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"Aspirational capital" and transformations in first-generation Alevi-Kurdish parents' involvement with their children's education in the UK

Dr Celia Jenkins[1]

3 ***Abstract***
4 *With a focus on the London Alevi-Kurdish community from Turkey, the aim of this article is to*
5 *analyse changes in parenting and home-school relations of two cohorts of first-generation parents*
6 *arriving in the nineties (Nineties parents) and the noughties (Millennial parents). Against a*
7 *backdrop of national data showing that "Turkish" children persistently underachieve in schools*
8 *across Europe, this exploration of differences within the first generation challenges deficit models*
9 *of home-school relations. Through adding "differences within a generation" to intersectional*
10 *analyses of home-school relations, it facilitates the exploration of parents' migration context,*
11 *ethnicity, religion and community. Additionally, the article addresses migrant parents' access to*
12 *different forms of capital in navigating the education system. This includes the contributions of*
13 *children, the community associations and local schools which have made a difference to Nineties*
14 *and Millennial parents' relationships with schools. Finally, the analysis demonstrates how*
15 *community activism can have much more powerful effects than parents acting alone.*

16 ***Keywords***: *Alevi Kurds, first-generation parents,parental involvement;transnational migration;*
17 *cultural capital.*

18 Introduction

19 This article captures the transformations in home-school relations occurring
20 within the first generation of the transnational Alevi-Kurdish migrant
21 community in London.[2] It explores the intra-generational differences
22 between first-generation parents arriving from Turkey in the 1990s (who I
23 describe as Nineties parents) compared to first-generation parents who
24 arrived from Turkey in the Noughties (Millennial parents). It highlights how

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[2] Whilst there has been migration to the UK of both Turkish and Kurdish Alevis, this article focuses specifically on the Kurdish-Alevi community in London, which comprises the majority of Alevis arriving since 1989 (Wahlbeck, 1998). Henceforth, I will use the term "Alevi" to describe them and capture their distinctive ethno-religious identity.

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1 education is a crucial site of struggle and engagement for migrant
2 communities and a key motivating factor for their migration. All migrant
3 parents bring to their country of settlement what Yosso (2005) describes as
4 "aspirational" capital, the desire for their children to have a better education
5 than they had and for education to provide the route to a more hopeful
6 future life for their children.

7 A key aim of the article is to analyse generational shifts in parenting and
8 home-school relationships but only within the first generation of parents
9 arriving directly from Turkey rather than between generations . With a
10 combination of secondary and primary qualitative data, this research
11 explores how the first-generation parents have adjusted their expectations
12 of British education to what the education system expects of parents and
13 "navigated" their way through their children's education. The theoretical
14 framework loosely draws on the Bourdieusian and intersectional framework
15 of home-school literature (Ball et al, 1997; Vincent, 2010; Crozier and
16 Symeou, 2017). This focuses on parental choice of schools and involvement
17 in children's education, mindful that policy discourse treats "parents"
18 collectively whilst the responsibility usually devolves to mothers (Reay,
19 1998; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2013). Like the home-school literature,
20 critical race theory also counters a deficit approach to minority ethnic
21 communities and captures how they have drawn on a variety of forms of
22 capital to engage with the education system (Yosso, 2005; Posey-Maddox,
23 2017). Of particular interest is how minority ethnic communities support
24 their children's education using these different forms of capital through
25 involving family members and community centres, which have a more
26 powerful influence than parents acting alone. Also, it extends an
27 intersectional analysis of home-school relationships by including the role of
28 minority ethnic community centres.

29 The Alevi-Kurdish community in Turkey and London

30 Portes and Zhou (2003) argue that the context of departure and settlement
31 affects migrants' adaptation patterns and outcomes. The Turkish/Kurdish-
32 speaking Alevi ethno-religious community[3] in the UK is normally defined
33 more generally in the literature (and official government statistics) within
34 the category of Turkish migrants, although in fact they have very different
35 life trajectories from Turks both in Turkey and the UK. Despite being the
36 second largest ethno-religious community in Turkey with an estimated
37 population of fifteen to twenty million (Aydin, 2018), the Alevis' experience

[3] Alevis from Turkey can be ethnically Turkish or Kurdish. The UK Alevi population is predominantly Kurdish but for the purposes of this paper, Alevi will be used to refer to them. However, the majority of them see their Aleviness as their preferred or primary identity while some resist being identified through ethnic differences (see Aydin, 2018).

of state persecution since the sixteenth century has led to a significant proportion migrating either internally to cities (where they often conceal their Alevi identities) or externally abroad (predominantly to Europe) to escape such persecution (Erol, 2012). What makes the Alevi-Kurdish community a distinctive case from other Turkish or Kurdish migrants is its long history of "persecuted exclusion" on both ethnic and religious grounds, living as a marginalised community (Sokefeld, 2008; Massicard, 2010; Cetin, 2014). Alevi-Kurds have experienced generations of assimilationist Turkification policies as the Turkish state aimed to "Turkify the Kurds" and "Sunnify the Alevis" (Ye□en, 2011; Demir, 2017). This has also generated a transnational effect because despite its estimated size of 300,000 (British Alevi Federation, BAF)[4], the Alevi community is relatively invisible in the UK. They are assumed to be ethnically Turkish or Kurdish and religiously Muslim and, as in Turkey, there is no official recognition of their identity in national demographic data.

