

The Process of Leaving School and Meaning of Schooling:  
The Case of Turkish School Leavers in Germany

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Çetin Çelik

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

Germany is among the countries where school performance is closely linked to students' social backgrounds. The Programme for international Student Assessment (PISA) reports revealed that the stratified character of the German educational system causes 'ethnic segmentation'. Comparatively, between migrants and non-migrants, educational background and social status matter in Germany more than in most other European countries. Children of immigrants compared to their German same-age peers are disadvantaged at almost every level of the educational system.

School leaver rates in particular highlight the disadvantaged situation for children of immigrants. Each year almost 76,000 students leave secondary education without any diploma and of these, the percentage that are children of immigrants is two and half times more than German children. The high share of school leaver children of immigrant background causes concerns about their integration into German society. Therefore, understanding the school leaving process in depth bears particular importance for both mitigating the dynamics underlying school withdrawal and improving their integration into society.

From a historical point of view, the educational expansion, increasing of average level of schooling, actually reduced the number of school leavers in Germany. For example, between 1950 and 2005, the percentage of school leavers declined from 16 % to 9 % (Destatis, GESIS-ZUMA and WZB:76; Becker 2006:30; Solga and Wagner 2001:109).

Despite this decline in school leaver rates, concerns about this situation in German society increased<sup>1</sup> and they now attract more public and academic attention. First of all, despite the visible decline in the long run, the percentage of school leavers recently is stable; in 1992, 9.3 % and in 2006, 7.8 %. This shows both the persistence of the phenomenon and the failure of recent reform and policy efforts aimed at reducing the numbers. Plus, there exists an ethnic segmentation in school leaving rates; the statistical data shows that, in comparison to German children, the share of school leaver children of immigrants *increased* over this period (Destatis, GESIS-ZUMA and WZB; Bildungsberichterstattung 2008; Diefenbach 2003/2004).

Another important factor is the negative effect of educational expansion that has taken place in Germany (Center for Educational Research and Innovation 2009). This contributed significantly to the deteriorated situation of school leavers in comparison to past times and they have become exposed to more risks than ever before in the job market (Solga 2002a).

<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Rumberger makes similar points almost two decades ago in a different context (Rumberger 1987).

The educational expansion enlarged the social distance between those benefiting from education and not, and this made educational failure of school leavers more perceptible (Solga 2002b). Additionally, as soft skills are increasingly demanded in the labour market today, leavers are further marginalized with their lower qualifications (Solga 2002a). The rigid link existing between schooling and the labour market in Germany also worsens their marginalization in society (Kristen and Granato 2007:6; Worbs 2003). Mostly, the concerns about school leaver rates are strongly linked to integration debates in Germany. The high number of immigrants leaving school causes concerns not only about their structural integration into the labour market but also social participation in German society.

Against this background, most research relates high school leaving rates of children of immigrants to a variety of causes. Among them, the most popular ones are the individual and institutional explanations. The individual explanations focus on the student and family characteristics and try to detect deficits for educational success and the students are seen as “dropouts”, whereas the institutional explanations pay more attention to the school system and its structural characteristics and the students are seen as “push-outs” (Kelly 1993). The institutional explanations gained currency in Germany recently as result of so-called 'PISA-Shocks'<sup>2</sup> in 2000 and 2006. It can be said that there is a strong tendency toward individual deficit explanations in school leaving research in Germany. The reasons for such a tendency might be traced back to the elements of “Ausländerpädagogik”<sup>3</sup>, against which the culture of immigrants, particularly that of Turkish, is seen as 'pre-modern' and in opposition to modern German culture (Nohl 2009). The conceptualization of immigrant culture as deficit is based on three assumptions: the language deficit, the language codes deficit, and primary socialization deficit (Nohl 2009). This tradition explains partly the strong sociocultural focus of the German migration research (Worbs 2003:1016).

Although these research streams focusing on individual or institutional deficits are different in focus and conceptualization, they mostly use similar methodologies for investigating school leaving. That is, a list of risk factors that leads, or might lead, students out of school is described (Lee and Burkam 2003:358). The methodological commitment of such studies is mostly multivariate analysis, which seeks to detect which variable, or combination of variables, for example, race, language, parental education and occupation, classroom size, or school structure, is the reason for unwanted behavior (Becker 1991:22–23).

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<sup>2</sup>The term refers to disappointing results of educational performances lower class German and immigrant children in Germany in compared to other OECD countries (Diefenbach 2003/2004)

<sup>3</sup>Foreigner Pedagogy is a term used for the schooling of children of migrant workers in Germany till 1980's. For the transformation of the term into “intercultural education”, see (Nohl 2009).

While multivariate analysis provides valuable findings about potential causes of a behavior, as Becker (1991) maintains “in fact, all causes do not operate at the same time” (Becker 1991:23); thus, it cannot account for the way the causes interact with each other in the emergence of the behavior.

The present study attempts to broaden the common conceptualization of school leaving as a process. Most research, due to its theoretical and methodological commitments, does not spell out the *process* by which students disengage from school. Thus, the present study aims to understand at first *how school leaving processes unfold over time*. Therefore, leaving school is considered neither 'push-out' nor 'dropout' but as a *disengagement process*. Such a conceptualization is of particular importance, for, as Kelly (1993) argues, the terms ‘dropout’ and ‘push-out’ as binary oppositions do not sufficiently capture the complex pathways followed in leaving school (Kelly 1993:preface). Additionally, this approach enables description of the interaction of various dynamics taken from the perspectives of the students themselves. Therefore, instead of attributing the reasons of school leaving to background variables, the present study, by following Becker's (1991) 'sequential model', intends to explain the development of school disengagement sequentially. It looks at Turkish school leavers from the School of General Education as this is Germany’s standardized school.

School engagement and commitment should be considered together with particular motivations and aspirations. As it was noted earlier, the culture of Turkish communities is seen as traditional, which contradicts the 'individualistic' and 'modern' values of the school education in Germany (Diefenbach 2003/2004:240). This is why so called “Kulturkonflikt” (cultural conflict) is a very popular frame of reference in Germany in explaining educational failure of Turkish children (Diefenbach 2009:440–441). In this framework, school success is assumed to mean an inevitable generational conflict between traditional parents and 'modernized children', (Diefenbach 2009; Weber 2005), and they are assumed to live a “Leben zwischen den Kulturen”<sup>4</sup> (Weiss 2007:13). Similar arguments about the school performance of the children of Turkish immigrants exist in the context of the Netherlands (Lindo 2000). As a result, some research maintains that school performance of immigrant children is a result of the way they value schooling. On the ground of this debate, the present study, by putting the perceptions and perspectives of the leavers at its center, aims to understand how Turkish school leavers value school from their lived experiences. The study focuses on the city of Bremen which is home to a sizable share of Turkish immigrants, whose labor market situations have been negatively effected by de-industrialization and restructuring of the

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<sup>4</sup>Life between two cultures

economy in recent times. The study ultimately contends with the two concepts of school disengagement and the meaning of schooling.

With regards to the structure of the dissertation, the main characteristics of the German educational system are dealt with first. In chapter 2, the educational system is critically reflected in terms of its logical foundations and relations with wider societal forces. On this ground, the ways in which the structural deficiencies and ethnic segmentation of the educational system create and reproduce existing gaps between the social strata are critically discussed. With a historical view, the negative contribution of the educational expansion into the deepening of social inequalities is highlighted. In this framework, the types, working definition and situation of school leavers in the German educational system are clarified and their marginalization is compared to other social groups.

In chapter 3, theoretical explanations associated with school performance are reviewed. The main arguments of individual, deficit, institutional, human and social capital, resistance and process explanations are clarified and their inadequacies in terms of the research interests of the present study are critically reflected. This provides a basis for the formulation of the theoretical framework of the study.

In chapter 4, the theoretical model of the study is constructed in detail. It is argued that former theoretical models, while playing critical roles in explaining important factors regarding school leaving, are not sufficient to fully frame the complex process of school disengagement. Based on this critique, Becker's (1991) "sequential model" is introduced and it is further argued that this is a suitable formal framework to map out school disengagement processes gradually from the perspective of school leavers. In addition, as the model was not originally generated for school disengagement, it is applied into disengagement processes with symbolic interactionism. Chapter 5 explains the research design of the study. It includes detailed descriptions about case selection and sampling, method selection, structure of the interview guideline, interview situation and data analysis.

In chapter 6, the school disengagement process is analyzed and divided into particular sequences on the basis of the data. The causal relationships between the sequences and sub-sequences are empirically constructed. Throughout the chapter, the different dimensions of the disengagement process from the perspectives of the interviewees are described. In chapter 7, the meaning of schooling for the interviewees is examined on the basis of the process described in chapter 6. Then, the analysis in chapter 7 takes the final sequence as the starting point. As a result, it is argued that in contrast to cultural arguments, the meaning of

schooling for the interviewees is not stable but changing. Based on the detailed account of both the process of school disengagement and of the changing meaning of schooling in daily experiences of the interviewees, the findings are summarized and the inadequacies of the study's theoretical model are highlighted in the concluding chapter 8. Furthermore, possible research areas and policy recommendations are discussed.



## Chapter 2 The German Educational System and School Leavers

### 2.1 The German Educational System

*The social background of people should not decide about their future. Social advancement through education, this is our social policy goal. Everybody needs to be included, nobody must be left behind. All too often, poverty begins with poor education. Everybody's participation in education and professional training is warranted by the equal opportunity principle (Wernstedt and John-Ohnesorg 2008a:38).*

Understanding the school leaving process as part of the life course requires a critical analysis of social and institutional structures (Weymann 2003). Institutionally, educational systems generate requirements for success and failure and define standardized rules and arrangements necessary to achieve success or failure. Powell (2009) argues that the educational system in Germany is designed to provide appropriate support to each individual to develop his or her “natural aptitude” or “given talent” (Begabung) at all levels of education (Powell 2009:173). In this direction, the students are selected early for differently organized, hierarchically ordered, secondary school types. Although it acquires a slightly different character in some German states, tracking is generally decided in accordance with student grades (especially in Language and in Mathematics), school recommendation, parents' choices (Söhn and Özcan 2006:108; Kristen 2000:32) and potential personality characteristics derived from consultations with the parents (Frick, Grabka and Groh-Samberg 2007:6). This selection point is indeed of crucial importance because it 'fixes' in a way the future educational path of the student. Although there is a possibility to change the track for higher degree, it rarely occurs in practice (Kristen 2000:32).

Children are entering into the educational system first when they are at the age of three or four. It is up to the family to send their children to this pre-primary education. The age of children to enter into primary school (Grundschule) is at around six. Primary schools are comprehensive schools and all children have to attend the school closest to their home, thus, the mix of the children in a school reflects the socioeconomic composition of the neighborhood (Söhn and Özcan 2006:104; Kristen 2000). This is one of the reasons for the emergence of ethnically segregated schools especially in industrial areas of large cities

(Kristen 2005). Following primary school the students are tracked into either Special school (*Sonderschule*)<sup>5</sup>, lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*)<sup>6</sup>, intermediate secondary school (*Realschule*)<sup>7</sup>, or college-track secondary school (*Gymnasium*)<sup>8</sup> (Söhn and Özcan 2006:104). Stauber (1999) argues that this early selection creates a fundamental institutional risk of social exclusion, which determines pupils' school careers and labour market opportunities (Stauber and Walther 1999:5).

After this institutional selection process<sup>9</sup>, students with exceptional talents are not separated out to receive additional individualized support, thus the students are less defined by their unique individual personality than by the school type they attend (Powell 2009:173). In connection to this point, Stauber (1999) asserts that the tendency to separate students into homogeneous school types is strongly linked to the German welfare state, which institutionalizes each stage of the life course with life-time social insurance and full-time work (Stauber and Walther 1999:28–30). He further underscores that the welfare system encourages people to have an *occupation* and develop a biography that fits into *Normalarbeitsverhältnis*<sup>10</sup>. Those who deviate from this *normal* biography are thought to be in need of *help* and included in a system of *Sozialhilfe*<sup>11</sup> which stigmatizes individuals socially due to lower qualifications (Stauber and Walther 1999:28–29).

Another equally important dimension of the structure of the secondary educational system is that it cements and intensifies the social and spatial segregation existing in society (Klemm 2008:26). As the children from lower class German and migrant families, which hold lower

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<sup>5</sup> During primary education, students who have learning disabilities or cannot meet the requirements of a regular school are thought of having special needs and selected for special schools designed for handicapped pupils and subsequently changing the track and getting the chance of a higher school degree is very low. This is one of the most debated issues with regard to children of immigrants. It is maintained that these schools might easily be abused for indirect discrimination since language problems might be mixed up with cognitive deficiencies (Söhn and Özcan 2006:107).

<sup>6</sup> The lower secondary school which provides a basic general education as a basis of practical vocational training; the certificate of the lowest track, acquired after the ninth or tenth grade, leads to a minimum qualification such as blue collar professions.

<sup>7</sup> Intermediate secondary school which prepares students, most often, for administrative and higher manufacture jobs, stands as a better alternative to Hauptschule. The education here lasts from grade five or seven to grade ten and the certificate leads to a medium-level qualification like white collar jobs.

<sup>8</sup> Gymnasium is the academic track, which, in combination with the Abitur (maturity certificate), traditionally, leads to university studies (Kristen and Granato 2007:6). It usually lasts eight or nine years (grades five to twelve or thirteen).

<sup>9</sup> In some German states, beside these three main tracks, there are also Gesamtschulen (comprehensive schools) which integrate these three tracks and facilitate movement between them (Söhn and Özcan 2006:110). These are integrated comprehensive schools (joint classes for all students) as well as additive and cooperative comprehensive schools (where the various types of secondary schools exist side by side on the same premises).

<sup>10</sup> According to the definition of German Federal Statistical Office, *Normalarbeitsverhältnis* refers literally to 1-) a full-time or part-time job with at least half the normal full working week, 2-) permanent employment relationship, 3-) the integration into the social security systems, 4-) the identity of work and employment (Puch 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Public assistance

socioeconomic status, are excluded from others in the early selection process and restricted to worse labour market outcomes, it reproduces existing power relationships in society.

Two thirds of German parents are in principle satisfied with a school system in which their children, going to intermediary schools (Realschulen) and colleges (Gymnasium), are separated from the children of socially disadvantaged families and foreigners. They want to secure the social opportunities for their children and believe that this works best through an early separation based on a differentiated school system (Wernstedt 2008:10–11).

Solga and Wagner (2008) maintain that the stratified school system creates and legitimates homogeneous groups causing social segregation in secondary education (Solga and Wagner 2008). The outcomes of Die Internationale Grundschul- Lese- Untersuchung (IGLU) 2006 and PISA III indeed prove that students of lower socioeconomic status are mostly disadvantaged in Germany (Wernstedt and John-Ohnesorg 2008b). Particularly the results of PISA 2000 - so called 'PISA-Shock' – demonstrated that the relationship of social background and competency acquisition is strongest in Germany among the OECD countries (Baumert and Maaz 2010:166). Statistically speaking, today “the social background of a child determines his/her educational achievement” (Valtin 2008:12), and the educational system does not adequately appraise achievement potentials of kids from lower classes (Kiper 2006:70). “Children from upper classes have five times more chances than those of lower classes to be recommended by their primary school teachers for going to Gymnasium, and this fact is even more visible in 2006 than 2001” (Valtin 2008:12).

The strong relationship between social background and educational achievement shown in PISA III demonstrates the incredible importance of the cultural and material resources of a family for a child's educational performance (Solga 2008b). While role models and relations with teachers are of great importance for children from lower classes (Stanton-Salazar 2001; Solga 2008b), students who spend only half-day at school in Germany, are more dependent on family resources (Solga 2008b). Adding to that, the stratified character of the secondary educational system creates different performances among the different school types and, instead of motivating, causes stigmatization<sup>12</sup> for lower track students (Solga 2008b). To summarize, school segregation leads to a “background-dependent canalization” and, thus, a “sub-cultural isolation” of student circles which, as a result, brings about “background-

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<sup>12</sup>What is meant here by stigmatization is that the stratified character of the German educational system sorts the students into differentially organized hierarchical school tracks and this, particularly with the current expansion of education, results in stigmatization for the students in lower school tracks.

specific differences” in social and educational performance development<sup>13</sup> (Solga and Wagner 2008:191).

The internal structure of learning environments is defined through these origin-based gate-keeping processes in the educational system, i.e. the composition of the student population in different school types is determined by their social background (parents) as well as the social background of their social contacts (their friends and colleagues)(Solga and Wagner 2008:192)

Hauptschule students today come mostly from un- or semi- skilled families which have low social and economic resources (Solga 2008b:3,; Solga and Wagner 2008:191-92-93, Solga and Wagner 2001). These disadvantaged conditions in school cause detrimental effects on the motivation and performance of the students. Indeed, the role of school was repeatedly shown in various contexts as a critical factor in the formation of students' aspirations and attitudes (Oakes 2005; Stanton-Salazar 2001).

Additionally, school effects became clear with PISA (2000), which undeniably shows a co-variation between composition of students in a school and their performance levels (Solga and Wagner 2008:193). The school climate in Hauptschule is demotivating, learning materials are inferior, and the chance to meet role-model school friends from families having better resources is extremely slim (Solga 2008b:3; Solga and Wagner 2008:191-92-93, Solga and Wagner 2001). On the contrary, students in Realschule and Gymnasium enjoy great advantage, they have more ambitious learning atmospheres, better educational climates and supportive, motivated, role model friends since they come from families having high socioeconomic resources (Solga 2008b:3; Solga and Wagner 2008:191-92-93, Solga and Wagner 2001). While it is officially possible to change the school type, the figures show that 90 percent of students stay in their tracked school type; and if a change happens, it generally happens downward into a lower school type (Solga and Wagner 2008). The school leaving rates also prove the importance of school climate in development of educational aspirations; in 2002 Hauptschule was 13.6 %, whereas Realschule was 2.2 % and Gymnasium was less than 1 % (Frick, Grabka and Groh-Samberg 2007:6–7).

In addition to social structural inequalities, the educational system also includes 'ethnic segmentation'. Diefenbach (2003/2004) shows that the children of immigrants are disadvantaged and much more tracked into lower school types, such as Hauptschule and Sonderschule, than their German counterparts; and less represented in upper school tracks such as Realschule and Gymnaisum (Diefenbach 2003/2004). And ethnic segmentation is not

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<sup>13</sup> This and following quotes from German books in this study are translated into English by the author.

a new but a long term fact in the German educational system (Alba, Handl and Müller 1994).

The stratified educational system has caused more dramatic consequences for lower track students with the educational expansion. With de-industrialization, the rising of the service sector and the computerization of production and education, higher education has become available to more people not only in Germany but all of Europe (Center for Educational Research and Innovation 2009). The expansion of education caused an unprecedented widening of the gap between certificate holders and non-holders. For example, from the 1950s to 1960s the percentage of 13-year-old Hauptschule-goers diminished from 79 % to 66%, whereas that of Realschule-goers increased from 6 % to 13 %, and that of Gymnasium-goers increased from 12% to 16% percent. The percentage of Hauptschule-goers diminished to 31% in 1990 and to 23% in 2004. On the contrary, in 1990, the share of Gymnasium-goers was 31% and Realschule-goers were 27 %. In 2004, the share of Gymnasium-goers increased to 33 % and Realschule-goers remained almost the same at 26 %, while Hauptschule-goers again diminished to 22 % (Destatis, GESIS-ZUMA and WZB:76; Becker 2006:30; Solga and Wagner 2001:109). As a result, the educational expansion deeply changed the value of educational certificates. Realschule diploma became a norm over time, and Hauptschule, due to the disproportional concentration of lower class and migrant children in this type of school, has come to be described in sociological and pedagogical literature as an “ethnically dominated school of residuals” or “ghetto-school” and Hauptschule goers have come, therefore, to be perceived as deficit students (Destatis, GESIS-ZUMA and WZB:76,; Solga and Wagner 2008:196; Stauber and Walther 1999:28–29).

