this from the beginning. And at first, I didn’t know how to deal with it.” Since most of her foreign students were Turkish, Müller decided soon thereafter to take a Turkish course and learn the differences between the German and Turkish languages. She also drew on her Turkish colleagues, first those employed by the Turkish government and later independent teachers, for help with the new language and in communicating with her students. Müller regarded understanding her students’ language as part of being a good teacher, and her efforts contributed to a space of cross-cultural education that would gradually extend beyond her own language-learning to incorporate all of her students and the classroom itself.

Particularly in the earlier years of immigrant settlement and until the mid-1980s, however, few teachers received any formal education or training specific to the instruction of Ausländerkinder. While many in West Berlin and throughout West Germany struggled to effectively
Some teachers took it upon themselves to develop strategies and programs to meet these new challenges. In West Berlin, a movement to incorporate both German and Turkish languages into classroom instruction began in the early 1980s with two teachers at a primary school in the district of Kreuzberg. Teachers in other districts with high foreigner populations, such as Wedding and Tiergarten, looked upon their efforts with interest. Especially in the beginning, the bilingual education approach was very much a grassroots effort as interested teachers met with each other, discussed the pedagogy, and developed their own instructional materials. Soon, however, teachers took the idea in a different direction; instead of using *zweisprachige Erziehung* (bilingual education) in foreigner-only classes, they integrated the concept into mixed classrooms of German and migrant students. By the mid- to late-1980s, similar programs were popping up all over the city, aided by funding from the sympathetic SPD-Grüne coalition government in the Berlin Senate. At its highpoint, approximately sixty schools throughout the city offered bilingual classes.

Bilingual education came to Wedding primary schools in the late 1980s and early 1990s, due in part to the efforts of Sabine Müller. Eager to be an effective teacher and willing to try new things, Müller began incorporating the approach into her own classroom and soon became a passionate advocate and developer of the program. “I observed how wonderful it is for the children and also for the parents,” she explained. As part of the program, the classroom furniture and tools were labeled with tags bearing both their German and Turkish names. The students and parents came into the classroom, “and discovered: Aha! There’s something Turkish, there’s something Turkish, there’s something Turkish. My language is accepted, and I’ll be accepted, too.” For Murat Güngör, another primary school teacher who has worked in Tiergarten and Wedding, one of the strongest pedagogical features of the bilingual approach is its utilization of what the children have already learned before they enter school. Instead of starting from zero, Güngör related, the approach builds on students’ previous knowledge, making them feel more confident in the classroom, which in turn encourages their learning process.

The implementation and practice of the *zweisprachige Erziehung* approach opened up an obvious and deliberate cross-cultural educational space in primary schools throughout the city in which teachers and students, German and “foreign,” participated actively. As

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71 Müller interview, 4.
72 Ibid., 2.
73 Enol Kayman (pseudonym), interview by author, 29 May 2009, digital recording, Berlin, Germany.
74 Müller interview, 4.
75 Kayman interview.
reflected in the observations of both Müller and Güngör, the verbal and visual inclusion of German and Turkish created a space that allowed for all participants to be involved in daily classroom activities on a relatively even level. At the same time, teachers incorporated other exchanges, such as celebrating holidays from different cultures in the classroom, and often emphasized commonalities in particular religious or cultural traditions. Müller illustrated this aspect of the program with the example of Abraham, a central figure in the Muslim Festival of the *Opferfest* (Sacrifice) as well as in the Christian Bible.76

Turkish-German students further learned about and experienced German holidays and traditions in classrooms and school-wide celebrations throughout the year, which also provided parents with the opportunity to experience and contribute to the classroom as a cross-cultural space. When Schmidt’s preschool class celebrated St. Martin’s Day, parents brought homemade baked goods and joined in the class party, part of which took place in a nearby Catholic church. “They thought it was fantastic,” Schmidt remembered, that they could take part in the festivities and the singing. Schmidt credited parental participation in this and other class celebrations with helping parents to feel more comfortable in the classroom and with the school in general.77

**Conclusion**

Primary and secondary schools played multiple and at times conflicting roles in the lives of second-generation students, their parents, and their teachers. The school brought Turkish-German students into direct contact with Germans, institutions, and expectations that alternately served to embed them in the host society even as they continued to define them as “foreign.” Teachers and fellow students, both intentionally and unknowingly, created spaces of exclusion that informed these students of their foreignness and reinforced the mindset that this was not their “home.” Yet, Turkish-German students also found and created within the school spaces of opportunity that enabled them to pursue their own interests and goals. To facilitate the education of these new students, school administrators and teachers adapted, even transforming the physical classrooms themselves. Often, change started with the teachers in grassroots, trial-and-error type programs that over time became a regular and regulated facet of the curriculum.78 The effects of the spaces within the school were

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76 Müller interview, 4.
77 Schmidt interview, 4.
78 Unfortunately, administrative support and funding for *zweisprachige Erziehung* programs began to wane in the mid-1990s as well-to-do German families moved out of the central districts of the city and into more suburban areas. By 2009, only five of the original sixty schools still offered bilingual classes.
ambivalent but overall led to a bounded, at times almost defensive, sense of belonging.

More broadly, this look at the experiences of Turkish-German children in their local schools illustrates the centrality of space in understanding the relationship between immigrants and their host society. By examining the space-making practices of Turkish immigrants and their children in their everyday landscapes, the active and interactive nature of integration becomes more apparent and reveals the places in which German society, not only immigrants, experienced a measure of hybridization. Ultimately, a spatial approach helps to explain the multi-faceted and at times conflicting nature of immigrant belonging — a complicated social, cultural, economic, and emotional connection rooted in the deceptively simple activities of one’s daily life.

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