It is against this background that second-generation children became a cause for concern due to inhabiting what the Chair of the Federation (Interview July, 2011) described as a "negative identity".[5] This is reflected in the way that parents (including some Millennial parents) who, not wanting to risk their children experiencing discrimination at school, would state their national identity as Turkish and their religious affiliation as Muslim when enrolling them. A case in point is Fatma,[6] a Millennial mother, who explained that she ticked Muslim for the religious category because she was worried her children "might get into trouble at school if they called themselves Alevi" (Interview July, 2018). Further, the pupils described themselves as "sort of Muslim" because they did not know enough about their religion to explain it otherwise. In this respect, although for different reasons than the persecution of Alevis in Turkey, this lack of acknowledgement of Alevi identity exacerbated the marginalisation experienced by second-generation Alevi pupils in British schools, contributing to the institutional erasure of their ethno-religious identity and the second-generation's sense that they did not belong in school. (Jenkins and Cetin, 2018).

The Nineties generation of "Turkish" migrants were predominantly Alevi-Kurds seeking asylum in the UK (Wahlbeck, 1998) who spoke little English and largely came from the same towns and villages. At first, they were

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[4] http://www.alevinet.org/SAP.aspx?pid=About_en-GB (last accessed on 1 March 2020).

[5] The consequences of a negative identity for the second generation were explored by Cetin (2014) in his ethnographic research to examine the higher than expected male youth suicide rate for second-generation young Alevi men which had sparked widespread alarm amongst parents and the wider Alevi community.

[6] Fatma came from a village near Elbistan in 2004 to join her husband and has three children. All names have been changed.

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mostly married men who arrived in the late 1980s or early 1990s in response to worsening conditions in Turkey following the massacres of Alevis and the 1980 military coup. On arrival most settled in north London where, because they spoke little or no English, they worked predominantly in the segregated ethnic labour market, mostly in the textile industry (Demir, 2012). They kept strong transnational kinship, cultural and political ties with their homeland. Alevi women mainly came afterwards through the family reunification rights in the early 1990s and would either work in the textile factories or do piecework at home (Cetin, 2014). Initially, the Alevis joined established Kurdish community centres that mobilised around left-wing and Kurdish politics (Demir, 2012) until the London Alevi Community Centre and Cemevi (LACCC) opened in 1993 to provide religious, cultural, political and educational functions. This reflected a reversal of the position of Alevis as a "twice minority" in Turkey to becoming a majority among the London Kurdish community (Demir, 2017). Demir explains this transition to an Alevi identity as a shift in self-definition to reposition themselves primarily in terms of a religious identity rather than their Kurdish ethnic identity. Moreover, a key feature of first-generation settlement in the UK was the ability to practice their religion openly for the first time. Thus in this article, using the term "Alevi" reflects how the community now describe themselves, but it is interchangeable with Alevi-Kurds.

Like the Nineties migrants, Millennial Alevis were also likely to originate from the same towns and villages and arrive in the UK speaking little or no English. They maintained strong transnational kinship and cultural ties with Turkey and were still likely to integrate into the ethnic community and labour market. In contrast, however, to the Nineties migrants, the Millennial first generation was better educated in Turkey and more likely to be economic migrants or came to join spouses or family members. This is not, however, to draw an absolute distinction between the Nineties and Millennials as having political and economic reasons respectively for migrating. As Demir (2017) usefully points out, these reasons can intersect as some of the early migrants came mainly for economic opportunities "albeit having suffered at the intersections of economic, ethnic and sectarian exclusions" (278). However, the Millennials arrived into a much more established Alevi community with kinship networks available and new community centres opening up across London and the UK following more dispersed patterns of settlement. This is an important difference because, as Portes and Hao (2004) argue, community centres provide vital support for migrant communities. Given that the LACCC was not set up until the early

Nineties, it was not sufficiently established to provide much support to the Nineties first generation (Interview, Chair of BAF,[7] July 2018).