Consequently, it is maintained that the German educational system creates particular school contexts that bring about a range of dissimilar socialization conditions. Therefore, it is far from compensating for low resources of the children of disadvantaged backgrounds (Solga 2008b). Conversely, by obstructing social mobility, it protects already privileged groups in the society, with some of Europe's most rigid status distinctions based on labor market and employment contracts (Wernstedt 2008).

## 2.2 School leavers in Germany

One of the fundamental problems facing school leaving research is the absence of a common agreement on what is actually meant by the term “dropout”. It seems that many terms are used in synonymy with dropout such as “the disaffiliated student”, (one no longer wishing to be associated with school), “capable dropouts” (whose family or cultural situation

did not agree with school demands), “stopouts”, (dropouts who return to school usually within the same academic year), or “pushouts” (individuals who feel that people at school want them to leave) (Chávez et al. 1991:6). The term dropout, like “truancy”, is an Anglo-American term (Stamm 2006:2). Although in the countries such as US and Great Britain, the terms 'dropout' and 'early school leaver' have certain conceptual clarity, there seems to be an incoherence on the usage of the term in Germany. The main reason for that is the dissimilar organization of the general and vocational educational system of Germany, compared to Anglo-Saxon traditions. Therefore, the operationalization of the term needs to proceed carefully for the case of the German educational system.

To begin with, the term “school leaver” is preferred in the present study over the term “dropout” because 'dropping out' implies *choice* on the part of the students and is not sufficient to capture the multi layered, complex interactions in the process. The German educational system generates 'school leavers' of two types. The first way to become a school leaver is to leave the School of General Education [Allgemeinbildende Schule] without any diploma. It includes Grundschule, Sonderschule, Hauptschule, Realschule and Gymnasium, and leaving any of these is sufficient for being an official leaver. This type of leaving is defined as 'Schulabgänger'<sup>14</sup>.

In Bremen, the compulsory education lasts 12 years and it ends no later than at the age of 18 (Senatör für Bildung und Wissenschaft) and when students are older than sixteen and still having no diploma from the School of General Education or are not eligible to acquire a certificate, they are directed into 'vocational schools' [Berufsschulen], for a 'vocational preparation year' [Berufsvorbereitungsjahr], where they are fulfilling their compulsory education [Allgemeine Schulpflicht] and are given occupational skills in particular fields. When a Schulabgänger leaves the vocational school without any certificate and cannot find any apprenticeship place [Ausbildungsplatz], then he is defined as 'Schulabbrecher' (Caspar 2003:4). As a result, 'Schulabbrecher' is a sub-category of 'Schulabgänger'; in other words, every 'Schulabbrecher' first has to be a 'Schulabgänger'<sup>15</sup>.

Given that there are two terms, the present study focuses only on those who leave mainstream schooling. Therefore, what is meant by the term “school leaver” in this study is 'Schulabbgänger', or those who left the School of General Education. Thus the working

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<sup>14</sup> The “Definition Katalog zur Schulstatistik 2008 deals with this confusion and generates a definition for school leaver (Kommission für Statistik 2008:46). The German version of the definition is as follows: „Abgänger der allgemein bildenden Schulen sind Schüler/innen des Berichtsschuljahres die die Schulart nach Vollendung der Vollzeitschulpflicht am Ende oder Verlauf des Berichtsschuljahres ohne Abschluss verlassen haben und nicht auf andere allgemein bildende Schulart gewechselt haben“.

<sup>15</sup> For different definitions and dissimilar use of the terms, see (Caspar 2003).

definition herein for school leaver is: a pupil who leaves the School of General Education or is thrown out, for any reason, before graduation or completion, and without transferring to another School of General Education.

Turning back to the contemporary situation, the educational expansion engendered dramatic consequences for school leavers in Germany. From 1950 to 2005, the percentage of school leavers declined from 16 % to 9 % (Destatis, GESIS-ZUMA and WZB:76; Becker 2006:30; Solga and Wagner 2001:109). Nonetheless, despite this historical curtail, the statistical data shows that the number of leavers is stable recently, see Table 1 (Bildungsberichterstattung 2008:286).

Table 1 : Graduates and school leavers from Hauptschule from 1993 to 2006 according to school certificates

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Without Hauptschulabschluss</b>	<b>Hauptschulabschluss</b>
<i>Frequency</i>			
1993	799,320	72,443	218,975
1994	818,012	74,048	221,984
1995	861,669	76,005	236,406
1996	892,396	78,747	241,930
1997	916,153	80,486	245,885
1998	924,358	82,968	245,362
1999	937,420	83,761	244,326
2000	937,890	86,601	238,614
2001	926,852	88,881	236,127
2002	936,407	85,314	238,746
2003	947,887	84,092	246,194
2004	986,317	82,212	146,237
2005	958,458	78,152	237,712
2006	968,869	75,897	236,531
<i>in percent</i>			
1993	100	9.1	27.4
1994	100	9.1	27.1
1995	100	8.8	27.4
1996	100	8.8	27.1
1997	100	8.8	26.8
1998	100	9.0	26.5
1999	100	8.9	26.1
2000	100	9.2	25.4
2001	100	9.6	25.5
2002	100	9.1	25.5
2003	100	8.9	26.0
2004	100	8.3	14.8
2005	100	8.2	24.8
2006	100	7.8	24.4

Over the past decades, the people having no diploma experienced declines in real income and lagged behind individuals with more education (Rima Shore 2009:2). While many people benefited from higher education, the social distance of educational groups between top and bottom expanded (Solga and Wagner 2001) and this has made school leavers' educational failures more visible than ever before (Solga 2002b). They have become a marginalized group with their shrinking numbers. They are exposed to more risks today than ever before because of the rising demand for soft skills in the job market<sup>16</sup>. Although their parents could find work with similar or even lower qualifications, these children find themselves marginalized within the educational system and society (Solga 2002a). The strong link between the educational system and the labour market in Germany contributed to this marginalization further (Kristen and Granato 2007:6; Worbs 2003).

Looking at school leaving through the lens of migration, a different picture appears. As is the case for school performance, school leaving rates mark the ethnic segmentation in the educational system. For almost two decades, the children of immigrants leave school without any diploma more than German students. In the time period 1991 to 2001, the average school leaving rate was about 20% for children of immigrants, whereas it was 8 % for German children (Diefenbach 2003/2004:233). Recent reports confirm this historical tendency, with the proportion of school leavers from the General Educational Schools [Die Allgemeinbildende Schulen] among the children of immigrants at almost two and half times higher than that of Germans; 17 % to 7 % (Destatis, GESIS-ZUMA and WZB:56). The dispersion is as follows in Table 2 (Bildungsberichterstattung 2008:274);

Table 2: German and foreigner graduates and school leavers from the School of General Education and Vocational Schools according to the certificate type and sex in 2006.

Degree	Total		German				Non-German			
			Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
without Hauptschulabschluss	75,897	7.9	38,905	8.7	22,426	5.3	8,952	19.2	5,614	12.7
Hauptschulabschluss	273,481	28.5	137,633	30.8	94,646	22.3	22,356	48.0	18,846	42.8
Mittlerer Abschluss	481,845	49.6	221,600	49.2	226,276	52.9	16,205	34.0	17,764	39.7
Fachhochschulreife	129,662	13.6	64,937	14.7	57,299	13.6	3,840	8.0	3,586	7.6
Allgemeine Hochschulreife	285,456	29.9	123,409	28.0	152,397	36.3	4,285	8.9	5,365	11.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,246,341</b>		<b>586,484</b>		<b>553,044</b>		<b>55,638</b>		<b>51,175</b>	

<sup>16</sup>For a theoretical discussion on possible reasons for diminishing chances of low skilled persons in the job market see at (Solga 2000)



Although no data are available nationwide about school leaving rates differentiated according to ethnic background amongst the children of immigrants (Diefenbach 2003/2004:227), it seems that Turkish students are more likely to leave school without any certificate than German peers, looking at their dispersion among different school tracks. For example, Söhn and Özcan (2006) use local data on the regional state of North Rhine-Westphalia and find out that, in 2003, 14 % of Turkish students left school without any degree compared with only 6 % of German students (Söhn and Özcan 2006:111). Additionally, by using her own calculations on BiB Integration Survey 2000 data<sup>17</sup>, Susan von Below gives an idea about the tremendous differences between second generation Turkish immigrants and Germans. According to this calculation, the picture is worse than is generally thought; among those who have no degree at all, all things being equal, the school leaver percentage of Turks is seven times more than Germans (Von Below 2006:211). The inevitable question, at this point, is why the picture is the way it is? In order to answer this question we should look at the arguments and explanations for why some students withdraw from school.

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<sup>17</sup> BiB is an abbreviation for “Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung“ (Federal Institute For Population Research)

## Chapter 3 Why Do They Leave School?

*If academic success in school were mainly contingent upon individual ability and effort, then there would be no need to entertain theories that focus our attention on the complexities that underline social relations in organizational life and society (Stanton-Salazar 2004:18)*

Central to almost all existing studies and policy efforts regarding school leaving is a concern with potential costs to society, such as unemployment, which leads to processes of social exclusion; a mechanism of disintegrating certain groups from society (Sackmann, Windzio and Wingens 2001). School leavers are seen as costing society in terms of reduced productivity and consumption in the short run, and they are also seen to be social burdens requiring public assistance due to limited training in the long run (Dohn 1991:211). As well as these types of societal costs, there are a range of significant personal costs to the individuals who leave. There are a plethora of risks that leavers face in their future life such as alienation, lack of self-esteem, homelessness, drug abuse, and crime (Hodgson 2007:3).

There are different theories and explanations for school leaving. Kelly (1993) for example, mentions two main groups of thought; the first 'individual' or 'deficit' group focuses on individual, family and cultural factors seeing the event as 'dropout' based very much on individual choice. The other group emphasizes institutional factors of unequal economic and political conditions, social structures and schooling practices as the primary reasons, and sees non-completion as 'push-out' (Kelly 1993:6–7). These two groups of thought draw on various sociological theories of educational performance, see Flores-Gonzales (2002) and Diefenbach (2009) for reviews of these theories. Other perspectives such as human or social capital theories and resistance theories offer explanations more marginal to these main two groups of thought. There are also process explanations but, compared to others, they are quite rare. I shall now, in the following sections, discuss these main and marginal school leaving explanations in order to understand to what extent they are suitable to frame the present study.

### 3.1 Individual or Deficit Explanations

These explanations place individual characteristics at the center of their analyses. The

basic claim is that due to individual, cultural and family reasons, the student lacks necessary characteristics that would otherwise lead him or her to school success. Such students are thought to lack motivation, have more school leaver friends, and come from unstable families often indifferent to education (Flores-González 2002:5).

Among other things, deficit explanations have a special tendency to focus on cultural practices or patterns of minority groups. It is assumed that the success or failure of the students might stem heavily from a cultural understanding of schooling. Lindo (2000) for example, in his comparative research on Iberian and Turkish youths in the Netherlands, concludes that, while having similar disadvantaged backgrounds compared to Turkish families, the more liberal role of women in the Iberian family mediates the children relations with school successfully and this support is substantially important in the greater success of Iberian children compared with Turkish children (Lindo 2000:221).

Cultural deficit explanations are dominant in academic research in Germany. Family characteristics and values are usually assumed to have main responsibility for the low educational performance of immigrant children (Hummrich 2009). The deficit approach in Germany is situated in a modern versus pre-modern paradigm and an integration/assimilation debate. Diefenbach (2003/2004) refers to the text of Leenen, Grosch & Kreidt (1990)<sup>18</sup> as an example of a cultural deficit explanation and argues that particularly Turkish migrants are assumed to have traditional 'pre-modern' attitudes to learning and schooling, which includes memorization and absolute authority of teachers (Diefenbach 2003/2004:240). Therefore, parents are skeptical and do not trust schools, which encourages instrumental and individualistic values in opposition to traditional values of Turkish families (Diefenbach 2003/2004:240). Especially when it comes to the female students of Muslim background, the so called "Kulturkonflikt" (cultural conflict) thesis comes to the fore (Weber 2005). It is assumed that female students are torn between 'liberal' school culture and 'conservative' family values and experience a cultural conflict (Weber 2005; Diefenbach 2009; Weiss 2007). Also, this conflict exists across generations with the children of immigrants assimilating into the cultural values of Germany and thus conflicting with their first generation elders' more conservative values (Alba, Handl and Müller 1994:212). The cultural deficit tradition produced a body of 'specialized' sociocultural works that deal primarily with Turkish migrants (Worbs 2003:1016).

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<sup>18</sup>Leenen, Wolf R./Grosch, Harald/Kreidt, Ulrich (1990) *Bildungsverständnis, Platzierungsverhalten und Generationenkonflikt in türkischen Migrantenfamilien: Ergebnisse qualitativer Interviews mit „bildungserfolgreichen“ Migranten der zweiten Generation*, in: *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*. 4, S.753-771

The capability of individual, cultural deficit explanations in comprehending school leaving faces strong criticism. While it is certain that individual background, family and culture play some roles in educational performance, many suggest that it is not a sufficient perspective to understand school disengagement processes.

First, the deficit explanations draw on a notion of a culture which is highly static in character; for that reason, they are not able to explain dynamic factors across racial, ethnic, class and gender groups. For instance, although being associated with low achievement, authoritarian parenting style might cause different outcomes in different groups (Flores-González 2002:5). There are findings showing that authoritarian parenting style might be linked with school success, for example, for Asian immigrants in the US (Rumbaut and Portes 2001) and for Turkish immigrants in Germany (Pott 2009; Alba, Handl and Müller 1994:241). Another example is Italian immigrants who, having completely different frames of culture, perform as poorly as Turks in the German educational system (Alba, Handl and Müller 1994:241). Second, the deficit explanations cannot deal with why educational performance differences exist among siblings, although they share similar social, familial and economic characteristics (Flores-González 2002:4). Third, and most importantly in terms of the present study, the deficit explanations do not spell out the process by which students become high or low achievers as Flores-Gonzales (2002) points out. They attach school leaving outcomes to demographic data so that certain characteristics “cause”<sup>19</sup> leaving (Flores-González 2002:3). It is conspicuous to predict whether a pupil will leave school by looking at race, economic background and academic ability. This indicates only probability, *not* causality, and furthermore such ambiguous meaning creates and perpetuates low expectations in society in general (Kerka 2003; Croninger and Lee 2001). Additionally, the data are often misleading in predicting who is going to leave due to large figures of gifted leavers (Hansen and Toso 2007:3; Renzulli and Park 2000), who do not fit the risk profiles (Flores-González 2002:3). Therefore the individual deficit theories cannot explain ups and downs in individual biographies and complex mechanisms working in the processes by which pupils disengage from school.

### 3.2 Institutional Explanations

The type and organization of a school creates specific learning climates and causes emergence of aspirations and motivations of different kinds (Oakes 2005; Solga 2008a; Lucas 1999). Most research highlights that the logic and structure of a school determines whether

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<sup>19</sup>Emphasis is original

existing inequalities will be aggravated, transmitted, reduced, or eliminated. A degree of centralized school policy-making leads to tracking of students into different institutional arrangements, with different goals. As noted earlier, Solga & Wagner (2008) argue that the tracking school system in Germany is responsible for differing educational outcomes of the students. Lower school tracks are subjected to anticipated socialization to perform educationally lower (Solga 2008b; Solga and Wagner 2008). Furthermore, teachers perceive more problematic behaviors and lower their expectations for such students, the students who are simultaneously from lower income families and ethnic minorities (Flores-González 2002; Modood 2004; Heath, Rethon and Kilpi 2008:226). An interview conducted with a German Hauptschule teacher denotes how teacher expectations might be conditioned by school structure; the teachers in Hauptschule school type are often less motivated to teach compared to their counterparts in the upper school tracks (Bönisch 2009).

The institutional approach has become popular with the so called “PISA shock” in Germany. An increasing attention has been paid to the role of school structure and logic in educational performance of lower status German and ethnic minority students. Next to educational performance, it is argued that the role of 'school opportunity structure' is strongly linked to peer group formation (Stanton-Salazar 2001), stigmatization of students (Solga 2002b) and reproduction of power relations in society (Solga 2008b; Wernstedt and John-Ohnesorg 2008b). Hence, the institutional explanations are important because they unearth the inequalities for lower class and ethnic minority students existing in the organization of the educational system.

These institutional explanations come with critical failings as well. They are not sufficient to fully explain school leaving as a phenomenon. First, the institutional explanations do not take into account differences that exist within same family or even within minority groups. Some Turkish students do well whereas some do not in the same tracked institutional structure of the German educational system. Second, they are not able to explain differing educational performances of different lower class background ethnic groups. As Flores-Gonzales suggests, not all lower class and ethnic minority students are doing bad in education despite the fact that they are pushed by the institutions to perform poorly (Flores-González 2002:8). Lastly, the institutional explanations are mostly macro in nature and overlook the interactions of individual characteristics with each different school setting over time, failing to explain the entire process by which a student disengages from school.

### 3.3 Human and Social Capital Explanations

Human capital explanations focus on familial conditions, as deficit explanations do, yet draw specifically on parental education as human capital and earnings as financial capital. They basically maintain that as migrant childrens' parents and communities hold lower human and financial capital, compared to that of native children, they are as a result disadvantaged in school (Diefenbach 2003/2004; Alba, Handl and Müller 1994). More siblings equals less capital because this means division of the parental human and financial capital such as time, help and money with more children (Diefenbach 2003/2004:242). However, the human capital explanations again place the immigrant family at the center of analysis and overlook, to a large extent, structural conditions and institutional factors. With such a focus, they implicitly assume education as neutral to students of all backgrounds (Bourdieu 1986).

Social capital explanations instead offer better tools for critically analyzing the role of school in the emergence of social inequalities in society<sup>20</sup>. The main figure of social capital explanations is Pierre Bourdieu. According to his theory of social reproduction, the change and social mobility in society among classes happens less than is generally assumed. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) claim that in France, although education is presented as a legitimate tool to be upwardly mobile, in reality it merely leads to the reproduction of status relations in society as it values only the culture of the upper classes, which the children from upper classes acquire naturally in their socialization processes (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Social capital is embedded in the relationships of parents and students with significant actors in institutions and through these relationships they can reach into institutional resources (Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995). However, schools reward and legitimize only the cultural capital<sup>21</sup> of upper classes and devalues that of lower class and minority students, and thus reproduces the inequalities in society (Murphy 1979:23). Bowles & Gintis (2002) argue further that there is a parallelism, or *correspondence principle*, between school and workplace; that is, schools structure social interactions and individual rewards in order to prepare students for adult work; they teach respect for authority and institutional hierarchy and, in doing so, reproduce social relationships of stratified workplaces (Bowles and Gintis 2002). Thus, school leavers are seen as part of a group that is pushed-out because they are

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<sup>20</sup>See (Bourdieu 1986). He constructs his concept of “social capital” by criticizing inadequacies in the concept of human capital, which he finds too economic and misleading in relation to understanding the transmission of capital.

<sup>21</sup> Social capital refers basically to the 'connections' or 'networks' which includes various resources, or it means “to membership in a group” (Bourdieu 1986) whereas cultural capital means mainly educational qualifications, see (Bourdieu 1986).

denied access to the human and social capital of the dominant groups, and thus they “are a product of the reproduction of capitalist order” (Kelly 1993:7). In this denial, some research points out that the “curriculum” plays a particular role and it reproduces the existing class structure and blocks engagement in school amongst lower class and minority students (Fine and Rosenberg 1983; Chávez et al. 1991:10–11).