Migration and educational engagement in the country of settlement

Most parents want their children to do well in school to enhance their future prospects but, as Vincent (2017) argues, ensuring success is an uncertain process. Migrant parents cite improved educational opportunities for their children as one of the key factors in their migration decision, especially when compared to their own often limited educational opportunities in their country of origin (Haw, 2011; Araujo et al, 2015). However, analysis of achievement data shows that too often their aspirations are not realised. For example, Heath et al's (2008) research across eight countries in 2007/8 found that, contrary to their parents' aspirations, second-generation children of immigrants are likely to underperform in relation to the majority ethnic group. Similarly, Schnell and Crul (2014), who draw on cross-national European studies, single out the children of migrants from Turkey (and North Africa) as more likely to underachieve, to drop out of school, and to have significantly less chance of progressing to higher education. However, to explain the wide cross-national variation in outcomes for second-generation Turkish children, they adopt an integration context approach, examining the interaction of family and institutional factors. They argue that analysis of migrant children's achievement should examine the interaction between parental background, the characteristics of the immigrant ethnic community they join, and the structure and organisation of the education system in the destination country to seek explanations and solutions to their persistent underachievement (Schnell and Crul, 2014).

In turning attention now to the importance of the integration context in England, migrant parents' anticipation that education could be safely left to the schools stands at odds with the massive escalation of parental roles and responsibilities being introduced in government policy. Since the 1980s, home-school relations have revolved around increasing expectations of parental involvement in their children's education and outcomes (Brown, 1990; Crozier and Symeou, 2017) which as Reay (1998) argues disadvantages working-class parents because they are unlikely to generate the same amount of economic, social, cultural or emotional capital to secure equivalent outcomes for their children as the middle classes. Further, parental involvement usually pertains to mothers, which Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2013) identify as a "fourth shift", with mothers doing

[7] During the research the Alevi community set up new community centres in London and elsewhere. The British Alevi Federation (BAF) was launched in 2013 and has been based at the new Enfield Centre since 2018. The Chair of the LACCC became the first Chair of the BAF so his title changes over the research, but he is the same person.

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educational work in addition to paid work, domestic labour and childcare. Equally, Vincent and Maxwell (2016) describe how parents, usually but not exclusively middle-class mothers, are going to ever greater lengths in the "concerted cultivation" of their children through extra-curricular activities, private tutoring, attending cultural events and so on to equip them for a competitive school environment.

Pinson et al (2010) argue that asylum-seeking and refugee children have received the least attention from policy-makers and educators and yet they are amongst "the most socially and economically deprived and discriminated-against groups in society" (4). In a recent review of the home-school nexus, Vincent (2017) claims that relatively few sociological accounts exist of how minority ethnic parents and migrants choose and interact with schools. However, one such account is Posey-Maddox's (2017) research on Black fathers' engagement with schools in America where she found that teachers sometimes made detrimental assumptions about their parenting skills and ability to support their children's education and treated them as exceptional parents if they showed an interest. Moreover, teachers had different expectations of pupils' abilities based on their class, gender, ethnic and other significant subjective identities. More generally, Yosso (2005) has criticised the deficit approach to communities of colour in which it is assumed that the children lack the cultural capital (knowledge, skills and abilities possessed by privileged groups) to succeed and their parents do not value or support their children's education. As Gillies (2006) also argues, within this parental deficit approach it then becomes the responsibility of the family to acquire the right kind of cultural capital and for the children to learn to fit into the institutional habitus of schools. Using a "critical race theory" approach, Yosso (2005) criticises the notion of "cultural capital" as the possession of dominant groups. Instead, she claims communities of colour possess multiple strengths derived from their "cultural wealth" which she describes as "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilised by communities of color to survive and resist macro and micro forms of oppression" (77). She identifies six forms of capital used by such communities – aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational and resistant.

In relation to the above, this article draws on a Bourdieusian, intersectional, critical race theory approach (Yosso, 2005; Crozier and Symeou, 2017; Posey-Maddox, 2017) which is sensitive to other identities within classifications of home-school relations, in particular generation, migration/settlement, religion, ethnicity, gender and community. The comparison of first-generation Alevi parents' engagement with schools will explore their context of departure and settlement, their use of different forms of capital in their aspirations and navigation through British schools, all factors

1 identified as critical to migrant children's educational success (Faas, 2008;
2 Portes and Hao, 2004; Pinson et al, 2010). This study further adds to extant
3 literature on home-school relationships to include the role of children
4 (familial capital) and ethnic community centres (linguistic, social and
5 navigational capitals) in supporting children, families and schools because
6 their influence is much greater than parents could achieve alone (D'Angelo,
7 2008, Araujo et al, 2015).

8 **Methods**

9 This research was driven by community activism in response to the Alevi
10 community's request for help in countering what they described to me as
11 the negative identity of the second generation. I would describe the research
12 as participatory research falling broadly within interpretative approaches
13 associated with an anti-discriminatory framework (Daneher et al; Cohen-
14 Mitchell, 2000). Whereas action research is more hierarchical in bringing in
15 experts to solve a problem, participatory approaches work more
16 collaboratively, recognising our respective contributions in an atmosphere
17 of mutuality and respect.

18 For this research, I draw on four main sources of data:

19 1) *Cetin's (2014) ethnographic research* on second-generation male Alevi youth
20 suicide which explored family, school and peer influences. I draw entirely
21 on Cetin's published research as secondary data for the analysis of the
22 Nineties first-generation parents but I have heard similar stories from other
23 members of the community. As he was an insider and had already
24 conducted extensive interviews with fifteen parents, including five couples,
25 who came to the UK before 1995, it made sense to use his rich data as
26 illustrative of my analysis rather than conduct new interviews[8].

27 2) *The "Religion and Identity" participatory action research* that aimed to find
28 solutions to the negative identity of the second-generation Alevi youth
29 (Jenkins and Cetin, 2018). Arising from a request by Alevi youth members
30 for Alevism lessons in Religious Education (RE), a collaboration began
31 between two local schools, the Alevi community centre (LACCC) and the
32 University of Westminster. Working over a period of three years, we
33 designed, trialled and evaluated Alevism lessons in Religious Education at
34 Key Stages 1 to 3.[9]

[8] All other interviews and focus groups described in the article were conducted by the author unless otherwise attributed.
[9] The Religion and Identity Project, which won the 2014 British Education Research Association/Routledge prize for a unique collaboration between a university and school for the second phase of the research, led to the development of Alevi lessons at Key Stage 3 in a local secondary school. See Jenkins, C. and Cetin, U.

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3) *Research on Alevi parents.* Focus group interviews with parents were held at the Prince of Wales Primary School in Enfield from April 2016 to February 2017.[10] Each was attended by approximately 15 to 20 parents although only mothers came. Two mothers from these groups (Zeynep[11] and Fatma[12]), whose experience chimed with other mothers, were interviewed again in July 2018 in order to capture data to describe the Millennial first-generation parents' experience, at least from the perspective of mothers. The Chair of BAF and the deputy head of the school were also interviewed to explore their perceptions of the changing relationship between parents and schools (July, 2018).

4) *Community perspectives.* Much of the analysis presented here is distilled from informal conversations with parents and community members at meetings or festivals at the community centre or from presenting our research at national events and regional groups, rather than from recorded interviews. A similar approach applies in ethnographic and other research, demonstrating the legitimacy of using opportunistic data to add to our understanding of parent's experiences in this way (Alexander, 2000; Cetin, 2014).

This research is relatively small-scale and qualitative, using a small number of cases to identify differences between two cohorts of first-generation parents – the Nineties and Millennials. This is not to suggest that all Nineties or Millennial parents are the same, sharing the same characteristics identified in the analysis that follows. Where possible, I have identified some heterogeneity within the cohorts or overlap between them in order to show that they are not watertight categories. Nevertheless, as Polit and Beck (2010) suggest, my familiarity with the community allows me to generalise these distinctions beyond the small number of actual interviews covered and to use them as a device to drill into the experiences I have heard described on numerous occasions.

The Nineties generation: "local choosers"[13]

In deconstructing the family-school nexus, I identify four main stakeholders –parents/extended families, children, the community centre and schools, all

(2014) "Minority ethno-faith communities and social inclusion through collaborative research" *BERA Insights* 9.

[10] This is the real name of the school which is used with their permission. The focus groups were jointly organised by the school and the author.

[11] Zeynep came to join her husband in 2001 at the age of 19. She completed *lise* (sixth form) in Turkey. Her daughter is 15 and her son is 7.

[12] Fatma came from a village near Elbistan in 2004 to join her husband and has three children.

[13] I draw here on Ball et al's (1997) concept of working-class locals which describes the choice processes of working class parents.

of whose influence changes across the intra-generational divide.[14] Schnell and Crul's (2014) analysis of underachievement of migrant Turkish children in European destination countries, examined the interaction between family and institutional factors rather than parental deficit. The intention here is to explore qualitatively this interaction between the Nineties Alevi parents' background and experience with the British education system to understand the reasons that their children underachieved. Typically, Nineties parents came from rural areas in central and south-eastern Turkey where they lived in an "environment of insecurity" (Sirkeci, 2003) mainly due to the war between the Turkish state and Kurdish guerrillas. Although education was compulsory to the end of the primary stage in Turkey, in practice attendance was patchy. Only primary education was provided in the villages and relatively few reached the secondary stage. Boys might attend secondary education in the nearest towns if they could stay with relatives but rarely girls, many of whom received no formal schooling. Those parents who had advanced beyond primary schooling had experienced ethnic and religious discrimination at secondary school from teachers and peers and they feared for their children's future if they stayed in Turkey.

Nineties parents repeatedly said that their children's education was a crucial reason for the family to migrate. They had high hopes for their children to get a good education abroad and at least find a white-collar job regardless of their own educational background. As one father of seven children put it:

> We had a dream, I mean we thought we are now in Europe and our children can now have a good education, at least get a degree. [...] I always reminded my children that we did not have the opportunity to go to school in Turkey (Hasan in Cetin, 2014).