Human capital explanations, as noted before, suffer from what deficit explanations suffer in general. They focus on parental and family characteristics and overlook institutional dimensions. Although social capital theories improve on this problem, as is partly the case for the institutional explanations, social capital fails in accounting for differences within schools and within minority groups. For example, there are high achievers and leavers amongst Turkish students in the same German educational system. Although some children are of the same negative parental, family and neighborhood background, they perform differently in the same educational system, therefore, the human capital and social capital explanations do not fully explain differing individual cases. Second, as Giroux (1983) and Flores-Gonzales (2002) point out, they underestimate potential resistance of lower classes to school practices (Giroux 1983; Flores-González 2002:8). To Giroux, particularly the accounts of Bowles and Gintis but also that of Bourdieu, miss the potential resistance at school (Giroux 1983:259). Last but not least, like other explanations, human and social capital explanations are not able to disclose the complex process by which a student disengages from school.

### 3.4 Resistance Explanations

The resistance explanations developed out of studies that focus on the struggle, confrontation and opposition between students and school. With ethnographic and qualitative methods, they highlight “student perspectives and the immediate context in which these were shaped” (Kelly 1993:7). The student perspectives are important according to Ogbu (1974) who remarks that “behavior of any group of people in schools, churches, or political rallies is not governed by “objective reality” out there but by the “reality” they experience and interpret” (Ogbu 1974:16). Thus, contrary to many studies, the meaning of schooling for everybody living in the same society should not be taken for granted. For Ogbu, the educational system is a *‘cultural institution’*, and the way its role is perceived by lower class and minority students is vital in order to understand their reactions to it (Ogbu 1974:17–18). Once students perceive that school success does not lead to labor market opportunity due to

many structural inequalities in society, they develop resistance and devalue schooling (Flores-González 2002:9).

It is also argued that students relate some behaviors and role patterns to ethnic and class identities. For example, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) maintain that black students accuse their pro-school peers of “acting white” and sanction them as they perceive working hard at school as a “white” practice (Fordham and Ogbu 1986). Likewise, Solomon argues in his case study, that the black students might develop other ways to reject school culture like engaging intensively in sport activities (Solomon 1992:chapter 5). In his famous book “Learning to Labor”, Willis (1981) shows how a group of students, adopt their working class identities and develop a sort of masculine oppositional culture against schooling (Willis 1981).

The resistance explanations give preferences to the students own perspectives. However, they assume incommensurable boundaries between worlds of minority students and school (Flores-González 2002:8–9). Many recent studies, particularly those having given birth to the theory of “segmented assimilation”, demonstrate that there is no inevitable opposition between community life and school success (Rumbaut and Portes 2001); rather, in some cases, sticking to the family and community values, and thus to their own types of capitals, increases the academic success of the children (Zhou 1996:218). By the same token, research shows that not all Turkish students are pressed between community and school life, but manage to develop acting strategies in order to combine them (Pott 2009). For example, Crul shows similar protective features of family and community bonds in the case of Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands (Crul 2000) and Gibson obtains similar results in the case of Punjabis in California (Gibson 2000). Therefore, these studies also do not confirm the assumption that the minorities see school success as something of the dominant majority (e.g. “white” or “middle class”). For example, Lindo (2000) in his research on Turkish and Iberian children in the Netherlands could not find any proof for equalization of school success with 'whiteness' (Lindo 2000).

### 3.5 Process Explanations

There are some theories that seek to frame school performance of students in terms of a process perspective. To the best of the author's knowledge, there are two studies carrying importance in this approach. One of them includes Tinto's (1993) efforts at creating a longitudinal model of college departure. In his model, he seeks to combine individual and institutional dimensions of student departure from higher education through theories of “the



rites of passage” by Van Gennep (2001) and “theory of suicide” Durkheim (1952). By making analogy to the reasons of suicide, school leaving behavior is seen as an outcome of lack of integration of students into school (something like anomie). In doing so, Tinto concludes with a Student Integration Model, which maps out the possible pathways of leaving college (Tinto 1993:115).

Another example of process oriented perspective is that of Lösel (1975). He uses the stigmatization approach to comprehend the ways in which a student is stigmatized in school. He analyzes the norms and values in most schools and highlights that they do not match with the values and norms of children from lower classes. Thus, school, with its middle class ideology typifies these students as deficits, mostly via teachers, and through social interactions the students come to sense this. This has negative effects on the students' self-perception and influences the way he or she behaves over time. By bringing a wide range of examples from many empirical studies, some of which are used also in the following pages of the present study, Lösel concludes with a model, which shows the process of student typification in school.

These two theoretical efforts are of importance in terms of their motivational similarity to the present study. Tinto's model tries to conceptualize student departure from higher educational institutions in a longitudinal way and tries to combine individual and institutional dynamics in that. On the other hand, Lösel's process model has a great potential to analyze the interactions in school and, in particular, the roles of both student and teacher in these interactions. However, these process oriented theoretical explanations are not without weaknesses. First of all, Lösel's model is limited to interactions within school. The model does not cover an aspect regarding what happens outside of school, which might be highly influential in leaving school. Leaving school should be considered in relation to many factors and the interactions in school are only one of them. Lösel never mentions, for example, potential peer effects, which have been continuously showed to be highly influential (Gibson, Gandara and Koyama 2004).

Although Tinto's model successfully captures these aspects, it suffers from some other defects. For example, Metz maintains that Tinto's model fails to understand the minority students integration into higher education because of the adaptation of the theory of “rites of passage” into his model (Metz 2004-2005). According to the theory of “rites of passage”, when a person passes from one place to another, or from one state to another, the person's social integration into the new setting is accepted with certain celebration or significant events. However, its application into the model would mean that the minority students

experience a rupture when passing into higher education (Metz 2004-2005). But minority students do not experience “disruptive cultural experience not because college is a rite of passage, but because the institution is culturally distinct” (Metz 2004-2005:10) quotes from (1992). In other words, the values and cultural frames of minority students might differ from the values of school, and this model assumes for the minority children a rupture from background values for the sake of “integration” into the institution, which might have “white” or “western” values (Guiffrida 2006).

Similarly, as the model takes its historical roots from Durkheim's suicide theory, it is subjected to the similar critiques (Liu 2002). Liu argues that the notion of normative congruence in Durkheim does not leave any room for individual choices, however today, we are faced with different reactions to education in multicultural societies (Liu 2002). Thus, the model is rooted in western assimilation and acculturation paradigms and fails to recognize cultural and familial connections and bi-cultural integration (Guiffrida 2006). Again concerning the Durkheimian background of the theory, although the model emphasizes the integration of the student into social and academic environments of school, it is not clear enough whether the integration is a process or an outcome (Liu 2002).

It is probably the functionalist root of the model, which gives preference to the integration into the environments, instead of seeing the relations of student with school in terms of negotiations and conflicts. Last but not least, Tinto's model is designed for explaining departure from voluntary college education, however, the focus of the present study is on leaving from compulsory education. Logically, in terms of motivations, aspirations and age, the model is not suitable to understand the leaving from secondary school type.

## **Conclusion**

I have sought to deal with the explanations of school performance in this chapter. It is today widely accepted that school leaving is a complex process through which individual and institutional factors play roles. Therefore, as I explained above, while being useful in many ways, these aforementioned explanations have some weakness in fully explaining the phenomenon. Among other things, the main weakness of all the explanations in terms of the present study is that they are not able to reveal the *process* by which a student disengages from school. A process shaped by a variety of factors whose meanings and roles change throughout space and time.

Another weakness of these theories, except for the resistance explanation, is that they do not pay enough attention to how school leavers themselves value schooling. In the present study, the school is considered as a site where conflicting symbols, meanings, ideas and ideologies confront with each other. Therefore, the resistance explanations shall be informative in analyzing the meaning of schooling for school leavers themselves, as resistance can account for particular student values. In the following chapter, I will introduce a particular hybrid theoretical framework that can account for processes of school leaving and the role of changing values.

## Chapter 4 Theoretical Framework of the Study: The Process of School Disengagement and Meaning of Schooling: A Symbolic Interactionist Approach

*In a highly and rigidly structured society, a career consists, objectively, of a series of status and clearly defined offices. In a freer one, the individual has more latitude for creating his own position or choosing from a number of existing ones...but unless complete disorder reigns, there will be typical sequences of position, achievement, responsibility, and even of adventure... (Marshall and Mueller 2003:14)*

In order to capture the unfolding character of school disengagement and changing meaning of schooling, I shall employ the *sequential model of deviance* by Becker (1991) and a symbolic interactionist perspective. In the following, these two theoretical models are introduced.

### 4.1 Becker's Sequential Model of Deviant Career

Leaving school is not an instant event or a spontaneous decision, it is instead a “gradually accumulating social withdrawal from school” (DeLuca 2002:4). It is a process. Therefore, it is assumed that there are both actions that move toward leaving and context factors that push toward leaving at different stages in a student's life. Becker offers a “sequential model” that is useful for understanding these stages which lead to leaving school.

Becker, in his book, *Outsiders* (1991)<sup>22</sup>, after giving the different definitions of deviance used in various domains such as statistics and social sciences, concludes that the shortcoming of these definitions is that they consider deviance as abnormal or contrary to homogeneity and they, therefore, focus their attention on the deviant case. Contrarily, he says that deviance is a social phenomenon, created by society. Social groups cause deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes the deviance. They make rules and apply them to people; that is, “deviancy is not a quality of one's action but rather application of rules and sanctions by others” (Becker 1991:9). It does not exist in behavior itself, instead it is a product of a process which involves the responses of other people to the behavior. Then, instead of focusing on personal characteristics of deviants, we should look at what they have in common. The answer, he gives in turn, is the label they are given such as 'rule-breaker' or 'outsider', and *the*

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<sup>22</sup>First published in 1963.

*process they experience* in the way of becoming so labeled (Becker 1991).

He develops his sequential model on the basis of this *process of common experiences* and applies it to marijuana users and musicians in order to understand how deviant behavior originates. According to the model, we must center our attention onto how patterns of behavior *develop* in sequence. We should describe each step and explain the dynamics that lead the individual from one sequence to another sequence, which are altogether going toward a final sequence; for example becoming a marijuana user.

In accounting for an individual use of marijuana, as we shall see later we must deal with a sequence of steps, of changes in the individuals' behaviors and perspectives, in order to understand the phenomenon. Each step requires explanation, and what may operate as a cause at one step may be of negligible importance at another step. We need for example one kind of explanation how a person comes to be in a situation where marijuana is easily available to him, and another kind of explanation of why, given the fact of its availability, he is willing to experiment with it in the first place. And we need still another explanation of why, having experimented with it, he continues to use it. In a sense, each explanation constitutes necessary cause of the behavior. That is no one could become a confirmed marijuana user without going through each step. He must have the drug available, experiment with it, and continue to use it. The explanation of each step is thus part of the explanation of the resulting behavior. (Becker 1991:23)

This model is highly useful because it both explains the variables of a sequence and the position one must reach within this sequence in order to pass into the later stages of the sequence. In Becker's research, a person who starts using drugs as result of his personal alienation from conventional norms will not necessarily become a drug user; "the variable of personal alienation, however will only produce drug use in people who are in a position to experiment because they participate in groups in which drugs are available; alienated people who do not have drugs available to them cannot begin experimentation and thus cannot become users, no matter how alienated they are. Thus, alienation might be a necessary cause of drug use, but a distinction between users and nonusers only at a particular stage in process" (Becker 1991:24). Becker uses the notion of "career" borrowing it from occupational life, where it means to move from one position to another, and applies it to his sequential model in order to acquire the moves of a "deviant career" (Becker 1991). Rather than referring to committing a deviant behavior at once, "deviant career" refers to developing motives, which are socially learned, for a sustained pattern of deviant activity (Becker 1991:30). As well as to developing motives, the process of common experiences might also unveil 'transition structure', (Sackmann and Wingens 2003), that is patterns of societal connections between the

steps in a career. The fundamental steps in development of such a “deviant career” are, in turn, as follows; a-) to be caught and labeled, b-) turning of the label into a master status, c-) and, the identification with a deviant group (Becker 1991:30–35).

This sequence model is highly suitable not only for criminally deviant outcomes, but also to account for disengagement processes and the meaning of schooling. It maintains that changes occur in the perspectives and perceptions of the people as they proceed along various stages. The explanation of how a deviant career evolves is formal and, for that reason, non deterministic. Therefore, this dissertation asks what would be the possible sequences in applying this model to the school leaving process? In other words, which sequences, and in what turn, might a student go through in becoming a school leaver?

## 4.2 Application of the Sequential Model into School Leaving Process and Meaning of Schooling: Symbolic Interactionist Approach

### 4.2.1 To be caught and labeled

Turning back to Becker's claim that there is not a natural deviance but “deviant behavior is behavior that people so label” (Becker 1991:9), for example after a person is caught performing a crime and labeled, the following could be the changing of his or her public identity. This person can develop a self-image which is adaptive with the label that can lead to a “master status” in his or her connections with the world, thus “some status...override all other status and have a certain priority” (Becker 1991:33). This person, for example, might be remembered first as a thief then second for being a women or man, or employed in a certain job. For the person, master status of 'thief' produces a self-fulfilling prophecy, which “...sets in motion several mechanisms which conspire to shape the image people have of him” (Becker 1991:34). The final consequence for the person is to get closer to, and identification with, a deviant 'thief' group which gives the person a sense of common fate (Becker 1991:38). These steps do not mean that a deviant career is inevitable for everyone committing a deviant behavior. The question whether one will develop a deviant career depends on his or her position in the process and on many dynamics at the personal and community levels; “if he makes the right choice, he will be welcomed back into conventional community; but if he makes the wrong move, he will be rejected and start a cycle of increasing deviance” (Becker 1991:37).

This same labeling logic can be applied to the process of school leaving. Unlike Becker's case study on marijuana users, this question leads to framing school as an institution and

considering its defining categories. Following Gomolla & Radtke's (2009:59–83) reference to Berger & Luckmann (1966), the institutions use definitions that take their legitimacy from “the historicity of reciprocated typifications of habitualized actions and relevant interpretations built in society” (Berger and Luckmann 1966:54). School, like many other institutions, by nature creates categories and uses them to classify students (Gomolla and Radtke 2009:chapter 2). Using this symbolic interactionist approach they also argue that the categories come along with particular *expectations*, and they are reinforced with *institutionally approved semantics* (Gomolla and Radtke 2009:80). The expectations have power to delineate possible *action schemes*, and these action schemes are inculcated with a complex semantic taken from, and continuously supported by, sciences<sup>23</sup> (Gomolla and Radtke 2009:Chapter 2).

Against this background, school, as an institution, is responsible for labels that produce “normal biographies” that can integrate individuals into society smoothly, or labels that turn some students toward deviant outcomes (Gomolla and Radtke 2009:chapter 2; Solga 2005:156). School appreciates particular teacher and student roles over personalities; some roles are positively valued over others, such as hardworking, adaptive, and used as ideal types in measuring up student performance (Böhnisch 1999:168–170). Shortly, schools sort out and classify students using labels.

But how are the students interacting with these labels? Solga (2005) presents an account of this symbolic interactionist perspective in relation to school disengagement. She maintains that central to this classification is the measurement process which includes test scores, certificates and teacher evaluations: “The students are evaluated with the standardized methods from very bad to very good or from educationally weak to educationally strong as result of their learning and behavioral activities in the classroom” (Solga 2005:157). This measurement/assessment is made by a teacher as s/he is the 'arbiter' of school norms and values against which students' school behaviors are judged<sup>24</sup> (Lösel 1975:2). With this assessment process, the “normal” and “deviant” are socially constructed (Solga 2005:157). Becker`s supports the symbolic interactionist perspective claiming that deviancy is socially

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<sup>23</sup> The Psychological and Medical discourses play a role in the justification of considering bad educational performance as “deviancy”; like, learning disabilities and so on. By keeping in mind that meritocratic ideology shapes the educational values today, it is noteworthy to observe the ways in which scientific languages function here.

<sup>24</sup>Lösel (1975) emphasizes that what is meant is not “the teacher” but 'teacher' as part of school mechanisms and conditions. Therefore, it should be added that the categories at school are not only limited to students but include teachers. Lösel shows that in contrast to popular theoretical educational goals like emancipation and creativity, most teachers prefer students who are conformist, orderly, rigid and docile over those who are flexible, active, non-conformist, unclean, messy, and the worse, independent and self-conscious. Thus the ideal student type means more adaption than confrontation (Lösel 1975:3).

constructed - not fact - through processes in school; “(...) rules about who is a member of the category are defined by society... not by nature” (Crocker, Major and Steele 1998:505).

If a student does not meet the requirements of imposed 'normal' categories, then the 'deviancy' construction starts for him or her in school. However, the relation between *personal theories* and *social theories* should be noted here (Lösel 1975:6–7; Böhnisch 1999:165; Brusten and Hurrelmann 1976:16). When a negative or positive characteristic of a potentially deviant student is considered, it is automatically attached to other negative or positive personality characteristics; for example a one time disorderly conduct might be considered together with laziness, dishonesty and unpunctuality (Lösel 1975:6). What comes out of these arbitrary associations are the simplified typifications and stereotypes of complex pictures, in this case simplified to an overall negative label.

The basic problem of practical ideologies consists in the fact that they have to make simplifications and produce obvious /clear-cut conclusions where in reality [...] the conditions are necessarily ambiguous and complex. Ideologies have the character of self-evident statements and thus it is often forgotten that there are other possible interpretations of social problems (Böhnisch 1999:166).

The significance of these negative labels, or stereotypes lies in their effects in micro processes. Powell (2003) argues official school categories produce unofficial categories in daily life of people; in that, classification should be understood as a *dual process*;

Socially constructed categories and their limitations are unavoidable, since they are necessary for organizing our perceptions, as well as for our adaptations to the dynamic and complex environments in which we necessarily live. In the context of schools, classification evokes expectations and assumptions, which lead to certain interpretations of the behavior and the reactions of a child – which, in turn, alter the conditions of learning process. This may have positive as well as negative effects for the child (Powell 2003:114).

Such categories, and their associated relevant perceptions and expectations, trigger labels and some sets of negative stereotypes that influence a person's self perception (Lösel 1975; Brusten and Hurrelmann 1976; Solga 2005; Powell 2003). The categorically constructed forms of deviance are personalized through scientific semantics (Solga 2005; Gomolla and Radtke 2009:chapter 2) “such as lack of ability, intelligence deficiency, learning or behavioral problems (learning disabilities)” (Solga 2005:157) and, in this operation, the meritocratic rhetoric of education, against which the school success or failure is a result of individual



talent or merit, is used for justification (Solga 2005) - ...“underlying such system justifying ideologies is the tendency to hold individuals responsible for their situation, and to attribute their situation to controllable factors” (Crocker, Major and Steele 1998:509). The students who are labeled in this way might experience psychological tensions and gradually withdraw from school due to their failure to conform to the ideal rhetorical type of student.

#### 4.2.2 Turning of the label into a master status

Psychological withdrawal happens parallel to identity formations. For children, school is an environment where one of the most significant passages from the *play* into the *game* takes place (Mead 2000:159). Students' behaviors are evaluated by teachers and others; students learn to take others' attitudes and behaviors into consideration and also become aware of the general typifications and expectations, which is the *generalized other* (Solga 2005:160). They see themselves from the others' eyes and develop a *self* out of this process; “self-images are constructed through a social interpersonal process; people tend to see themselves as they believe others see them (Park, Crocker and Kiefer 2007:1504). Solga (2005) argues that in this observation of, and comparison with, other *selves*, the test results, grades and diplomas play a central role because they are, *significant symbols*, giving *commonly shared information* about the self and others (Solga 2005:160).

...they, as socially approved and institutionally legitimated, become an inter-subjective interpretation filter which informs about not only one's behaviors and performance at school but also shapes one's self-perception of his own performance in comparison to that of others (Solga 2005:160).