Once in the UK, Nineties parents sent their children to school and expected them to do well, such was the reputation of British education. Yosso (2005) admires such "aspirational capital", the belief that their children could do well in school despite the institutional barriers which impeded their progress. In this respect, they were "good" parents, caring about their children's education and encouraging them to work hard but not otherwise involved. One father,(Zafer),[15] spoke for many when he said, "my biggest

[14] As already noted, in the absence of primary data from the perspective of schools receiving the Nineties Alevi pupils and also with the community centre just in the process of formation in the early Nineties, this section draws on Cetin's (2014) research which captures what parents and children reported about home-school relations during that period.

[15] Zafer is in his 60s. He came here in 1989 and applied for asylum. He brought his six children to join him after four years when he was granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK. He has only had a few years of formal education at primary school level.

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goal was to see my children have a good education" while Ali[16] expressed his regret at spending so much time earning money that he had so little time with his children and their education. Those few Nineties parents who did not leave education entirely to the schools, had been better educated in Turkey and spoke better English. It was their children arriving in the Nineties and entering the British education system at a young age who were more likely to realise their parents' dream by graduating with degrees and assimilating into white collar or professional employment, but they were the exception.

Whilst Alevi second-generation children consistently underachieved in schools, some of the Nineties children claimed that they had done well at primary school but then found the work too difficult at secondary school. For example, Raci[17] left school with no qualifications and explained how his achievement began to slide once he reached secondary school. His story was typical of his peers:

> I was trying my best but still struggling with my homework – most of the time I was copying from my friends. My Mum could not help me with my school work because she could not understand a word in English. She does not know how schools function here. She only learnt about my performance when she was called to the school for my troubles... but then it was too late (Raci in Cetin, 2014).

Inevitably, most Nineties parents were severely restricted in the help they could provide for their children due to their own limited education. Both parents were working long hours often in the textile factories and/or bringing home piecework. Mothers managed their work around their children's education by either going to work when their children were at school or home-working. They realised that it was hard for their children to have to start school without speaking any English and felt powerless to help them. Fathers in Turkey were the breadwinners and assumed that it was the mother's responsibility to look after the children and help with their school work, but they had received even less schooling than their husbands (Interview, Chair of BAF, 2018).

Nineties parents mostly did not speak English and were dependent on their children to interpret for them in official contexts, such as with schools, health professionals and benefits officers. This meant their children often missed

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[16] Ali is in his forties. He is a successful businessman and father of three children. His wife had been through the British education system hence could speak English when they got married. Two of the children are university graduates and Ali suggests this was mainly because his wife was able to help them throughout their educational journey.

[17] Raci is a second-generation young man with no GCSEs.

school to help out which could lead schools to think the parents did not care about their children's schooling. One boy, for example, had a fifty per cent absence rate due to interpreting for his sick mother (Kadir[18] in Cetin, 2014), which adversely affected his academic achievement. Importantly, this can be seen as a situation of role reversal where parental responsibilities are handed over to the children. In cases such as Kadir's, Yosso (2005) would see this as children acquiring linguistic capital, "cultural wealth" or "navigational capital" in stepping up to help their parents find their way around institutions and bureaucracy and had schools been aware this was the reason for his absence, they might have been supportive too. However, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) see this "taking power over parents" as a key contributory factor in some children's descent into the "rainbow underclass".[19] The boys and girls who were in trouble at school took advantage of their parents' lack of English by deliberately mistranslating letters home. The Chair of the British Alevi Federation confirmed that parents would be unaware that the school had requested a meeting to discuss their child's behaviour until more drastic measures were taken and then it was too late to do anything about it (Interview, July, 2018).

The Nineties parents did not have already established social or community networks which could help them engage with their children's education. Moreover, policy expectations demanded greater involvement of parents by choosing the best schools, attending parents' meetings and helping with schoolwork. Without the support of the extended family which they had depended on in Turkey, parents relied on other Alevi parents who could speak some English to help them out with adjusting to life in the UK. The type of neighbourhood and quality of schools is an important aspect of the social milieu that also affects children's educational outcomes and life trajectories.[20] Assuming that all schools were equally good, the Nineties parents sent their children to the nearest school, similar to a working class Local's pattern of school choice (Ball et al, 1997). Hackney and Tottenham, where the Nineties Alevis lived, had some notoriously bad neighbourhood schools with a reputation for gangs and inter-ethnic conflict. Moreover, as outsiders, Alevi youth were jockeying for power in relation to peers from other disadvantaged ethnic groups, especially Black youth, who had already lost faith in education as a route to social mobility (Zhou, 2001). In addition, some of the Alevi youth were bullied for their appearance in cheap clothes

[18] Kadir is a second-generation young man in his twenties with no GCSEs.
[19] The "rainbow underclass" refers to an existing underclass made up of different ethnic minorities within a situation of permanent poverty and anomie. This class is characterised by disorientation, lack of belief in the education system and underachievement at school. This leads towards a downward assimilation trajectory, blocking their chances of social mobility (Portes and Zhou, 1993).
[20] See Cetin in this issue for a more extended discussion of the effect on life trajectories.

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or not behaving like practising Muslims and their negative sense of identity was a further contributory factor in their disaffection with schooling.

The Nineties first-generation of parents had much to contend with as they settled into their new life in the UK. In an interview (July, 2011) the Chair of LACCC said parents would complain that their children were out of control, staying out late with their friends and taking drugs and that they needed help before it was too late. He recognised that parents were too busy working, often left their children home alone, and used the language barrier as an excuse not to get more involved in their children's activities. He remarked that the parents paid greater attention to material wealth and tried to compensate with material possessions to make up for not being there; a result of them having had so little money in Turkey. Inevitably, the dream of life in the UK providing a place of safety and a bright future for the family was not borne out by the reality, especially not in the beginning. Alevis were experiencing poverty and constant fear of deportation so they worked hard to save some money for the family just in case they were sent back to Turkey. Moreover, the Chair of LACCC felt that parents had placed too much trust in the education system and not enough in their children when they told their parents something was wrong:

> Many families did not want to believe it when people said something bad about the schools or the police. This is where we failed as a community as we lost trust in our children. [...] We were losing our youth. (Ali, July, 2011)

In summary, I argue that relations between parents, children and schools for this Nineties generation were evolving, messy and contradictory rather than simply either "positive" or "negative". All parents possessed aspirational capital, encouraging their children to do well and provided for their material needs whilst adjusting to their new life. They assumed that it was the schools' responsibility to deliver educational success if their children worked hard and behaved themselves. Given that at the time, the greater policy emphasis on parental choice and active supervision and support of their children's education (Ball, 2010), the Nineties parents fitted the profile of working class, minority ethnic "bad" parents in a deficit model of schooling (Gillies, 2006). More specifically, blame was targeted at "bad" mothers whose children under-achieved (Crozier and Davies, 2007; Vincent et al, 2010).

On the other hand, the accounts of Alevi parents suggest that they tried their best despite their limitations and the material conditions in which they lived. The children themselves had to contend with their lack of English when they started school, being left home alone whilst their parents worked long hours and having no one to help with their homework. However, these children

were much more agentic than analysis of home-school relations normally gives them credit for, including the power they held over their parents through learning English and their navigational skills in negotiating with officials. Similarly, the neighbourhood schools they attended were often constructed as “bad” schools and could be blamed for not intervening sooner, having low expectations of their ability, blaming parents for not getting involved and excluding those involved in gang violence, and so on. Some schools did try to contact parents about their child’s underachievement, truancy and risk of exclusion.However, this was thwarted by the parents’ inability to speak or read English and their children’s manipulation of home-school communications.

The Millennial generation: “cosmopolitan choosers”[21]

The discussion of the Nineties generation provides the basis for comparing the similarities and differences in the integration contexts of the Millennial first-generation parents and their new second-generation children.[22] It also expands the normative configuration of parent-school relations through successful collaborations between the Alevi community, parents and schools working together in the best interests of the new second generation. Whilst some of the first-generation Millennial parents originated from similar villages and towns to the Nineties generation, they were more likely to have migrated from the towns and were generally better educated. The majority of mothers in the focus group completed the secondary stage of education in Turkey, a contrast to the Nineties generation who had largely missed out on formal education. When Zeynep, a typical Millennial mother, was interviewed, she explained her situation:

> I came to the UK when I was 19, through marriage. My partner arrived in 1995/6 and we decided to live in the UK together once we got married. [...] In Turkey, I was in education until college. [...] We always remember our personal experiences growing up and think about the lack of opportunities we had. As parents we make a great effort to ensure that our children are not deprived in the same way we were and work to make sure they have a good education (Zeynep, July, 2018).

However, like Zeynep, most Millennial mothers we knew, had faced discrimination in Turkey and stressed that their children’s education was a

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[21] Cosmopolitan choosers are described by Ball et al (1997) as more middle class with a wider range of strategies for choosing schools.
[22] The new second generation are the children of the Millennial first-generation parents, mostly born here and going through the British education system themselves.

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key factor in their migration decision. They too had plenty of "aspirational capital" and ambitions for their children to go to university.

Like the Nineties parents, the Millennial parents lived precarious lives when they first arrived waiting to establish their migration status which limited their opportunities to find employment or learn English. Their choice of primary school for their first child still reflected the "Local choosers" practice (Ball et al, 1997) of the Nineties parents. However, whilst proximity remained a key factor, parents became more discerning in their choices for their second and subsequent children. The Millennials benefitted from family and/or more established Alevi communities who could provide advice and support. They also settled in more suburban areas such as Enfield, some through choice and others by being allocated council housing there. They could rely on the local grapevine for what Ball and Vincent (1998) describe as "hot knowledge" or gossip from other parents about local schools. For example, Fatma said that she chose the closest school for their first child but for the younger child it was a more informed choice based on what she had learnt from other Alevi parents about the Prince of Wales Primary School in Enfield, where we conducted the Religion and Identity Project. Mothers at the focus group (April, 2016) also knew other Alevi children at the school and were attracted by the Alevism lessons. Fatma described the difference between the schools her children went to like this:

> The schools used to ask us if we were Muslim and I used to hesitate to respond as we are Kurdish Alevi. At this new school, the school reassured me that they knew what Alevism was (Fatma, July, 2018).