The effect of self-perception is very pronounced; many deviantly labeled students rate themselves as weaker or inferior to their classmates (Lösel 1975:11). For them, school is a place where they feel insecure and alienated (Solga 2005). “A person differs from the norm - either actuarial or prescriptive - in a given context, so the individual is discouraged or excluded because of a feeling - vague or explicit - that he or she does not fit in with the heretofore homogeneous group” (Fiske 1998:384). In such cases, it is quite probable that a label such as 'low educational performance' becomes a *master status* in one's interactions with others, which cause a *social stigma*<sup>25</sup> (Becker 1991:34; Solga 2005:167). “For such students an average school day means inter-playing between feedback-loops of failure, being rejected and

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<sup>25</sup> Master Status overrides all other subsequent statuses of a person in his or her interactions, such as race comes before class; e.g. being black comes before being doctor or middle class. A deviant feature turned into a “master status” can shape a person's life and identity deeply (Becker 1991:33).

a *cooling out*-effect which might bring forth school phobia, anomie (the feeling of powerlessness and alienation) which distances a student from the learning process” (Solga 2005:159). It is a process that results in, among other things, stigmatization, lowered self-esteem and lowered perceived self-efficacy<sup>26</sup>. This, in turn, leads to weak performance in education; “when faced with obstacles and failures, people who distrust their capabilities slacken their efforts or give up quickly” (Bandura 1999:8). Of course, one does not always have to confirm the expectations. However, as Solga (2005) points out, it gets more and more difficult for the person to change his or her self-image because of the institutionalized stereotype his or her peers and teachers maintain (Solga 2005:163–164).

#### 4.2.3 The identification with a deviant group

In the paradigm of school as a place where children learn how to play the *game*, students form their personality by taking others' roles into consideration and learning about group identification. They look for a group to identify themselves with; “it is a period in which he likes “to belong”[...]” (Mead 2000:160). For a student labeled as “low achiever”, it is most likely that he will get closer to other students who are like him; “...students of low social and intellectual efficacy are likely to gravitate to peers who do not subscribe to academic values and life-styles” (Bandura 1999:19). This is an important shift in the development of *deviant career* because a group gives a person a social identity, “It gives them a sense of common fate, of being in the same boat” (Becker 1991:38). The group is “the aggregate of persons who are likely to have to suffer the same deprivations as he suffers because of having the same stigma” (Goffman 1986:113). Through group identification, the person adapts present action strategies and justifications, and develops belonging and social identity. In other words, a group provides a person with a self-justifying rationale to behave a certain way (Becker 1991:39).

By drawing attention to the effect of group identification on personal identity, Solga (2005) maintains that a student identified with group of low achievers might withdraw from school as a part of 'tension management' (Solga 2005:164–165). She refers to Geulen (2000) and emphasizes that, as a kind of coping strategy, the withdrawal is not a *passive adaptation* but rather a *preservation* of personal identity which requires a careful *self-selection* of the situations which they seek or wish to avoid (Solga 2005:165). Although careful selection of situations to enter is a very active form of self-protection, in doing this students may alienate

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<sup>26</sup>Perceived self-efficacy refers to the beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. Efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves and act (Bandura 1999:2).

themselves from society and become “outsiders”<sup>27</sup> - (2005:166) quotes from (Becker 1991). They select the situations to enter because there is a direct connection between success and failure in a particular domain and basing self-esteem on that domain (Crocker, Major and Steele 1998:528; Crocker and Major 2003:233; Osborne, Major and Crocker 1992; Bandura 1999:3Park 2007 #34 :1504). If a student gets constant disappointment from school for example, then a disengagement might prevent that student from receiving negative feedback such as bad grades and negative evaluations of teachers that might undermine self-esteem (Crocker, Major and Steele 1998).

For a student disengaging from school, or who feels disappointed in school, the damage to social identity and lowering of perceived self-efficacy can have a marking effect on his or her life course; “a low sense of cognitive efficacy is associated with psychical and verbal aggression and ready disengagement of moral self-sanctions from harmful conduct. The impact of children` disbelief in their academic efficacy on socially discordant behavior becomes stronger as they become older” (Zimmerman 1999:206). The increasing self-doubts about academic achievement come mostly together with problematic behaviors; “over time, growing self-doubts in cognitive competencies foreclose many occupational life courses, if not pro-social life paths themselves. Disengagement from academic pursuits often leads to a heavy engagement in the constellation of problem behaviors” (Bandura 1999:19).

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have tried to sketch Becker's (1991) sequential model as ideal for understanding the school disengagement process and meaning of schooling. I also highlighted the symbolic interactionist underpinnings of Becker's work and the way that social construction and identity function in school disengagement. It should be noted that the purpose of this study is not to test Becker's model but to use it as an informing frame, because it enables a division of the whole school disengagement process from singular events which are mere stages in the procedural nexus. Also, understanding the process with this model requires looking closely at the personal perspectives and views of students during the process, which is vitally important for grasping the meaning of schooling.

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<sup>27</sup>The emphasis is original

## Chapter 5 Research Design

This chapter discusses how I investigate both the school disengagement process as it unfolds and how school leavers themselves value schooling. The fundamental claim here is that focusing on the process and meaning of schooling is of great importance to understanding the dynamics that lead students to disengage from school. The present study looks at Turkish school leavers in Bremen, Germany. It draws fundamentally upon twenty semi-structured in-depth interviews and four months of participant observation in one of the vocational schools, and includes students who depart from the School of General Education.

### 5.1 Case Selection and Sampling

The field research for the study took place in Bremen. As the second largest port city of Germany, Bremen has been an industrial and trade center and its population presently is around 650.000 (Statistisches Landesamt Bremen 2010). However, the city has been undergoing a deep de-industrialization process, which hits mostly the low qualified immigrant workers. The impacts of the re-structuring of the industry has impoverished usually the regions of the city such as Kobbel and Kolding<sup>28</sup>. These parts are largely populated by Turkish immigrants and most of the interviewees in this study are from one of the two. Particularly, the closing of the shipyard firm AG ARGA had a great negative impact on the migrant population in this region as it was the major migrant employer. In 1984 the firm was closed down and two thousand people were fired. The second wave came with the closing down of another shipyard firm VULBRAN in 1997, and again a couple of thousand workers became unemployed.

In these two shipyards, mostly immigrants were working. The German workers who were fired had better chances to find new jobs in different sectors with professional retraining (Umschulung), whereas the immigrants mostly could not take professional training due mainly to their language problems and thus they could not find a new job in different sectors. In the 1990s the temporary employment companies mushroomed and the same unemployed immigrants started doing low paid temporary work and they became unemployed regularly. Those who did not work were directed to temporary compulsory works by Unemployment Office or they were retired early.

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<sup>28</sup> All student, teacher, school, Bremen's regions, and firm names in the study are anonymous

This has a very negative impact for immigrant families living in these parts of the city. They became dependent on welfare and they presumably pessimistic about their futures. The dense and rapid unemployment made the younger immigrants less hopeful for their future. They grew up in poor family conditions in which the fathers are unemployed and the mothers often look to unskilled, low-wage jobs such as house-cleaning. Today it is not so difficult to see the reflection of this impoverishing in the rundown buildings, schools, and rough streets of the two regions in which most of the interviewees live. The students interviewed attended the disadvantaged schools in these neighborhoods. They are disadvantaged in terms of both the students' profiles and the learning environments so that some parents want their children go to intermediary schools in better parts of the city than go to college track schools in these areas.

As noted earlier, leavers from the School of General Education are sent to vocational schools. Therefore, I planned to find my interviewees in one of these schools in Bremen. After my many visits to the Ministry of Education in Bremen (Senatör für Bildung), I gained access to a social worker working in Lindenhof School. He helped me get the necessary permissions from the school administration for working there and in establishing trust-based relations with my interviewees. The social workers are closer to the children and know more about their private lives than do school teachers. They are often seen as friends by the students. My relations with the social workers, therefore, eased my acceptance tremendously in interviewees' eyes as someone to talk with and take part in their daily school life.

Lindenhof school offers vocational training in some fields such as nutrition, clerical-work, woodwork, metalwork. It usually has more male students than female and when the study was conducted, it had 115 male, 85 female students. Lindenhof school is situated in a part of the city, which is heavily populated by immigrants. Among inhabitants living there, there is a commonly held belief that Lindenhof School is one of Bremen's most problematic vocational schools. Many people think that most of the children in this school are drug users or dealers, asocial, aggressive, problematic and/or hopeless. The students attending Lindenhof are aware of the negative image of the school:

*(...) OK this school is too shitty, I'd not like to come to this school, but I have to, because I could not in other schools (...) (Aykut, 1086<sup>29</sup>)*

Although it is possible to reach a Hauptschule certificate via this school, it actually

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<sup>29</sup> The number next to the name refers to the line of the expression in transcribed text of the interview

functions as a last resort for those who could not 'succeed' in the School of General Education<sup>30</sup>. So, although they attend Lindenhof school, the children are official leavers from the School of General Education.

The present study examines the disengagement processes and meanings of schooling by placing the school leavers themselves in the center of the research. It takes the Turkish school leavers at this school in Bremen and elicits in-depth accounts of their lives with room for them to select which aspects they wish to emphasize (Barbour 2008:115). It is criticized that the case studies provide little basis for scientific generalizations (Kohlbacher 2005). Indeed;

...case studies [...] are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study [...] does not represent a 'sample', and in doing a case study, your goal will be to generalize theories (analytical generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization) (Kohlbacher 2005) quotes from (Yin 2010).

Thus, the aim in this study is to contribute to theory of school disengagement processes via immersing depth into narrations of the interviews. In order to reach the interviewees I spent an intensive four months in Lindenhof School. The average school time lasted from eight o'clock in the morning to three o'clock in the afternoon. I was at the school almost every day until it closed. I joined occasionally into the classes, spent time with the children in and out of the schoolyard, and I was with them in events such as year-end parties, and celebrations and festivities that the school organized. This was very helpful for taking notes about challenges from students to teachers' authority, such as resisting leaving the classroom when they were told to do so, and, the ways they behave and are approached in the Trainingsraum<sup>31</sup>, and students' relations with each other in different situations. Participant observation was extremely helpful for establishing trust-based relations with teachers, school staff and interview partners.

In this context, the qualitative character of the study should be emphasized; this study does not aim at measuring the impact of a set of predictors on leaving leaving school or staying in school. This would require a different research design and sampling, such as including a control group. Instead, the study is designed to explore the dimensions and

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<sup>30</sup>See at (Kelly 1993) for a discussion of the role of such vocational schools in General school system in the context of Canada.

<sup>31</sup>Trainingsraum (Training-room) is a room in the school to which the students who, the teacher thinks are misbehaving, are sent. It works like a rehabilitation room. The students are usually given advice by the social workers of the same national and language background on why they should get a certificate from Lindenhof and how important this certificate is. Actually the social workers are expected to keep the students under control and handle the situation with the least harm to the school. They mobilize their language and 'cultural tool box' to get closer to students as an "in group" person.

processes of leaving school based on the in-depth narratives of school leavers.

In sampling the interviewees, a snowball technique was used. The interviewees were asked whether they have friends interested in giving an interview. After gaining more knowledge of the environment and people via participant observation, I myself contacted the interviewees directly by purposefully *not* choosing them from the same friendship circles and the same ethnic<sup>32</sup> backgrounds.

Concerning sampling, despite wishing to have female leavers included in the sample, there was no female social worker working there, who could help the male researcher to establish trust-based relations with potential female interviewees. Therefore, it was impossible within the short time frame of the doctoral study to include them. The possible findings of the study are related to male leavers, not females. The criteria for choosing interviewees were as follows; male, Turkish school leavers from the School of General Education who had been in German educational system for at least five years.

## 5.2 The Method of Semi-structured Interview

Exploring the process of leaving and the meaning of schooling in detail requires understanding in depth the interviewees' lived experiences and perceptions about sensitive events like frustrating school careers, which are delicate issues and, thus, difficult to explore or probe. It necessitates being equally specific and flexible in asking interview questions. Therefore, among different qualitative interview types, the semi-structured interview was thought to be the most suitable. It, for example, leaves room for wording some questions and arranging the level of language differently depending on interviewees. This was particularly important for the students interviewed as they usually use a mix of German and Turkish languages. Additionally, it helps the researcher not to miss relevant points that might come out spontaneously during the interview and allows for dealing with sensitive topics actively to protect the interviewees' different levels of comfort in speaking about them (Berg 2004:79).

Moreover, the semi-structured interview design was also preferred because of the position this study has regarding theory and empirical data relationships. As noted earlier, the study does not test the theoretical framework introduced in the chapter 4, which would require the researcher to use a fully structured interview design, which is composed of theoretically driven questions. However, the study does not use the grounded theory either, if it means the

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<sup>32</sup>Although the interviewees are from Turkey, they are of different ethnic backgrounds such as Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic and so on.

researcher collects his data without any single piece of theoretical assumption in mind, which would lead the researcher to employ an unstructured interview design. Different from these two cases, the study uses the theoretical framework introduced in chapter 4 as *informing*. That is, the previous theories and hypothesis regarding school leaving and meaning of schooling are known to the researcher and they are partially taken into account during the research, and moreover, they can be falsified. The semi-structured interview is preferred because it allows both the theoretically driven and non-driven questions in the guideline. With its half structured guideline supported with scheduled probe questions, it helps to stay focused on, and revolve around, the interview topics on the one hand. With its unscheduled, narration-trigger and on-the-spot questions it makes possible exploration of aspects of the phenomenon in depth (Wengraf 2001).

This strength of the semi-structured interview design matches very well with the study because, whilst forming its research question based on the critique of the previous theories, debates and hypothesis in the literature, the study is designed to explore the aspects, which, the researcher thinks, have been left unexplored. As shall be explained later on, this view of the theory and empirical data relationship is also visible in the data analysis. The data analysis is made by constantly moving back and forth between the theories in the literature, particularly informing theoretical perspective of the study, and the interview materials.

### 5.3 The Structure of the Interview Guideline

In line with the semi-structured method of the study, the interview guideline consists of both scheduled main questions and side probe questions. The structure of the guideline was redesigned after some pilot interviews. While the general logic of the guideline remained the same, in the initial form of the guideline there were questions which were supposed to encourage the interviewee directly to narrate on the school time at the beginning of the interview, such as “yes, you were at school; so, please tell me how was it from starting to end?”. It was expected that in reaction to this question, the interviewee would start to narrate about what happened from his perspective leading up to the school leaving incident. To explore the process in depth, another narration-trigger question was placed in the guideline “tell me when did you start to think about leaving school?”. However after the three pilot interviews, it was seen that the flow of the interviews do not proceed as hoped. The reactions of the interviewees were quick and their answers were short. The questions did not perform the function as narration-trigger.



Having had feedback from the pilot interviews, the interview guideline was redesigned in a way that was supposed to 'warm up' the interviewees for the interview. The interview guideline starts, in its final format, with some warming up questions about the birth place and date and also sometimes migration history of the interviewee, such as “when did your parents come to Germany?”. It was sometimes the case that the interviewees were starting to narrate about some events before the interview started. In these situations, I was not interrupting the interviewee but integrating their narrations into the interview. After the warming up questions, the guideline shifts towards the history of family migration and school history of the interviewee with the questions on kindergarten attendance and first school times. The interview guideline was designed in order to explore two main things; school disengagement process and meaning of schooling, therefore the guideline was divided into these two sections, although the responses of the interviewees often offered information about both in each of the two sections of questions.

The first part of the interview is related to the process of schooling. It explored the dynamics which the interviewee considers important in his schooling process. In a way that includes the warming up questions, it begins with the Kindergarten times and covers, in turn, primary school, transition into secondary school, and leaving school. The main motivation here was to explore the interaction of a range of dynamics, which the interviewee mentions during the interview, in a biographical manner. That is to say, it aimed to understand what the significant events are during schooling, and how they are related to each other throughout the process of schooling.

In addition to these process-oriented questions, which are for exploring the time dimension of leaving school, the process section of the interview guideline also included questions which correspond to three potential blocs of the process. It included teacher/school specific, peer group specific and family specific questions. The motivation lying behind such a structuring of the process section of the guideline is to acquire a cross-sectional description of the schooling process. That is, understanding the time dimension with the preschool, primary school, secondary school and leaving school questions on the one hand, and acquiring a deeper understanding of each time dimension with the questions on school, family and peer that cross this time period in parallel ways.

Next to the scheduled main questions, each subsection of the process part of the interview guideline covers side probe questions as well. Thus, it is designed in a way that encourages the interviewee to narrate about schooling processes in terms of school family, and peer relations. In particular, when the interviewee mentions specific feelings or beliefs, the side

probe questions proved to be fruitful to ask about the crucial events that made them feel so.

The questions in primary school times, like other parts of the guideline, are made up for prompting narration about relevant topics such as - “How was it at the beginning?” “How did you like it?”. Similarly, the questions on transition into secondary school were aimed to explore the experiences and performances of the interviewees during and after the transition. By using the bloc questions on school, family and peers; the interviewees' integrations into social and academic environments of school were also researched. Similarly, but with a more specific focus, in the section of leaving school, the interviewees were encouraged, with a range of main and probe questions, to reflect about the detailed descriptions of the schooling process up to leaving it again. The questions such as “So tell me, how many schools have you changed so far?” or “Can you remember how it started, I mean, did you start to skip the school first?” proved to be good in prompting narrations, which then gave detailed descriptions of the schooling process with specific events such as disciplinary meetings in school, confrontations with teachers, relations with peer members or devastating family events.

Unlike the process part of the interview guideline, the second part of it is comprised of the questions intended for understanding the way the interviewees value schooling. These questions revolved around the expectations, hopes and aspirations of the interviewees. In particular, the future expectations and plans are given special emphasis. Through questions such as “Now you are here, can you tell me what your future plans are?” or “Can you tell me what your job plans are? What do you want to do now?”, the interviewees were encouraged to narrate about their expectations and hopes. These narrations are included in the analysis in order to understand where schooling stands in their lives. Plus, with on-the-spot questions about school certificates, it aimed to understand how they consider the value of certificates personally. As this part was designed to collect data on how the interviewees consider their situation in general it was quite useful for comparison with the narrations in the process part in order to acquire how, and as results of what, the values attached to schooling by the interviewees changed.

For the two parts of the interview guideline, the previously scheduled questions enabled consistent and systematic comparisons between the interviews. Open-ended and probe questions were placed into the guideline so that new themes and points might spontaneously emerge in the flow of the interview. Although the process and meaning of schooling parts are subsequently separated from each other in the guideline, the researcher did not always follow the order of the sequence of the questions; it was given preference to the sequence followed

by the interviewees. In doing so, the researcher tried to avoid the “bureaucratization” of the interview<sup>33</sup>(Hopf 1978:97) as it allowed for consideration of sequences of interviewees' explanations as something growing out of the array of social realities.

As noted earlier, the interviews open with a warming up section, which included the questions such as date of birth and place, and the short history of parental migration to German. Particularly, the last question of this section - “When did your parents come to Germany?” - flared up narratives in different lengths such as satisfaction/dissatisfaction with living in Germany or their longings for Turkey. These narrations were never interrupted by the researcher and were carefully being related to the analysis of the data. However, not all interviewees reacted to these first questions with detailed narratives about different topics. Yet, in particular, with the following question - “Did you go to Kindergarten?” and “Do you remember when you started to the school?” - the pace of the interviews were placed into a school career of the interviewees. The narrations of the interviewees were supported with relevant probing questions during the interview such as “can you tell me more?” or the tangible or specific events were asked in detail. Although the focus of the study is on the school biographies of the interviews, in the flow of the interview, the topics ranged from migration histories, to football, to girlfriend issues and so on. When the interviewees stopped narrating on a specific topic, the researcher did his best to choose a suitable question of the previously prepared semi-structured interview guideline, which included a range of topics from school, family and peer group perspectives.

#### 5.4 Description of the Interview Situation

For this study, twenty interviews were conducted. The first three interviews took place in a small cafeteria close to Lindenhof School. As the teachers and school staff working in the school got to know the project better and as trust-based relations came out, I was given a key with which I could enter many classrooms and Trainingsraum freely. When it was school time and every classroom and Trainingsraum were occupied, I was offered another empty room. I used these places for the interviews when they were empty. Compared to the previous interviews in the cafeteria, I observed that the interviewees were more relaxed, concentrated and eager to talk in these rooms. We were alone and there was nothing around that might cause a distraction. The interview atmosphere was open and friendly. I was neither a social

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<sup>33</sup> The restrictive form of separation between the roles of interviewer and interviewee causes a bureaucratization of the interview [die Leitfadenbürokratie], which blocks the full adaptation of everyday communication (Hopf 1978:97).

worker nor a friend for them, but somewhere in-between. Since I was sometimes joining into classes sitting there together with them, my role was far from that of teacher.

Given that ethnicity is associated with stereotypes and cliques that go hand in hand with the subjective in-group and out-group definitions and relations, Herwartz-Emden and Westphal maintain - by keeping in mind potential problems - that ethno-cultural similarity of the interviewer with interviewees causes the emergence of an intimate atmosphere which eases the communication particularly about power related topics such as racism, discrimination and so on; this relation is called “culture effect” [Kultureffekt] (Herwartz-Emden and Westphal 2000:67–68). Although the researcher's own biography diverges in many respects from those of his interviewees (i.e. highly educated), sharing a similar Turkish national, cultural and linguistic background played a certain role for the researcher's admission into 'the group', which made interviewees talk openly on the topics that, otherwise, might have been left unsaid. Each interviewee was given some information about the research project when asked if they were interested in giving an interview. They were also asked to sign an interview contract showing consent for voice recording and guaranteeing data protection. Some interviewees spoke only Turkish whereas others spoke a mix of Turkish and German language during the interviews. Sometimes it was easier for them to express themselves on some points in only one of those languages. Each interviewee was told that they are free to use both languages interchangeably whenever they want during interview as the researcher has a sufficient command of the German language.

## 5.5 Data Analysis

Transcription, in a word, is a form of translation (Gillham 2007:121). This point was especially the case for the interviews conducted for the present study because a mix of languages was occasionally used in almost all of them. Special attention was paid not to lose anything in the transcription; the interviews were word-by-word transcribed, and they were re-read multiple times after and some minor corrections such as putting emphasis, separating interviewer and interviewees' parts from each other with bolds were made in order to obtain standardization.

The transcribed data collected by the semi-structured interview guideline was analyzed in accordance with the principles of content analysis set by Mayring (2010, 2000). Among others, the qualitative content analysis was chosen because its rule-based character enables dealing with the data in a systematic and controlled manner (Kohlbacher 2005). Accordingly, in order to understand how the students disengage from school and how they consider

schooling, the transcriptions were analyzed step by step, by placing the categories into the center of the analysis. In doing so, both inductive and deductive category building techniques were used interchangeably.

The interviews generated 467 pages of raw interview material. They were read at least three times. Before the data analysis with the computer program, some sections of the interviews were manually highlighted. This period was very helpful for getting into the interview material in depth. Some side notes taken during the interviews about the interviewees and some short indications about specific parts of the texts were also added. This proved to be practical particularly for the “explication” of the material, that is, adding explanatory notes to the relevant parts of interviews which expands the understanding, and explains the passage in question (Mayring 2000). These notes were sometimes the means that related the relevant parts to the discussions in the literature about the topic and the informing theoretical framework of the present study. Within the framework of this relating, some rough categories emerged automatically. Parallel to this, the materials were read again in order to find 'attributes'/elements' of these categories in relevant parts of the texts. From such a processes, specific descriptions were reached.

Following this preliminary process, the data was uploaded into the Atlas.ti computer program for a refined processing and analysis. However, it should be said that the preliminary process was highly important to gain deep knowledge on the data. Upon uploading, the data was subjected to the procedures of “summary” “explication” and “structuring” (Mayring 2000; Mayring and Gläser-Zikuda 2005, Mayring and Gläser-Zikuda 2005; Kohlbacher 2005). In Atlas.ti, first the data was reduced into smaller parts by summary. That is, the parts irrelevant to the research aims were not coded. However, this was not a smooth process. In many cases the previously “irrelevant” parts turned out to be significantly meaningful for the analysis. With cross-readings between the informing theoretical framework of the study and the data, the categories and coding rules in both inductive and deductive ways were established. That is to say, inductive categories were contrasted with similar categories of the informing theoretical framework on the basis of their differences and similarities. This practice enables not only a capturing of the limits of a theoretically deductive category but also help to reformulate the definition of the categories in question. Mostly this redefinition led to more refined coding rules of the categories and in general coding of previously overlooked material. These moves were of great importance in terms of extracting a consistent structure from the data so as to systematically investigate the process of school disengagement and meaning of schooling.

When new blurry categories emerged in the texts, they were related to the *contrasts* and *similarities* of the previously established, more stable categories for reaching a proper definition. This 'relationism' proved to be very useful because it allowed the researcher to conclude “under what circumstances a text passage can be coded with a category” (Mayring 2000). For example, the following were coded in the texts as ingredients of the 'family background' category:

[Divorcement between parents] [Employed father LSES] [Employed mother LSES] [Kindergarten] [Language ability of father high] [Language ability of father low] [Language ability of mother high] [Language ability of mother low] [low social/economic resources in the family] [No Kindergarten] [The school situation of sibling, Sonderschule] [The school situation of sibling, school leaver] [The school situation of sibling, Gesamtschule] [The school situation of sibling, Gymnasium] [The school situation of sibling, Handelsschule] [The school situation of sibling, Hauptschule] [The school situation of sibling, Oberschule] [The school situation of sibling, Realschule] [Unemployed father] [Unemployed mother]

Following this procedure, a coding agenda including the categories their definitions and coding rules, was created. It was revised many times in the analysis process. The readers can find the the coding agenda that includes relevant categories which are used in the creation of types, in the Appendix<sup>34</sup>.

### **5.5.1 Sequences of the Disengagement Processes: Ideal Type Formation**

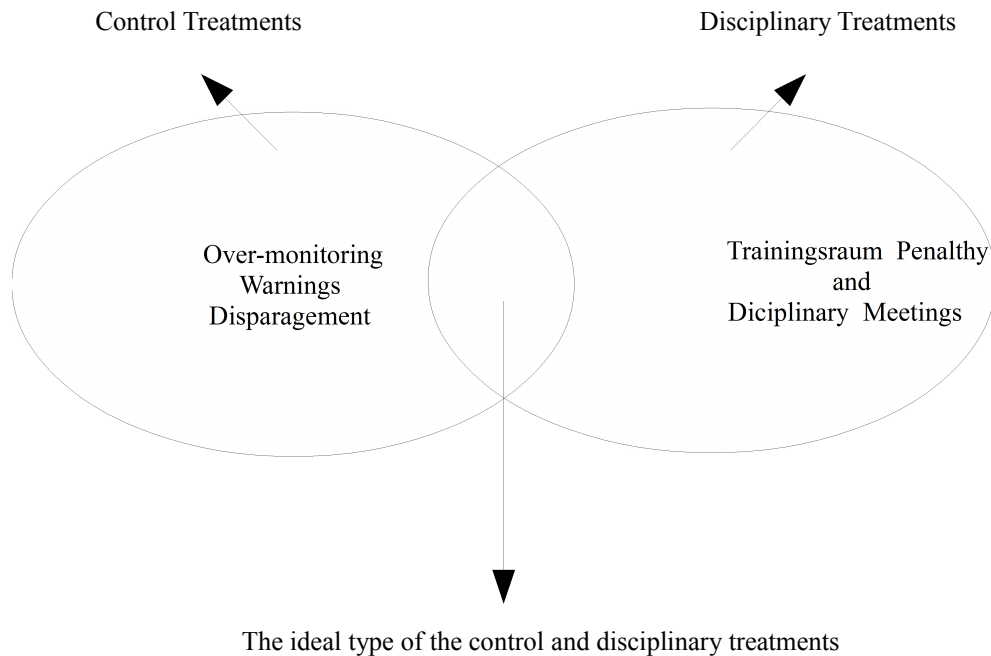
Through the content analysis, the categories were fixed. With the moves both inductively and deductively among the data, existing literature and the informing theoretical framework of the study, the emerging categories were reformulated in accordance with the coding rules. Then, these defined categories made up the particular types. That is, categories turned out to be elements of a type. In forming a type, the categories were as close as possible to each other (*internal homogeneity* on 'the level of the type'), whereas the differences between the types were as strong as possible (*external heterogeneity* on 'the level of the typology') (Kluge 1999). As “the constructed sub-groups with common attributes that can be described and featured by a particular constellation of these properties are defined with the term type”, type “can be defined as combination of its attributes”(Kluge 2000). For example, the categories 'Overmonitoring' and 'Trainingsraum penalty' were defined and, accordingly, coded in

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<sup>34</sup>In the coding agenda, most of the codes are given with examples in order to show the reader how codings were created from the interview materials. There are no examples for the basic/clear codings such as unemployed father/mother. It should also be said that in the analysis of the data both the examples given or not given in the coding agenda are most of the time coded for more than one category.

relevant parts of the texts.

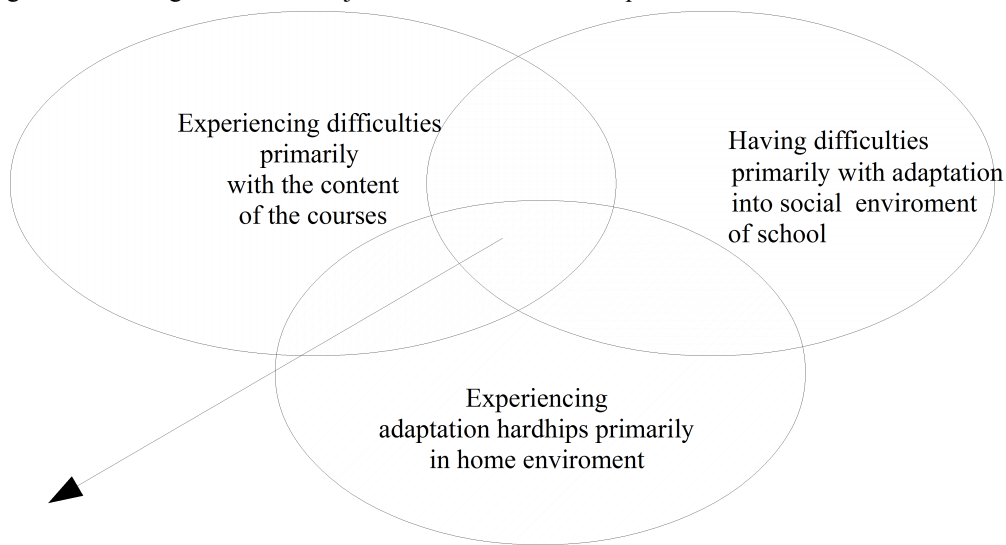
Figure 1: The formation of the type “the control and disciplinary treatments” through the attributed space of the categories over-monitoring and Trainingsraum penalty



Over-monitoring and Trainingsraum penalty have similar elements because both refer to treatments aimed at keeping the students under control. However, they differ in relation to their scope; over-monitoring is mostly limited to classroom conflicts whereas Trainingsraum penalty is more official and has labeling effects going beyond the classroom, for more information see chapter 6, section 6.4. The categories share the maximum similarity, thus, they fulfill the '*internal homogeneity*'. The 'intersecting space' in Figure 1 above results from the combination of the selected attributes and their dimensions. So, the type “the control and disciplinary treatments” is erected on the attribute space of the categories .

After the formation of types, they should be contrasted with the other types on the base of differences for fulfilling the condition of the '*external heterogeneity*' on the level of the typology. If we take again the type 'the control treatment ' as example, and contrast it with the previous type "incompatibilities in school and at home' we see the way in which the types are related to each other. However, before contrasting the types, we can have a look at how attributes of the type of incompatibilities in school and at home come out.

Figure 2: The formation of the type Incompatibilities in School and at Home through the attributed space of the categories achieving low and maladjustment connected to the problems at home and treatments in school



The ideal type of the 'incompatibilities in school and at home'

The definition of the category of 'low achieving' means experiencing difficulties predominantly with the contents of the courses in school, whereas the definition of the category of 'maladjustment' means experiencing predominantly adaptation hardships both in school and at home. Now the attributed space of the categories refers to the types 'low achieving' and 'maladjustment' in different intensity and constitutes the type 'incompatibilities in school and at home'.

Now 'the control practices' and 'incompatibilities in school and at home' can be contrasted in terms of 'external heterogeneity' on the level of the typology. Examined in terms of what they refer to - first to the control and disciplinary practices that results in labeling for the students, and second to the initial incidents lying behind the control practices - we see that the types in question refer to different attributed spaces, so the external heterogeneity condition is fulfilled. Plus, there emerges the existence of empirical regularities (*Kausaladaequanz*) and meaningful relationships (*Sinnadaequanz*) between the types. That is to say, upon having experienced incompatibilities in the forms of either low achieving or maladjustment - the interviewees experienced the forms of control and disciplinary treatment that led to labeling.

As a final outcome of the typifications, the process was divided into seven causal and meaningful sequences (types). Each time, the types consisted of categorical attributes contrasted with the new emerging type on the ground of similarities, differences, empirical correlations "Kausaladaequanz"(Kluge 2000) and meaningful relationships



“Sinnadaequenz” (Kluge 2000) in order to fulfill the external heterogeneity condition at the typology level. That is, the ideal types were formed in relation to each other. Following explaining the method and principles of constructing ideal types, it should also be added that the construction of ideal types makes possible clear understandability and lack of ambiguity (Weber 2007). As Weber points out, that while not being reality itself, an ideal type serves to understand the features of reality from a one-sided accentuated perspective (Weber 1997). In that, the ideal types that form the disengagement model in this study should be seen as empirically bounded detailed descriptions of the *ideal* types of reality.

## Chapter 6 Process of School Disengagement

The analysis of the interviews shows that most of the students went through specific cycles one way or another and sometimes back again in their disengagement from school. The disengagement process develops over time and ends with various forms of incidents that lead them out of school. I shall now seek to describe the common perceptions stemming from similar lived experiences of the students that shape the sequences and, in doing so, I will try to show the causal links among them and their inner sub-sequences. To begin with, the data suggests that while having differences in varying degrees, the interviewees share similar background characteristics.

### 6.1 Disadvantaged Background

As noted before, most research emphasizes the strong link between individual background characteristics and academic performance in international (Rumberger 1987) and national settings (Alba, Handl and Müller 1994; Valtin 2008; Kiper 2006; Baumert and Maaz 2010). The findings of the present study *partly* confirm them. Although many of the interviewees are disadvantaged in some respects, their profiles vary and it is difficult to confirm that they are leaving school specifically because of a disadvantaged background. In order to understand better how their background characteristics converge with and diverge from each other I look at the socioeconomic situation, parental education, and neighborhood in which these children have grown up. Furthermore, and more importantly, I look at how these backgrounds interact with each other and create a social climate for each student.

#### 6.1.1 Socioeconomic Difficulties

The profiles of the interviewees indicate that they partially fit the description of “at-risk youth” generated in the existing school leaver literature. Some are from lower status backgrounds and their parents are short or long term unemployed and living off of welfare provisions. Some male parents are doing temporary work at construction sites in addition to under-the-table laboring<sup>35</sup> at the same time. In doing so, they earn extra tax-free income as

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<sup>35</sup>By the under-the-table laboring it is meant that working without registration and being paid without paying taxes. People working so receive lower pay than the registered workers.

they continue to benefit from the welfare, although they risk legal consequences in doing so. On the other hand, some interviewees come from low- income backgrounds with parents working in legitimate jobs. Besides these, a few interviewees are of entrepreneurial family background, their parents run shops and groceries. More than half of the female parents are not working, the rest working in different jobs such as cleaning lady or general worker.

Those coming from poor and stressful family conditions expressed awareness of the disadvantaged situation of their parents and family members. For example Hakan, who was born and grew up in Bremen, states that *“There is no job, or there are jobs but they do not give them to our fathers, because they did not go to school, you know. They came from Turkey without any diploma, no language, you understand”* (Hakan, 625). Hakan is 18 years old, gregarious and a very talkative person, and despite a low social-economic profile of his family, he is by no means asocial or living in his own world as is generally described for characteristics of the school leaver personality<sup>36</sup>. Hakan's father works as an informal bricklayer in construction paid in cash, under-the-table. Hakan's mother is a house wife.

Similar to Hakan, Emre comes from a family which might be considered as underclass. Both of his parents are long term unemployed and they live on welfare:

*(...) my father was driving a small lorry in my cousins' place [small firm]. Two days in a week, he was distributing the chickens that were ordered. Then they said look recently the number of our customers fell off, one of us is redundant here, then they canned him. And you know, he does not speak German, he can say one or two words but it's nothing, so that's why he cannot find any job, wherever he applies he is asked for German. (Emre, 417, 418)*

Emre was born in Bremen, completed kindergarten and primary school there, and has three siblings holding Hauptschule diploma. He states that he shared a small room with his two elder brothers until a short while ago because their flat is too small (Emre, 385). He has not had his own room at home and the housing conditions are disadvantaged. Emre reports, his father is reluctant to work due to a dramatic event; *“He worked many years in DM<sup>37</sup> time and worked a lot but illegally and then he invested 50 thousand (DM) into so called “Yimpas” because we could not put it into the banks like Sparkasse, because he worked illegally, then they said they went bankrupt, 50 thousand (DM) just gone, left nothing, so now he does not like working much, because he has negative experience<sup>38</sup> (...)”* (Emre, 417).

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<sup>36</sup>See the debates in the theory chapter of the study

<sup>37</sup> Previous German Currency, “Deutsch Mark”

<sup>38</sup> “Yimpaş is an organization, which promised high interest rates. This share is not called as “interest” as it is sin in Islam.

Having earned money by working under-the-table, Emre's father invested it into this organization instead of normal banks, but apparently it was a scam. Dramatically, this event caused a great disappointment and stressful family atmosphere at home.

Similar to Emre's case, Aykut also lives without his own room and does his homework in random places at home. His father works as a taxi driver and his mother is a house wife, yet, he does not perceive his socioeconomic background in the same way as Emre. *“I mean, to earn money is not important, you know, what is important is we have money in Turkey...”*(Aykut, 734). Contrasting with Emre's case, the investments Aykut's family has in Turkey seems to play a role in formation of a stable family environment. Aykut does not perceive any of the stress and anxiety regarding socioeconomic hardships. Yet, despite this positive financial situation, lack of having own room can be interpreted as absence of a pro-school environment at home

Sinan, is an example of an interviewee with a relatively stable home. Sinan's father is self-employed and runs a home appliance store and Sinan reports that they do not have any economic problems and his parents are involved in his schooling.

*My parents keep telling me to do good at school, doing homework...They say 'if you don't want to go this school, then you can change it, money is not important'. They say 'it can be a private one, too, you just go to school, we can do everything'. (Sinan, 457).*

Sinan, compared to his friends considers himself lucky *“...my relations with my mum and dad, thanks god are good, I mean we have no problems at all, sometimes my friends say that ooh I don't like my father at all, another one says I don't love my mum. I love them both, I mean they are really good to me (Sinan, 673).* His parents do not have any language problems and he was getting help from his mother as he was experiencing difficulty with his lessons. He neither suffers from low socioeconomic conditions at home or stressful family life and, he has parents interested in his schooling. So Sinan has by no means an „at risk profile“.