Here can be seen an element of the "middle-class cosmopolitan chooser" (Ball et al, 1997) entering into the choice of school, which suggests this generation has greater knowledge about the education system. Zeynep explained her choice process, relying on both "hot" and "cold" knowledge (official information published by schools) (ibid.) about local schools:

> I researched for both children. I looked at the league tables and asked friends who had children in the schools for their experiences. I then weighed up my options and made a decision based on this. For my younger child, it was a more informed choice. We knew more about scores and better education. I am very happy with my choice. This school ensures our needs are met. For meetings, they arrange interpreters and we are sent off fully satisfied (Zeynep, July, 2018).

This comparison with the previous schools that Millennial mothers had sent their children to was far more consistent with the Nineties parents' experience of schools as dismissive of them for not speaking English. With

far more support available to them, the Millennial generation were much more in command of their children's education and were far less likely to experience role reversal in parental responsibilities, thereby strengthening their parental authority. Whilst it was not possible to establish how many of the Millennial mothers were in paid work, those attending the school meetings were full-time mothers, actively supporting their children's education in a way that the Nineties mothers could not. Whilst the Nineties fathers commented that the mothers were not educated enough to help their children, this generation of mothers were taking ever greater responsibility to support their children's education with evidence of acquiring the "cultural capital" so highly valued by middle-class mothers (Vincent and Maxwell, 2016). The focus group mothers (April, 2016) described the "educational work" they performed at home (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2013). For example, they played games with their children, and taught them how to write their names so that they would not start nursery without any English language skills. Whilst some fathers helped out, they mostly left education to the mothers. At the focus group meeting (April, 2016), mothers asked the school for help to get fathers more engaged with school life.

Conversations with Millennial children or information provided by the Deputy Head of the Prince of Wales Primary School, also confirmed that it was mainly mothers who helped with homework, at least during primary school, although two said their fathers helped a lot. Fairly typical is the Year 6 girl who said that she spent two hours a day revising for her SATS with her mother (Year 6 Alevi pupil interviews by the Deputy Head, 2015). This was harder at secondary level so mothers enlisted older siblings or extended family members who had attended school here to take on that responsibility. This meant that almost half of the Year 6 children had siblings helping them with their homework, an example of "familial capital" (Yosso, 2005). In addition, over half had private tutors like Zeynep's daughter. Zeynep explained that she felt guilty that she could not help her daughter as much as she wanted to and so once she had exhausted support from cousins and other family members, she hired a tutor for her even though she was doing well at school (Interview July 2018).

Millennial mothers were corresponding to "responsible parenting" and acquiring cultural capital which is more associated with the white middle classes. As is evident, Zeynep was leaving nothing to chance even though her daughter was doing well at school. However, it was her daughter who was now helping her younger son and so siblings and extended family members were enlisted to help, utilising familial capital. Millennial mothers also sent their children to booster classes or after-school clubs. In relation to their Alevism, they went to *saz* classes (a plucked musical instrument),

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joined *semah* dance sessions (part of the Alevi religious ritual) or attended Turkish lessons at the LACCC. They acquired "cultural wealth" to keep in touch with their linguistic, cultural and religious heritage. Vincent and Maxwell (2016) define these activities as the "concerted cultivation" of children, normally encouraged by middle-class mothers who intensively prepare their children for the future. Millennial mothers partially fit this description although they remain predominantly working class. Whereas the Nineties parents spent money on material goods for their children, partly to compensate for not being there or not being able to support their children's schooling, the Millennial parents spent it on supplementary educational and extra-curricular activities to enhance their children's chances of success. Undoubtedly, Millennial mothers were much more agentic than the Nineties mothers and were making most of the decisions about their children's schooling whilst keeping the fathers informed. This suggests a shift in power relations between parents and a re-establishment of parental authority over the children's education and a much more positive home-school relationship.

A further crucial area of difference between the groups is that the LACCC was much more established when the Millennial first-generation parents arrived and together they took steps to address the problems of the second-generation Alevi youth and actively engage with local schools. Direct actions included arranging meetings in schools to build relationships with Alevi parents. The Religion and Identity Project collaboration with local schools and the university to introduce Alevism lessons in local schools is the best example of the collective strength of the community which made a far greater impact on the schools than if individual parents had requested them. The Chair of the Britain Alevi Federation said with considerable pride:

> In the early stages we were approaching schools and trying to encourage them to put Alevism lessons into their curriculum. Now it is schools who approach us. They want to know more about it and they want to teach the Alevism lessons (Interview, July, 2018).

This fits Yosso's (2005) description of a community passing on their "cultural wealth" to empower, build resilience and achieve positive outcomes for Alevi parents, pupils and the schools.