Ahmet does not perceive any economic problems at home, as well. He actually comes from a working class family background. His father holds a regular job with a private international postal service carrier, and his mother works as a cleaning lady. Ahmet's father came to Germany at a young age, holds Hauptschule diploma, has no language problems and is very much engaged in Ahmet's and his two sisters' school affairs- one going to mix school Haupt-Realschule, another one to Gymnasium- *“in such things mostly my dad gets involved, because my mom does not speak German, because my dad does, they ask for my dad always,*

*my dad deals with everything in everywhere” (Ahmet 461).* Social workers and teachers in Lindenhof school also confirm his father's involvement with Ahmet's schooling.

Similar to Aykut and Sinan, Ahmet does not come from deep frustrating family conditions. He has no school leaver sibling, one of them even is going to Gymnaisum. However, Ahmet has been expelled from different schools twelve times, he was jailed twice, one due to burglary, another one due to physical injury. Additionally, he got involved in a lot of fights in different schools. He fought with teachers and he does not remember how many discipline punishments he has received so far. His social-economic background, while being low, does not tell much about how he developed such a deviant career. Like some others, Ahmet's case also exemplifies the diverse characteristics of the interviewees. Although they all left school, they do not share the same “at risk youth” features and each has a divergent socio-economic and demographic pathway to school leaving.

Despite the exceptions, most of the interviewees face highly difficult economic circumstances and unstable and frustrating family conditions. Bekir lives with his unemployed mother, who was brought to Bremen from Istanbul seven years ago upon her divorce from Bekir's father. He reports that both prior to and after the divorce of his parents, they have had frequent economic predicaments, and he now wants to go back to Istanbul; *“I would go back to Istanbul but then there would be a problem, I should work, I should bring money to home for my father, when I do not work he would not allow me to come home” (Bekir, 13).* Bekir accounts that his grandparents came to Germany in the 1970s as guest-workers and that his mother was born in Germany. When she was 15 and doing well in school, she was forced to get married with someone from Turkey. *“then they got married and became unhappy, you know, every day beating and fight(...)my father used to get angry and beat my mother, because he was thinking, her family was looking down on him. It lasted 18 years in this way, afterward they split up”.* (Bekir, 49-50) Due to the problems within the family Bekir has grown up in an occasionally violent and miserable family atmosphere.

Like Bekir, Mehmet also came to Germany in his childhood. He started school eight years ago in Bremen. Mehmet lives in a deprived, stressful and highly frustrating family circumstance. His father is sick and cannot work and his mother is a housewife. His brother and sister left the school without any diploma and are unemployed as well. All family members live on only social welfare. Mehmet has by no means a pro-school climate at home. He has no role model within the family.

*He [his father] is not going there alone [Unemployment Office], sometimes I am late to school because, I have to go with him, he does not speak any German. My brother, I don't know, he sleeps and never gets up and he does not get on well with my father, so I am going there. My little sister goes to school early. My father appointments coincide with school time, then I must go with him, what can I do, should I leave him alone? (Mehmet, 858).*

The economic constraints seem to impose heavy burdens directly on the children in Mehmet's family and cause nerve-racking experiences. Mehmet has been undergoing conflicts between his unemployed elder brother and father and experiencing great anxiety.

In many of these cases the social and economic hardships within the interviewees' families appear to cause some of the students involvement in risky behaviors for their schooling, such as working ;“(...) *At that time, I knew that the life has changed, started to change, you know, I began to stand on my own feet slowly, I mean I went and worked a lot, I was going to open markets on weekends, I did that for 3 years, I started when I was 13, I was going even to Holland on weekends...we were going to public-markets and selling goods outside, because we needed money, you know, we were short of money (Hakan, 385).* Obviously, the low social and economic background of his family is not sufficient to meet Hakan's needs. This drives him into taking risks and he develops some concerns at young ages regarding living.

The burden of living in poor conditions on the shoulders of the interviewees is epitomized in a more salient way in Onur's case. Like Hakan, Onur was born in and completed all his schooling in Bremen. He started to work with his brother in a fast food restaurant chain when he was in Hauptschule. He accounts why and how he started to work;”...*with time, you are thinking differently, you grow up, your mother asks, my son don't you work, you know, then you think about the problems, you think about bread, ooh I should bring bread home, just like that, then I started to work...(Onur, 394).* It seems that, for Onur, there were some concerns that came before the schooling and that presumably hindered him in developing an ambitious student identity. He goes on explaining how he was struggling between school and work, as he was a student in Hauptschule “(...) *after school I was going to work, after work I was already feeling exhausted, I was going home, sleeping and coming to school, that was just like that (Onur 402).* The relevant literature asserts that working parallel to school can have detrimental effects on school achievement (Gibson, Gandara and Koyama 2004:56). Onur's case clearly supports this claim. Mostly, but not exclusively, the interviewees come from lower socioeconomic statuses. Some experience intensive stress, frustration and conflicts; whereas others have relatively better socioeconomic circumstances within family and a less stressful home environment.

### 6.1.2 Educational Profiles of Family Members

Another important background characteristic of the interviewees is the educational profile of their parents. Some parents are children of guest-workers who came to Germany from the 1960's on, whereas some arrived there as a groom or bride at a young age. There are also a few parents who came to Germany as asylum seekers. The parents often hold predominantly primary school diplomas or none, which means that they have either limited schooling experiences or not at all. In return for that, however, there are also leavers whose parents have schooling experiences in the German school system.

Those with low educational profiles are short of basic knowledge about the educational system and, thus, cannot provide their children with essential support. The parents' school involvements are highly determined by, among other things, language problems. Emre says that whenever a phone call was made from the schools he attended, his parents cannot communicate with the school authorities on the phone.

Indeed the language problem seems to fetter the contacts of the parents with the schools. Similar to Emre, for instance, Ersoy reports, *"my mother doesn't speak any German at all but my father is not too bad, I mean, he speaks, if he does not understand, I would tell him"* (508, Ersoy). Obviously, the language problem makes Ersoy's parents dependent on him. Similarly, Can says that, instead of his parents, his 24 year-old cousin went with him to the parent-teacher meeting in the school *"in family, my cousin, who was born and grown up in Germany came with me"* (404, Can). Like Can, Onur states *"my father's German is kind of OK, my father came with my brother [to school meeting] once, I went there alone one or two times"* (482, Onur). Combined with low educational background, the communication problems do not only bring about hesitant behaviors in contacting the school authorities but also lead to losing control over the childrens' schooling. Giving the (language) control to the child, presumably undermines the classical parent-child relations and over-empowers the child.

Although it is less common, some parents do their best to help the children in their schooling. As touched upon previously, Ahmet's father was trying to deal with Ahmet's schooling as much as he could. His father keeps a Hauptschule diploma, and speaks fluent German. In a better way, support was within reach for Sinan. His mother does not have any language problems and was eager to help him in his schooling. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the educational profile of most parents are low and the students rarely get support for homework completion or regular check of school performance.

It is worth noting that, when asked, none of the students confirmed that there was a translator in the schools for disciplinary meetings to which the parents have been invited.<sup>39</sup> So, the organization and operation of schools contribute to the parents' losing control over their children. From reports of the interviewees, it is certain that the schools are not designed in a way that takes into account the language problems of the parents stemming from their lack of education in a German context.

On the other hand, Ünal grizzles about low parental involvement in school from his own life experiences and mentions potential reasons: “... *as they came from Turkey, my mother and father do not know much about the language here, the culture here, the teachers here, I mean they cannot help, they are in difficulty, I mean their culture is different...*” (Ünal, 325). Interestingly, he explains his family's inability to help him with their 'cultural' defaults, which is a very endemic explanation among many struggling students. Although lack of parental involvement is mostly the case, it does not necessarily mean that the students cannot get any support from their families, as the successful siblings might convey the necessary resources, “...*she (younger sister) was coming to me when she couldn't do it (homework) and so on, but after 7.class her homework got ten times bigger than mine, she was helping me sometimes, but then I did not want to, I could not stomach, you know, you feel ashamed, you know, I am older than her but she helps me*” (Hakan, 361). It is noteworthy that some interviewees expressed reluctance in relation to getting help from their successful siblings. Hakan stops getting help from his sister because he is ashamed of it. He thinks that it might undermine his manliness. Another example is Ersoy “*I did not ask for help from my sisters, I mean I did not want. I was getting help when I was small in primary school, in second and third class, but then I got older and did not get any help*” (Ersoy, 420). Like Hakan, Ersoy also stops getting homework help from his elder sister presumably due to the concerns about his prestige and masculine role.

The statements also reveal that there are not many role models around these students. The low educational profile of the parents and language problems weaken the communication of the families with the school and some of the children find themselves alone in a gap between boundaries of family and school. Hakan expresses this gap strikingly in lamenting on his Hauptschule years.

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<sup>39</sup>While there are some local migrant organizations that seek to fill the gap between parents and schools by providing the students with homework support and their parents with language supports, it appears at first that they are weak organizations and second, the connections between parents and those organizations are quite fragile in the long run. This is obvious from the sporadic support that the students have taken from such organizations in their schooling.



*“If there is a problem at home or with your family like money problem and so on, you also learn it as you are small, I mean there emerges a feeling inside you. Look at for example German children, he comes home, his mother helps, she says let me look at your homework, they learn before going to bed and get up timely, we are not like that, many families are not like that, you are alone at an early age, you begin to stand on your own feet, you begin somehow to feel, it starts, you know. I, for example, how to say, I was at 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> class and I started to get the hang of it, I mean the life, standing on your own feet, It was difficult, I was trying to do something like getting money, you understand. I don't know how to say but there was no motivation at home, I mean they tell you to go and learn, when I went home, for example, my mom' d keep telling me go and do your school and so on, but what she could do, she did not go to school and she does not know, she'd like to help if she could but she did not go to school, she does not know anything, I mean we are a bit unlucky” (Hakan, 333)*

His statement is striking because it underscores the ways in which poor conditions associated with economic hardships and low educational profiles create stress and low emotional well-being for the students, especially as they compare themselves to the perceptibly successful and cared for students of native German families. Hakan exemplifies the potential detrimental effects of parents' lack of ability to help due to educational deficiencies on the educational performance on the one hand, and shows his both awareness of, and resentment for, the disadvantaged situation of his family compared to “German families” on the other.

### **6.1.3 Disadvantaged Neighborhood**

*Where we live is a little bit different, once they wrote in a newspaper, it is “Klein Istanbul in Bremen”. No German lives there (Temel, 150)*

The interviewees chiefly live in neighborhoods deprived in some respects. The relative diversity that is observable amongst the family conditions of the students is not the case for neighborhood characteristics where there is uniform disadvantage. They come from the peripheries of Bremen such as Neuplatz, Mitte, Kobbel and Kolding, which are generally over populated by lower class immigrants and Germans. These parts of the city are all socioeconomically disadvantaged. Therefore, these quarters harbor limited resources and restrict the reach of inhabitants the potential opportunities that are available outside of these areas due to the limited social ties.

Most of the interviewees reported that they have grown up in these ethnically dominated areas where Turkish/Kurdish is generally spoken within the family and among friends. There is great evidence of homophily amongst the Turkish/Kurdish children. Their acquaintances

are mostly other Turkish/Kurdish children, even if there are German children and Russian children in the quarter. For it, they refer to cultural similarity and language issues; “...the ways we joke around are the same as we come from the same people, we know same movies...” (Ünal, 452). Their contacts with German families and friends is little to none in their neighborhoods. “German? I live here so long, but I have maybe only one (acquaintance) (Ibrahim, 3000). Ibrahim comes from a low socioeconomic background. He was born and grew up in Germany, but despite that, he has almost no German friends. Regarding the homogeneity of the neighborhood, Hakan reports that “we know each other from Kindergarten, mothers are acquainted for a long time. When they came from Turkey, they moved into this quarter, so now everyone knows everyone, we are like a family, altogether, we have visited each other very often, they are like brother in the quarter” (Hakan, 101). Hakan lives in the same quarter with Temel, and he also confirms ethnic homogeneity of the neighborhood, which Temel articulates above as 'Klein Istanbul'<sup>40</sup>.

The ethnic homogeneity and low socioeconomic background of the neighborhoods presumably makes it difficult for the children to find potential role models, which are also not available within the family. The interviewees report that drug use is common in their areas and many of their friends left school. As academic motivation grows out of social and personal relationships (Stanton-Salazar 2004:129) these children are destitute of the concrete connections to other social networks that might bring them tangible forms of support. Some parents do not want to stay in such neighborhoods, Turgay, for example, reports that his father became concerned about the neighborhood and moved into another place as he could afford it “...how to say I mean the speaking style, such as small children swearing, my father said it'd be good to move into somewhere else, even if the rent is higher, the children can grow up better”. (Turgay, 124). Though Turgay's father managed to move out of the area before his trade business bankrupted, it is generally difficult for people to do the same thing probably not only because of economic restrictions but also the social ties which they are part of. For example, as stated above, working informally, with under-the-table-pay is common among the parents and it appears that in accessing such job opportunities, the social ties within which the person is embedded play significant roles.

Another equally important dimension of the neighborhood is the reflection of the neighborhood structure onto the composition of students in school. The importance of school as compensator of the weak resources that students bring from their families and neighborhoods have been indicated elsewhere (Stanton-Salazar 2001; Oakes 2005). For the

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<sup>40</sup>Small Istanbul

students whose families have low social capital, school might have an equalizing effect (Solga 2008b). It might provide the opportunity to meet friends of different backgrounds and teachers who can convey better the resources into the student (Oakes 2005). Therefore, school time might stand for a very important break from disadvantaged neighborhood that limits accessing the necessary capitals.

However, this is mostly not the case for Turkish students, more than half of the interviewees stated that children of immigrants were dominant in their primary and later schools. *“The classroom was full of Turkish”* (Deniz, 227). There was a very low number of German classmates in their classrooms with mostly Turkish, Kurdish, Russian and Arabic students. The reason for the emergence of homogeneous student profiles in primary schools is probably owing to the fact that the students should, by law, attend the primary school closest to their residence in Germany<sup>41</sup> (Kristen 2005). This somewhat explains why some students have the same friends both at school and in the neighborhood; *“where we live ...there are not many German over there, it is a big quarter with only three or four German families. All are Turkish, Kurdish and so on, everyone knows each other, I was always in the same school with them, they were in the same school, my company was always them”* (Temel, 130). It seems that being structurally locked out in neighborhood repeats itself this time in the composition of the students in school. The students' contacts with native students and the students of different socioeconomic background remain limited .

Nevertheless, this should not be generalized for each interviewee. It is obvious from the reports that dominance of children of immigrants in primary school is not exclusively the case. Some reported a mixed composition of the classroom and school; *“it was like fifty-fifty, there were some Germans but others, too, coming from different places [countries]”* (Sinan, 273), whereas some other stated the dominance of German students in their classroom, *“in the school almost all were German....only a couple Turkish and Kurdish”* (Aykut, 272). Similar to Aykut, Erdem reports; *“In my class there was only an Arabic and a Turkish student the rest was German”* (Erdem 337). These statements indicate that the homogeneity in the neighborhood does not always mean ethnic homogeneity but predominantly socioeconomic homogeneity.

## Conclusion

I have sought to show in this chapter the background characteristics of the interviewees.

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<sup>41</sup>This is one of the reasons of the emergence of ethnically segregated schools especially in industrial areas of large cities. For this see at (Kristen 2005).

The findings suggest that they are diverse in many respects but have also some things in common. The socioeconomic background characteristics reveal that the interviewees mostly come from lower family backgrounds, whereas a few come from entrepreneurial families. Some experience social and psychological derivations of their poor socioeconomic conditions such as stress, anxiety, conflict and resentment. On the other hand, some children come from peaceful family environments and do not perceive any socioeconomic hardships. Another important point was the educational profile of the family members. The findings suggest here a limited degree of diversity. Some parents are lacking of experience in education at all and have language problems. Few hold Hauptschule degrees, have no language problems and are putting efforts into their childrens' schooling. Yet, the low education and language incompetency weaken parental involvement in school, and loosen control over child's school performance in most cases. These problems are exacerbated by lack of access to translators for the parents in schools. Also, in the cases of better educated and supportive siblings, many of these interviewees prefer to 'stand on their own' as a result of their concerns about masculinity, manliness and pride. This presumably further prevents potential success in school.

Another background characteristic is the neighborhood. All interviewees live predominately in the disadvantaged parts of the city of Bremen, which are over populated by lower status Germans and immigrant inhabitants; they contain weak resources, and lack role models. This composition of the neighborhood repeats itself in the composition of the student profiles in school. Overall, the findings show that the backgrounds of the interviewees are diverse to some extent, however, they converge at some points. In the following chapter, I shall focus on the schooling years in order to understand the interviewees experiences in school coming from the backgrounds that are described so far.

## 6.2 Incompatibilities in School and at Home

While some of the interviewees attended Kindergarten, they either stated that they do not remember this time clearly or they did not remember it as a significant marker in their lives. However, primary school times and beyond unquestionably mark some important moments in school biographies of the interviewees. The analysis of the data shows that there are some forms of incompatibility that hamper the students' integrations into the social and academic environments of schooling.

Some interviewees report problems predominantly with the contents of the courses which seem to hamper their integration into academic environments of school. Some students express that they were naughty in school which indicate predominately adjustment hardships into the social environment at school. These two types of incompatibilities, while having different features, have many things in common and converge over time. Although it is not always possible to understand the causal relationships between the two types of incompatibilities, in some cases they are clear. Low achieving students, for example, develop maladjustment and disruptive behaviors as they get negative feedback, whereas the students having adjustment hardships get negative feedback and perform educationally low. The data clearly demonstrate that the both types of incompatibilities are not intrinsic features of personality. Instead, they come out in the interactions of the interviewees with family members, school practices, treatments and definitions. Many students experience incompatibility in school parallel to the predicaments erupting in private or family life and vice versa.

### **6.2.1 Achieving Low and Maladjustment Connected to the Problems at Home and Treatments in School**

In Lindenhof school where the interviews were conducted, one of the social workers with a Turkish background, who discovered I am working on the leavers from the School of General Education suggested me talking to Alper because he wanted to know why he hates everything about Germany and Germans. On the surface, he blended into the crowd, which was grouped ethnically into different corners of the schoolyard where almost all male students wear the same style black leather jacket, loose jeans and have similar hair cuts; short hair on top with even shorter hair on the sides and back of head. Alper showed his harshness and fragility in the first moments of the interview as he was replying to my question about the

place of birth; “*you know what, I was born here but if one asks, you know, then I was born in Turkey*” (Alper, 06). Alper thinks that being born in Turkey made him more Turkish compared to others who were born in Germany. He attracts attention with his extreme racist and nationalist views and visible anger toward the teachers in particular and Germans in general. “*...believe me you will hate them [Germans], go to their home, disgusting, their appearance disgusting, they smell, the way they talk, I hate them. In my eyes, they are all ugly...you cannot trust them...*” (Alper 575). His racialized expressions acquire a slightly different tone when he comes to talk about teachers; “*they cannot destroy me because, I am sorry but they are Nazis, they are the people swearing at Muslims, Turks and Atatürk, s/he [teachers] comes to classroom and say 'ooh dirty Turks, ohh dirty Muslims'...*” (Alper, 86).

To unpack the story lying behind the origin of this anger, I consider his biography closely. Alper's father is working in a high-end car factory and his mother is working as a cleaning lady. His two elder sisters, both having Realschule diplomas, are married and his younger sister is going to Gymnasium. From his accounts, despite low social and economic profile, there is no pronounced uneasiness within the family.

Alper reports that he had to repeat the first year and he was not a brilliant student in primary school. Instead of being tracked at the end of it, he went to Orientierungsstufe<sup>42</sup> where the tracking is done in the end of 6<sup>th</sup> class, but he could stay there only half a year and was picked up by a special school due to his low academic performance; “*because of the courses, how to say, I was very lazy, I mean I cannot describe it in another way, I was really lazy*” (Alper, 150). From his accounts, it appears that being sent to special school is very marking in his identification with strong nationalism and in development of his extremist views. Putting great effort into using Turkish versions of the words during the interview, he accounts;

*Yes I went to all, I mean I went to Kindergarten, in Turkish it is 'çocuk bahçesi' isn't it? Primary school, middle school then they sent me to vocational school, no wait, middle school, I mean after middle school, they sent me eh, what was the Turkish word for that, it is, you know, for having learning difficulties, or how to say, I mean, they sent me to this place where ignorant people are, because I have no lust to learn, zero, but not, I mean, due to ignorance. I was, shortly, lazy. They sent me off there and I went, there I completely changed, I was deeply affected there. There I began to defend Turkey more, because I love it more, even if support would come from Germany. How to say, as each ages, there comes a changing time, changing of style, you know, I, too, completely changed there. It was not a good place, I was a racist for sometime there, I got close to racism, then I found “ülküçülük”<sup>43</sup> I mean, I saw the inside of*

<sup>42</sup>Orientation stage; first two years of secondary education.

<sup>43</sup>It is a Turkish ultra-nationalist ideology, which is connected to Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) in Turkey.

*ülküculük, I found the truth there, racism was not good and so on. I was there, then they sent me off to a vocational school, metal vocational school, Arbeitsamt, ehmm what was the Turkish word for it, arbeitss ehmm, the place of help, yes, they took me there but it did not go well, it was too high, I mean the place is not for me, I was there, then it did not work out, Now I've come to here..."(Alper, 30)*

Interestingly, in his case, low educational performance and, much more than that, the way it is *defined and treated* in the educational system is strongly linked to developing extremist views and behavioral adaptation problems. Alper was classified as a low achiever and sent to a special school. Throughout his special school years, a period where he felt labeled, he developed hatred and repugnance for Germans.

In contrast to Alper, Metin does not hold any extremist views at all, and he is known as a modest and consonant person among his friends. He never skips the school in Lindenhof and spends his free time training himself in a Gym, as he is interested in Kick-boxing. Unlike many other interviewees, Metin is of Kurdish background and his friends are from various backgrounds including Germans. He went to Orientierungstufe following the primary school and after short time he was tracked into special school. He says that his uneasiness started first with mathematics.

*Then there was this teacher, math teacher, I didn't get along with her at all. Because, math is not my strong side, I'm pretty bad at it. And then she said something, that we had to do, and I couldn't manage and couldn't keep up, well and that was bad luck for me. She maybe would explain it again, but then she had to look after the other 23 pupils. That's how it was (Metin, 315).*

Metin perceives how he is seen in the school and he hesitates to ask for more help from the teacher. His reporting also shows how he defines his position in the classroom in comparison to performances of his classmates. As the school is not designed for providing individual help for overcoming his inadequacy in the lessons, he develops behaviors for disguising his underachievement, a behavior that showed how he was suffering from his weak performance.

*Sometimes I was not doing [homework] I had a friend, he was doing everything, I was copying from him quickly, heheh!. I mean, I was doing it so that no one could understand, you know. I was really fast at writing, I always would copy quickly in just 15 seconds and then show it. Since I couldn't*

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It is also known as "Grey-wolves".

*understand it, I didn't know how it works, and they didn't explain it to me again, I had to copy. If not, I would have gotten into trouble at home, and they'd have called at my home. I wasn't keen on that to happen, on getting in trouble with my dad (Metin, 295)*

His initial problems start with perceiving himself in a lower position in the classroom due to the difficulties with Mathematics. His expression “I didn't know how it works, and they didn't explain it to me again ” can be interpreted that he needed people to help him but he could not get any support. As result of his views about the way he is perceived by others in the classroom, he develops strategies, which actually leads him into maladjustment in school, in order to protect himself from further conflicts that might come out when the school informs his family.

I came across Ahmet first when I was in the Trainingsraum in Lindenhof School together with other social workers. Ahmet was sent to Trainingsraum by a female teacher, she, being probably experienced at such cases, came down to the room with him, I suspect in order to prevent him from running out of the building. Ahmet was there because the teacher thought he was 'acting up' in the classroom. After the teacher delivered him to the social worker and was leaving the room, Ahmet shouted at back of her “*du bist ein ausländerfeind*”<sup>44</sup> She neither reacted utterly nor looked back (*Trainingsraum field note*). During the interview, he states that “*there is no teacher that I liked but if they be good to me then I'd be good to them*” (*Ahmet, 842*).

As described before, in spite of his slightly better home conditions, Ahmet's school biography is full of disciplinary penalties, fights with classmates and teachers, lots of expulsion, criminal acts and jailing experiences. As noted earlier, his two sisters are successful in school and his father engaged himself in school affairs for all his children. When accounting his primary school years, he reports that once the way he is treated in the classroom drove him crazy:

*“I remember, a teacher yelled at me, she humiliated me in front of others, everybody saw it and laughed, then I got angry, I was so small then, I punched her stomach, I tried to beat her, then she cowered and pulled back, her stomach was hurt, then she called someone else and so on, that was my first fight” (Ahmet,257).*

Ahmet had his first physical fight with a teacher in primary school in the third year when he was approximately nine years-old. He says that he resented the way the teacher approached

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<sup>44</sup>You're a xenophobic



him. However, it is difficult to interpret his attitudes in the classroom. Turning back to the topic of primary school later in the interview, it appeared that he had difficult times with some courses preceding adjustment problems;

*I have been always good at Math [Mathematics], first and second year, I could only do that, still I am good at it, in my report card it is either 1 or 2<sup>45</sup>, it is never lower, I know only Math good, I do not know the rest at all (Ahmet,325)*

It appears that his perception of 'not fitting into school' triggered some adaptation problems in primary school. He developed incompatibility with the academic and social requirements of school. Despite these incidents, Ahmet finished primary school and was even tracked into Realschule. However, as it will be shown later, he continued to experience hardships in later stages of his school life.

In contrast to Ahmet, Ersoy can be described as shy and calmer. He was born in Turkey and came to Germany when he was 5 years old. His father is a construction worker and his mother is a housewife, both do not speak German. His father arrived to Germany first illegally and applied for asylum. Upon being granted asylum, he took the whole family into Bremen. Ersoy has three sisters; two elder sisters holding Realschule diploma, and the youngest sister is at primary school. He reports that he was misbehaving in school. *"I was naughty ...I was small, I kept talking in the lessons and so on, I mean it started slowly like this and went on in the same way"* (Ersoy, 138). Ersoy did not go to Kindergarten because he was with his family at an asylum camp at that time. He started primary school just after the years in this camp and had to repeat the first year. In following school years, Ersoy continued to have hard times in school *"first and second year was normal, in third and fourth year, it started to go down, there were friends, I mean, I was telling something, then he was telling, so we were annoying the teacher"* (Ersoy, 740). It appears that there is a strong relationship between low achieving and maladjustment in his case. His maladjustment begins soon after or parallel to his perception that he is performing educationally low.

Amongst the interviewees, Erdem, whom I met in woodwork class, represents a most different case. With his relatively long hair, heavy metal style tight pants with chains on the side and Converse shoes, his appearance deviates considerably from that of other Turkish students preferring short hair, leather jackets and loose blue jeans with black or white Nike shoes. *"I have only German friends"* (Erdem, 341) Erdem says and he complains about intolerance of Turkish youth; *"for instance they say 'look at him how he wears, look at her*

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<sup>45</sup>In German grading system in schools, five is the worst score, whereas one is the best.

*how she wears' and so on. And also I have never seen Turks dressing like me...”(Erdem, 637).*

Erdem separates himself from Turkish and Kurdish youth with thick lines and finds them to be “aggressive” and “macho”; *“how to say, I cannot get on well with Turks and Kurds that were born and raised up here, I don't know how to say, I mean, nothing against them really, but they fancy themselves as something, suddenly they say, 'hey I will beat you' this and that, I don't like such stuff” (Erdem, 353).* As stated above, Erdem's circle of friends consisted only of Germans since the beginning of his primary school. He went to his first year of primary school in Bremerhaven and stayed with his grandparents along this year, as his family moved into Bremen, because his father was working in a high-end auto factory in Bremen. In his second year, he changed primary school and started a new one in Bremen. Erdem says that he was cutting classes and skipping school by then; *“it started in the third year...I couldn't get on well with the children there, so, I did not want to go there, if I don't like somewhere, I would not go there” (Erdem, 381).*

It appears that Erdem had some difficulties in adapting himself into a new environment in Bremen. Although I shall deal with incidents such as cutting classes and skipping school as signs of alienation in detail in the following chapter, it is important for the moment to recognize that Erdem changed the school and after that experienced incompatibility with the new environment. He states that he did not like his new friends in his new school and was not happy there. In his case, it appears that maladjustment is not an outcome of low educational performance but the other way around.

In addition to the difficulties resulting from changing the school, he had also hard times at home. He was sharing his room with his “problematic” brother in his new home in Bremen. He reports that his younger brother, who goes to special school now, had a highly negative impact on Erdem's schooling by then; *“as I was working, he was coming and asking questions, if I was dealing with my own homework, he was asking about his homework, but I had to do my own work, and also we cannot get along well, we fight all the time” (Erdem, 269).* He describes his brother as aggressive and having adjustment hardships not only in the school but also in the family; *“for some reasons, he [his brother] is suddenly flying into a temper, he is always nervous...he is restless and should move all the time or he should kick up a fuss...he is fighting, there were lots of problems at the school, he is aggressive, ribald. When he watches football he is a potty-mouth“ (Erdem, 761).* Erdem reports that his brother was highly influential on his school performance and adaptation into his new home in Bremen, and as a result he did not feel like doing anything at school. Following the moving, he was nearly sent to special school in the fifth class because of his low educational performance and

maladjustment in the school; *“because of grades, I was never talking in the class, and sometimes I did not go to the school”* (Erdem, 277). Erdem's problems stem heavily from his maladjustment into his new home *and* school in Bremen. He says that his family separated his room from his brother and after that he worked better and managed not to be sent to special school in the nick of time. However, he continued to skip the courses constantly and experienced difficulty in later classes as well.

Whilist pointed out by the teachers at Lindenhof School as one of the students speaking fluent German, Turgay had to visit preparatory class before primary school due to his language problem. Following primary school, Turgay went to Orientierungsstufe for two years, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes, and he was tracked into Hauptschule. Turgay indeed has a school biography full of ups and downs. To unpack his story, his father's jailing incidents, due to business problems, are decisive moments for Turgay's schooling. When his father was jailed the first time for one month, Turgay was at 6<sup>th</sup> class in Orientierungsstufe, and in the second for three and half months incarceration, he was in 9<sup>th</sup> class in Hauptschule. He remarks that first one did not affect him as deep as the second one, nevertheless both seemed to have a negative impact on his school performance; *“I mean my courses were actually good, but it got worse because of some psychological and family problems because my dad was in jail sometime, so, the courses got worsen”* (Turgay, 322). Turgay is a sensitive and fragile person. He feels himself very close to his father and takes him as a strong role model. It seems that he deeply resented his father's jailing and as a result did not put efforts into his courses. When he was tracked into Hauptschule, the second jailing incident affected him deeper; *“then three months he stayed in investigative custody. After three months, he went out as innocence, but so that's why, psychologically, I mean, we felt down at home, I mean, that's why the courses got worsened too much...”(Turgay, 348)*. Turgay's low performance and maladjustment into school have strongly synchronized with his father's jailing incidents. In his biography, low school performance is preceded by frustrating incidents at home that in turn cause low achieving in school.

Not only those whose biographies are given above in some details but also other interviewees put into words how they experienced educational and adaptation hardships at school. Alper, Metin, Ahmet and the others have dramatically different biographies. What they have in common is that they predominantly experienced social and academic problems in school and/or at home. The reasons behind these two predicaments are various. For some, both low educational performance and maladjustment in school are not constant but emerge depending on the incidents occurring in other parts of their life, for example when they

experience social and psychological difficulties at home. The treatments and handling processes in school should seriously be taken into account, as well. School is a place where the students are asked to fulfill new educational and behavioral standards and adapt to the rules in a new competitive milieu. The ways the students are handled in school obviously make them perceive how they are seen, labeled, and this is strongly linked with incompatibilities they experience.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I detailed first the experiences of the interviewees in school with a special focus on the hardships that they have gone through in both their schooling and in their family lives. From the analysis, I have found two sorts of incompatibility: low educational performance and maladjustment that stem from various reasons such as disappointing events in the family, moving and so on. Both school and home/family maladjustments cause the interviewees to experience problems in adaptation in the schools' social and academic environments. These incompatibilities appear to have reciprocal relationships depending on the case. I have highlighted that low performance and maladjustment are not constant personal characteristics but they come out as consequence of the student-home-school interactions.

## 6.3 The Early Forms of Alienation

The interviewees showing low educational performance and having adjustment hardships in school seem to have gone through other sequences in which they experienced alienation in various forms, such as, frustration, powerlessness, indifference to class, school fatigue, oversleeping, tardiness, and playing truant. The data suggests two inner sub-sequences in the sequence of early forms of alienation. First, frustration with the academic or social environments of school triggers feelings of powerlessness, and school fatigue and, for some, playing truant. Second, the data reveals that some interviewees suffer from extreme forms of alienation, arguably revolving around the borders of psychological disorder.

### **6.3.1 The Causality between the Forms Alienation: Frustration, Powerlessness, School Fatigue and Playing Truant**

The accounts of the interviewees prove that a strong causality between underachievement, frustration and developing school fatigue exists. Following his incompatibility Aykut reports; *I don't know, I was just going out and then again inside, and sometimes I did not listen the teacher at all*” (Aykut, 628). Aykut had some uneasiness that comes out of losing control over the lessons, and that distanced him from schooling. He did not do any homework and did not learn, he lost his interest in the courses, and he started to have a sort of fatigue *I was too tired to study, I was bored sometimes*” (Aykut, 646). These feelings of fatigue are reflections of meaninglessness and anxiety, like anomie, that are the indications of insecurity and psychological frustration.

The forms of alienation that the students have gone through in many cases include playing truant. For example, Deniz accounts how his difficult times with some courses made him feel estranged from the school.

*“they were helping but I thought, I could understand [lesson] but then I found it difficult they passed into another subject, then it got more difficult...it was difficult for me then I did not go there...”* (Deniz, 317).

Deniz felt powerless and worthless in the classroom as he did not understand the content of the courses and he began to play truant. It is usually the case that truant behavior comes after the feelings of hopelessness that are triggered by frustrations with courses or relations with teachers.

In a similar situation, Ahmet came to think that he did not possess the academic ability to be successful in school and the feeling of worthlessness sparks off some forms of alienation, one of which is school fatigue; *“...I was bored in the class and I was not listening, I did not know what they were talking about anyway, so I was bored and I wanted to go out...I was feeling too tired (Ahmet, 834).* Ahmet's fatigue seems to stem from his feeling of worthlessness, or acceptance of a worthless label, and powerlessness, and this elicited short term truant behavior. *“I don't know I started to skip the school in 7<sup>th</sup> class, I was more into school in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year. I came to 7<sup>th</sup>. then, I don't know, it was like, I felt suddenly tired to learn, I mean, I did not understand anything because I was not learning, I was doing nothing, sitting there like a shit, just listening them...” (Ahmet, 271).* His statement underscores the sequentiality and causality of different forms of alienation as result of low achieving and maladjustment; he felt bored and tired as he did not learn, and in reaction to this frustration, he felt himself powerless, or worse he felt that he did not have a purpose in school, and began playing truant.

Erdem exemplifies how maladjustment, low grades, school fatigue and truant behaviors are interconnected sequentially. Experiencing adaptation problems both in a new school and home environments led him into frustration, which resulted in worsening of the grades and playing truant: *“How to say, I got bored after 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes, I mean I did not use to feel like going because I was knowing, my grades were bad, I thought what I should do there anyway”(Erdem, 421).* The causal sequence between maladjustment, frustration, school fatigue and developing truant behavior is clear in this case.

The same sequentiality between the forms of alienation exists in Emre's case. Following primary school, he was sent to the Hauptschule section of a Gesamtschule and he stayed there 3 years, until 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Emre ended up in Lindenhof School after being expelled from three different schools.

*Nastiness, I mean, I was not going to school till four. Two times a week it [the school] was until four, both in Tuesday and Thursday. Thursday was OK, I mean I liked the courses like music, and I don't know, art, such stuff, so I was going there, but on Thursday, there were boring ones, only writing on the blackboard and so on, like Math and German the ones I don't like, I never went to school on Tuesdays for a couple of months, the teacher told me, 'you are not coming to school on, you are always sick on Tuesdays'. I don't know, what can I do, I am getting sick on Tuesdays, I said, and he said, 'OK I see'. Then they were going to kick me out of this classroom, but then they gave up they did not change my classroom. (Emre, 201)*

What is important about Emre's narrative is that the sequence of his truancy occurs predominantly in the courses at which he thinks he is unsuccessful and in which he feels himself weak and powerless. He is frustrated and feels very strong school fatigue; *“I mean either I did not like [the courses] or I did not feel like going, you know. I was just wanting to go home, no lust for it (Emre, 297).* His alienation to school starts with some courses and is partial. The next excerpt shows the reason for this partial alination in a clearer way .”*I was not understanding anyway. I was skipping one or two hours, once his (the teacher) class hours passed, I was coming back, sometimes I never came back, you know, I was telling myself, “I can't wait for him two hours, what the hell”, then I was going home completely” (Emre, 545).* Emre cuts the courses which, he thinks, potentially might frustrate him. As he skipped the courses, his grades got worse, his interactions with teachers took another turn and reversing the process became more difficult for him. The data suggests that his school fatigue deepened and gave rise to over-control of teachers on him that goes hand in hand with conflicts and fights with teachers, which I will focus on in the following section.

By the same token, Ünal's case illustrates the causal ordering of the process of alienation. He says that he was doing good until fourth grade in primary school. Following that, he went to Orientierungstufe where his grades were low *“I did not go to schools...I did not want to get up, I am such a person who likes sleeping” (Ünal, 149).* One might think at first sight that Ünal is simply disinterested in school because he never put efforts into bettering his performance. However, his over-sleeping is an indication of school fatigue, it is a reaction to the feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness in some courses: *“Yeah, I used to like Math, I was solving the problems very fast, then, I guess, it got hard, after that, I could not solve any more, I was not good enough for Math, then they [grades] went down” (Ünal,543).* He did not want to go to school, because he was an unsuccessful, unhappy and frustrated person there.

The way in which the frustration with courses leads to experiencing some of the forms of alienation is also visible in Can's case. He arrived Germany seven years ago, and since then he suffers from language problems.

*I mean I went to school for a year quite regularly. I had good average, the courses were good, I mean I never got one or two (Grade) but you know I save the face by three, four and so on. I mean these times were OK. Then I came to 8<sup>th</sup> class, it got more difficult, there were the topics that I did not understand, my German, I mean before, we were getting smaller homework but in 8<sup>th</sup> class, it is getting bigger. In the eighth year, “Fach” [subject of expertise] comes, theory comes, biology comes, how to say, music, painting, I mean lots of*

*things, and English, too..Puhh! I just came to Germany, I could not even learn German, you come and give me English (course), how can I understand it! Anyway, English, I mean, I could not succeed it, then I got bored, I mean, I got angry, you know. Then, I did not go there.(Can 202)*

Like many others, in Can's case the sequence between underachievement and the feelings of frustration, powerlessness, and playing truant is obvious. The majority of the interviewees developed truant behaviors due to frustration with their courses. Sequentially, as they are frustrated with social and academic environments of school because of the reasons stemming from student-home-school interactions, they become more alienated to school.