Schools have also played their part in improving home-school relationships and Millennial first-generation parents reported that they were much more welcoming and proactive towards integrating and supporting their children. Most schools work hard to create an inclusive community but research by Barron (2007) and Crozier and Davies (2007) demonstrates the minefield of misunderstandings that can sometimes arise when schools

attempt to integrate minority ethnic pupils. As the deputy head of the Prince of Wales Primary School explained in our first interview (July, 2010), the school was unaware that their 82 "Turkish" pupils were Alevis before the project began and had concerns about their underachievement, poor behaviour and the lack of involvement of Alevi parents. However, she transformed this lack of awareness into her commitment to the Religion and Identity Project. She hosted a meeting of Alevi parents (July, 2011) to gain their support for the Alevism lessons and played a crucial role in preparing age-appropriate materials, organising and supporting the lessons for Key Stages 1 and 2 and evaluating them. Given that much of the school's work is focused on building good relationships with parents, raising aspirations for pupils and building resilience to the many challenges that families face, the Religion and Identity Project is an excellent example of fostering a "community of practice" on many levels (Barron, 2007). It was the impact of the Alevism lessons that helped raise the profile and achievement of the Millennial Alevi pupils, bringing parents into school and giving Alevi pupils a sense of belonging.[23] The many achievements of the project are documented elsewhere (Jenkins and Cetin, 2018) but most importantly, in both pilot schools, it empowered Alevi youth. As one of the Highbury Grove[24] Secondary School pupils said

> Everywhere we Alevis are a minority, people don't know about us but when they learn about Alevism, they accept it and you get a lot more respect (Cem,[25] Focus group, Highbury Grove pupils, April, 2017).

Whereas before the lessons, other students had not heard about Alevism, the lessons conferred legitimacy on Alevi pupils' identity while creating a dialogic home-school relationship (Vincent, 2017) which connected the new second-generation's outside world with the interior world of the school. Moreover, the exchange of knowledge between the LACCC, school and home gave Alevi children an opportunity to teach their parents what they have learnt about Alevism[26] and to discuss their religion more openly at home. It also made them more agentic in sharing information with their parents, teachers and peers instead of always being on the receiving end of information.

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[23] From the first year Alevism lessons were introduced in the school, the Year 6 Alevi pupils performed better in the national SATs (Standard Attainment Tests)at Key Stage 2 than teacher expectations and their results have continued to improve.
[24] This is the real name of the school which is used with their permission.
[25] Cem is a Year 13 pupil at Highbury Grove school and one of the first cohort to experience Alevism lessons.
[26] Due to the suppression of Alevism in Turkey and the oral tradition of transmission of the religion, many Alevis did not know much about their religion and tended not to discuss it with their children.

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Conclusion

This intra-generational study of Alevi parents, particularly mothers, in London confirms that education is an important site of struggle and engagement for migrant parents if they are to realise their aspirations for their children to succeed in the country of settlement. The value of this comparative analysis is to challenge deficit models of first-generation parenting in migrant communities; to open up an intersectional analysis to reveal the significance of generation in home-school relations and apply Yosso's conceptualisation of different forms of capital used by minority ethnic communities. This analysis shows how Nineties and Millennial first-generation parents draw on a different range of familial and community resources than are traditionally recognised to support their children's education. The research shows how significant transformations in home-school relations have occurred within the first generation in the space of a decade.

Key differences between the Nineties and Millennial parents were that the latter were better educated in Turkey, more mothers could speak English, they were less likely to be either working or working full-time, they settled into a more established community so that they understood the demands of schooling, and knew better how to choose schools and get more involved in their children's education. In terms of parental involvement, mothers were expected to take responsibility for their children's education and mostly they did, but there was some limited involvement of Millennial fathers (a matter which should be addressed in future research). Also, the community centres played a leading role in supporting parents both through providing lessons to affirm cultural and religious identities and also through working with schools. It is doubtful that the Alevism lessons would have gone ahead if the suggestion had solely come from parents. This suggests future educational research with migrant communities should include the role of community centres as important stakeholders in the mainstream home-school nexus and to bring the "cultural wealth" of minority ethnic communities into schools.

Finally, what is distinctive about this research is the highlighting of the importance of religion and identity for both parents and children in terms of their ability to integrate into the school community. The Alevis were persecuted in Turkey for their religious identity and were invisible in the UK as their country of origin led them to be identified as Turkish and Muslim rather than Kurdish and Alevi, generating a negative identity for the second generation. The Religion and Identity Project is an example of where the community took the lead in tackling this problem and collaborating with the schools to find solutions. As a result of the project introducing Alevism lessons into the RE curriculum, there has been a

significant improvement in the children's sense of belonging, achievement and behaviour in both schools. Alevi youth have experienced more self-confidence and pride in their Alevi identity to the extent that one secondary school child could now describe himself as a "full Alevi". Importantly, the project has effects beyond the confines of the school to positively impact on the identity of the community as a whole.

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