Although playing truant is the most common case for the interviewees, it is not exclusively so. As noted earlier, Metin had problems particularly with Math class earlier and considered himself incapable of doing better. This frustration made him feel powerless, bored and caused him to experience a deep school fatigue - *I don't know, no lust for it ..(Metin, 157)*. However, he, interestingly, remarks ; *"i have never skipped the school, I have always gone there (Metin, 243)*. Similarly, as it was shown previously, Ersoy was frustrated with the courses and as a result of such deep frustrations he developed school fatigue and indifference to the courses *"I did not ask for help anyway, I mean I was not giving much thought to such things"* (Ersoy, 312). However, he also says *"No, no I always used to go to school, but, I mean, I was just naughty"* (Ersoy, 254). Another example is Alper, who, despite his previously mentioned hatred against his teachers, says *"I was going to school every day"* (Alper, 154). By the same token, while the sequence from frustration to school fatigue is also obvious in Ibrahim's case, he never skipped school; *"no never, I have done such a thing in my life"* (Ibrahim, 190). These cases demonstrate that incompatibilities experienced in school generate some sorts of alienation in students, they however do not always lead to truancy. Although some interviewees did not play truant, they sequentially went through a range of forms of alienation in their school careers.

### **6.3.2 Alienation as Psychological Disorder**

As I have shown so far, the interviewees suffer from alienation in various ways. They experience feelings of powerlessness as result of performing low and having difficulty in adjusting to school. As consequences of these experiences, they develop forms of alienation such as feelings of powerlessness, school fatigue and playing truant. Yet, there is another form of alienation that a few interviewees seem to experience, and that is difficult to be subsumed



under the other forms of alienation due to its intensity and seriousness. There is a deep anxiety that presumably stems from the mix of deleterious family and school conditions. Some interviewees are not able to find a way out of desperate situations and of despondency. The stressful conditions due mostly to socioeconomic hardships at home and frustration in school lead them to feel suffocated.

*In my file, there is nothing, everything is clear but how to say, I started to feel bored in the school, a fear inside me, I did not go to the school, I did not mind it [the school] even if I went there. I don't know, my father was awaking me so that I could go to school, I am going there only for one hour, then I am going to internet cafe, I don't stay there either, I don't know, an angst, I feel a fear inside me suddenly, a kind of fear, I can't understand (Mehmet, 271).*

What sort of fear did Mehmet suffer from? Apparently, he experienced anxiety from an extreme form of alienation to school. In this period, he is aware of his situation but he feels unable to do anything to change the circumstances. He faces a nexus of difficulties, on the one hand the poverty in which he is living and its stress and depression, and on the other hand, in school language problems, frustrating grades and adaptation predicaments. Furthermore, as noted in the previous chapter, he lives in low socioeconomic family conditions with a sick father, and unemployed family members. Mehmet experiences hopelessness and desperation. We know from psychological studies that anxiety is a psychological disorder that has long term consequences especially when its origins go back to childhood and adolescence years (Cartwright-Hatton S. 2006). The following shows a first hand example of such crises in a different case;

*For a week, my mom visited my grand-mom in Haiben, where she lives...she went there and I was alone, I went to bed, then something came and scared me, something comes over me, it is dark I can't see, I am trembling and can't get up, and once I could get up I can't see anything, there is nothing..I can't sleep until morning, when I go to the school in the morning, I am sleepless and stumped. When they did not scare me I was going to fruit machines or looking at computer, so it was, I was always late to the school, I could not understand the teacher at all. (Bekir, 317)*

As stated before, Bekir is a child of a single-headed family and lives with his mother, who is unemployed. He was socialized in frustrating family conditions and now lives in poverty. He is exposed to heavy stress, hopelessness and the derivations of these circumstances such as powerlessness, aimlessness and meaninglessness. Combined with the frustrations in the

school, the poor family conditions damage his emotional well-being. They lead him toward a psychological disorder that has a deep, detrimental effect on his commitment to the school. Those accounts show ultimately that anxiety, stress, demoralization, and constant failure may threaten their psychological well-being.

### **Conclusion**

I have demonstrated in this chapter that the two incompatibilities low-achievement and maladjustment are sequentially linked with a range of forms of alienation the students experience. The incompatibilities generate frustrations for the students, which results in feelings of powerlessness, school fatigue that triggers playing truant, and in some cases, arguably, psychological disorders. In the following chapter, through the perspectives of the interviewees, I shall focus on the control and disciplinary practices in school and its arbiters, which comes often as a direct result of the forms of students' alienation to school.

## 6.4 Coping Strategies of School: Control and Disciplinary Treatments Having Stigmatizing Consequences

The students going through incompatibilities and gradually alienated from school via their attitudes and behaviors such as being disinterested in the lessons, school fatigue and playing truant, attract attention in the classroom and school, which results in control schemes enacted by teachers and school administrators as part of their coping strategies. I will refer to this sequence as “control and disciplinary treatments” and focus on their form and outcomes in this chapter.

The first range of control treatments are the monitoring kind, such as warnings and disparaging remarks. These treatments occur in the classroom as a result of the interactions between the students and teachers. After the monitoring treatments comes the disciplinary treatments. These are the Trainingsraum penalties and conduct-meetings imposed on the students. Unlike the former, disciplinary practices are deeper in terms of effects; more people get involved in the interactions as they overflow out of classrooms, and these practices generate more tangible outcomes for the students in question, they impose in a more structured way the deviant labels onto the students.

### 6.4.1 Control Treatments: Over-monitoring as Warnings and Disparagement

Students alienated in school encounter control treatments. This is the sequence where the above-mentioned forms of alienation come to be seen as part of students' personal traits. The analysis of the interviews demonstrates that there are repetitive forms of control treatments that are common in the reports of the students.

*Hum, for example in that school, everyone in the classroom was speaking, but if I say a word or laugh she was getting angry only at me, I was really getting annoyed then, then squealing, and the fight with the teacher. ( Do you think she was behaving in this way towards only you in the classroom? )Yeah, she was always coming over me. (Erdem,465)*

Among the control treatments, *over-monitoring* in the classroom makes up a common point of the interviewees' accounts. The practice is apparent in expressions such as “the teacher is coming over me” or “teacher is looking always at me”. In the over-monitored interviewees points of views, teachers watch their behaviors more closely than others and this practice is so strict that it suffocates and stigmatizes or labels them in the classroom.

*“In the school, yes OK. He knew I was acting up, he was looking at me all the time, if I say anything, then he was immediately saying yeah you again” (Ersoy, 258).*

Ersoy assumes that regardless of his behavior, the teacher would assume he is “guilty” he was expecting to always see disruptive behaviors from him. The distinctive side of this sequence in the general disengagement process is that the students, through the control practices, such as over-monitoring, come inevitably to see how they are seen by the teachers, by the school administration and in some occasions even by classmates.

*“...everyone in the classroom was speaking, he [the teacher] was telling only me 'shut up' only yelling at me. Then I was yelling at him, what of it?, everyone is speaking here, why are you only dealing with me...” (Emre, 309).*

Contemporary scholarship demonstrates that such over-monitoring mixed with disparagement that Emre complains about is not a rare case; teachers have less verbal communication with, give negative feedback to, and smile seldom at, low expectation (i.e. labeled) students. It appears to be a mechanism of *interactional control*. Cooper (1979) asserts that this form of control occurs when teachers experience low control over low-expectation students and they thus limit their initiations with the student by creating a negative emotional climate in the classroom and giving negative feedback to them; in other words, teachers' perceptions of personal control causes discouragement of low-expectation students (Cooper 1979). Can's case relates to this argument.

*“...I raised my hand and kept waiting, I mean, I wanted show that I know the answer, too. I wanted to give the answer; I am not worse than others, I also knew the answer; I knew how it should be done. Then he did not pick me, as lowering down my hand, I said 'fuck you!', he heard it and told me to go with him, he took me into the school director” (Can, 402).*

Can kept insistently raising his hand in order to show the teacher that he knows the answer. The teacher did not pick him and Can got angry because he interpreted it in a way that the teacher is not interested in him. The interview data supports the interactional control argument by Cooper from the *perspectives of the interviewees*; in their opinions, the teachers were quick to accuse them in many instances. Mehmet accounts the conflict he had with a teacher in the final minutes of the lesson when all the students were reading:

*...Then I only bended my head to my side, she shouted me, she shouted me and I saw her writing a paper to send me to the Trainingsraum, I took the paper*

*and threw it in front of her, I said “you go to the Trainingsraum, not me. I am here since 7:30, now you send me there just because I bended my head to the side”, I said “what type of teacher you are. You should help me, but look how you behave at me”. Then she yelled and I yelled and I slammed the door and went out! (Mehmet, 291)*

The statements of a school inspector, who previously worked as school teacher, also support the interaction control argument. He stated in our conversation that he himself has encountered similar cases as Mehmet's in his checks of classes in schools. He said that once a student deviates from the majority in the classroom with indifference to lessons and adaptation problems, teachers generally have a tendency to increase control, a kind of application of a label. He pointed out that this usually provokes students and exacerbates the situations. What Mehmet reports above can be seen as a sort of exacerbation caused by over-monitoring. Considering his poor and demotivating family conditions, he further loses his already weak connection to schooling via the control practices of the teacher. Over-monitoring comes out mostly in the forms of disparagement and warnings. It can be inferred from the interviewees' statements that they are presumably used to increase control in the classroom.

*“she was yelling, when you look at your side...she didn't want me because I was bad , I was not coming to school” (Özgür, 353).*

As illustrated in the excerpt taken from Özgür's interview above, the disparaging attitudes of teachers and repetitive warnings make the interviewees sense that they do not belong to the group of students whom the teacher likes; and this exclusion gives rise to some negative consequences on the emotional well-being of the interviewees such as the feelings of inner-conflict, stress and anxiety in the personal self-definition. The control treatments led the interviewees into thinking that the teachers expectations are very low or entirely negative. They then begin to develop disbelief against the school. Metin's account illustrates how this happens;

*Many things were not true, sometimes it wasn't my fault at all. I admit that I'm not innocent, I have often messed up. But there were things where it wasn't my fault, and they immediately called (the parents), your son did this, your son did that. I think they just wanted to get rid of me. Just wanted to send me to sort of a bad school. They didn't want me to become someone better (Metin, 303).*

This indifference mixed with disparagement that comes together with lack of interest in the student's potential problems arouses a feeling in Metin that the teachers and school administration discarded him, that they did not care about or want him. While the control practices might only be part of teachers' coping strategy, this excerpt proves that Metin's disbelief against school is strongly linked to the accumulated control practices.

#### **6.4.2 Disciplinary treatments as Trainingsraum Penalty and the Meetings**

When over-monitoring, warnings and disparagement reach critical levels or teachers are otherwise unable to control the interactions with students, disciplinary penalties of Trainingsraum and meetings are the next form of control treatment. Based on the interviewees' accounts, and my own participant observations at the Lindenhof school where a similar Trainingsraum control exists, the students who are constantly being sent to Trainingsraum are stigmatized or labeled not only in the classroom but also in school as a whole. Although these disciplinary control treatments are a means for teachers to better control the classroom, they have stigmatizing consequences for students, because many teachers and school directors occasionally visit the Trainingsraum and for a student, being seen there means to be known as a problematic 'bad student' in the eyes of the administrators. Therefore, some students resist to go there because they know that it will label them.

*Sometimes everyone was chatting in the classroom, the teacher was always accusing the same persons, he was saying that you, you and you go out of the class now, and sending people to the Trainingsraum. Then we were getting more pissed off. Why he only sends us? Whole class was chatting, but he was sending only two or three of us. He was saying now go out, and then we were ripping the paper in front of him and going out! (Emre, 631)*

Emre's remarks indicate that the Trainingsraum as a penalizing practice has a very negative effect on him. He does not want to go there and his reaction to it is a form of resistance. Many interviewees attend disciplinary meetings as a regular occurrence, and keeping in mind that it takes six Trainingsraum penalties to incur a disciplinary meeting, "konferenz" (Ersoy ,536), it becomes clear how often the Trainingsraum penalty is utilized in schools as a control treatment.

*I don't know, how to say, I did not want to stay in this school. When that teacher comes to the classroom, how to say, she is yelling at you when you are*

*late, tells you to go out, you know such stuff, then she also sends to the Trainingsraum. Then I could not deal with it. I told them that I want to change school (Mehmet, 275).*

Over-monitoring and constant Trainingsraum penalties irritated Mehmet and led him to withdraw himself from his school. Mehmet's withdrawal is striking because he is one of the few students who made positive comments about teachers. He praises his first teacher endlessly, saying that he motivated him very much; *"he was like an angel"* (Mehmet, 231). Considering his family conditions, which are not at all conducive to pro-school motivation, the importance of a teacher for a student like him is paramount. However, this 'angelic' teacher is canceled out in a sense by negative experiences with other teachers. He says that his subsequent teacher in the 7th class did not show particular interest in his situation. In 7th class, Mehmet starts playing truant yet this time, to his mind, a female teacher became obsessed with him and his 'bad' behavior, and he had to change the school. Importantly, his statements, like other interviewees' statements, confirm the sequentiality of the process; "teacher's obsession" comes out after the forms of alienation he made visible - indifference to courses and playing truant.

As very shortly noted earlier, through this sequence, the student does not only come to be known as problematic to his teachers and school administration but also in some cases to his classmates. The control treatments result in stigmatizing consequences which are likely to let a student's classmates know about how the teacher thinks of the student and the teacher will be less supportive (DeLuca 2002:4; Solga 2005). The control treatments of teachers might be interpreted by classmates as signs that they should distance themselves from the student as well. In such cases, the stigmatization of the student presumably goes hand in hand with feelings of isolation and the label is further imposed on the student.

*"The teacher said there is abuse and tension in the classroom, then the others said, it is so since he has come. I mean, actually I'd never swear. And then, you know, they said, the class is nervy, the students are scared of me and so on, don't ask me why, I really don't know, how to say, the teacher said OK 'look we don't need a person like you', then they kicked me out of there, I don't know why" (Turgay, 288).*

Turgay's case illustrates that he felt alone not only against the teacher but also against his classmates. As he thinks everyone is against him and he is not liked, this control practice has presumably strong devastating effects on his personal self-definition. Similarly, Özgür complains about the attitudes of his classmates. He says, he had some uneasiness with some

classmates as of fifth class where he performed poor educationally: “...they think themselves important and take you down a peg” (Özgür, 546). Most probably, the reason for derisory attitudes toward him by some classmates stems from the control practices which label him socially within the school. The important thing for the analysis here again is the sequentiality of the process. The control treatment comes only after the students' alienation from school in different forms sketched in the previous section. Additionally, the control treatments make students known as problematic to the school and in some cases, to their classmates. Students' awarenesses of the perceptions of others (stigmatization or labeling) undermines and alters their self-perceptions. Thus, the Trainingsraum and disciplinary practices are not limited to the classroom and school in terms of their influences but they disperse into the social relations and self-definition of the students.

### **Conclusion**

In this section, I have sought to show how the control and disciplinary treatments bring about stigmatizing consequences for the interviewees. The former set of practices is restricted to teacher-student conflicts and takes place in the classroom environment, the latter set of practices is overflowing out of classrooms and taking a more formal twist. The most pronounced effects of the treatments on students in this sequence is that they are stigmatized in varying degrees as depending on the type and intensity of the treatments. I shall now focus on the next sequence that focuses on the reactions of the students to the treatments.



## 6.5 From the Perception of Irreversibility to the Self-fulfilling Prophecies

Common to all reactions the students show to the control and disciplinary treatments are disappointment, indignation, anxiety and stress. However, the control and disciplinary treatments seem to generate two sequential sub-steps that are strongly intertwined with each other. First, the students lose any beliefs that their efforts can remedy their situations in school, in fact they come to believe the opposite, which is consistent with what they perceive to be the beliefs of teachers and sometimes classmates. And, second, on account of disbelief in reversing the situation, self-fulfilling prophecies germinate. In this sub-sequence the students' educational performance goes from bad to worse and they exhibit extreme disruptive behaviors.

### 6.5.1 Self-fulfilling Prophecies: Educational Performance from Bad to Worse and Extreme Disruptive Behaviors

On the basis of the sequences experienced so far, the students exchange negative expectations with teachers and interpret teachers' preferences as clear indications of whom they value in the classroom. This paves the way for destructive beliefs that their efforts are useless to change their own situations. They think their efforts are worthless as to recovering their bad grades in particular and school career in general. This perception can have a very strong effect on the development of self-fulfilling prophecies by the students;

*How to say I was in the classroom, it suddenly turned out to be a fight, you know, he [the teacher] came, held me he was going to kick me, because I was not learning and just idling there (I guess he would not kick you just because you idle there) I mean, you don't understand, do you? I was not listening because I just got that I could not do anything, only two months left, even if I came to school every day, they'd not have given the diploma...(Hakan, 233)*

This excerpt unveils the sequentiality of the process: Hakan rejects learning because he saw no capacity in himself for changing the course of events in account of his feelings of mistrust against his teacher. To explain, when Hakan was in Hauptschule, his teacher, though he promised, did not send him to Realschule for trying, and he resented his decision greatly; “I was fully ruined...everything finished” and he blamed the teacher; “he did not give me a chance, he did not tell me go and try your chance. He said, no, you are not good enough you will stay in this classroom” (Hakan, 218). Quite similar to the control and disciplinary

treatments, this event made Hakan distrust the teacher. He lost his belief in himself to change the situation; *“I am believing that I could do there [Realschule], because I found the right way then again. They did not do it, afterward I totally gave up”*<sup>46</sup> (Hakan, 213).

Based on this background, Hakan exhibits a self-fulfilling attitude; rejecting learning. His case shows the strong link between losing hope and developing confirmatory behavior consistent with the treatment of him by teachers. Similarly Sinan's reporting shows self-fulfilling actions reflective of feeling no way out of the situation.

*...In the 6<sup>th</sup> class, there was a rat-bag teacher in the school, she was Miss Günther, no one could get good grades from her, she was hating me and I was hating her, my grades were down because of her, actually because of myself, too, I was not learning, but as she was hating me, I was getting worse...(Sinan, 193)*

Sinan's account captures the downward sequence that stems from control treatments and pushes his motivation in the wrong direction. We know today that positive relationships with teachers have tremendous effects on development of the senses of commitment and belonging to school, which is vital for the internalization of the success-oriented goals by students. Sinan shows the opposite; negative relationship with his teachers, feelings of losing control over the courses and movement toward putting less and less efforts into bettering his performance, in a sense this is just what he perceives the teachers expectations are of him.

Many of these students become disappointed in this sequence of events going from simple in- classroom control treatments, to disciplinary actions. The interviewees show multiple instances of disappointment, a kind of gulf of disappointment opens and widens with each school-imposed and especially individually-motivated steps in their sequences. Essentially, I argue here that the perception of losing control over the situation stemming from multiple disappointments further demotivates the already demotivated students. The students, due to the deep mistrust and feelings that their situations are irreversible, come to believe they can be kicked out of school at any time. They easily take a position against the teachers because they think that they already discarded them, which brings about further withdrawal of the students from schooling.

Can, for example, begins to skip school as he thinks he could not do better; *“I was staying at home...I could not do [the lessons] (Can,222)”*. This decreased participation and his withdrawal confirms the picture (e.g label) that Can thinks the teachers have of him. That is, a self-fulfilling attitude resulting from his hopelessness for his own situation. These events are a

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<sup>46</sup>“I totally gave up” is translation of “O zamanda tam kaydim”. It might also be translated “I was totally ruined”. But in this context, it refers to a deep change of the way of behaving from this moment on.

product of the control treatments. It should be highlighted in this point that perception of irreversibility of the situation might not be the only option for students subjected to the control and disciplinary treatments. However, it becomes much more difficult for students to keep their motivations high as result of these treatments. It is evident from what the students report that any hopes and motivations that might save them from leaving school do not come after a certain threshold of control treatments.

The research shows that teacher expectations produced more powerful self-fulfilling prophecies when students believe that teachers treat the students differently (Madon, Jussim and Eccles 1997), in other words when they feel labeled. As shown thus far, the data are rife with examples of this. The present research also points out that these students are fragile and susceptible to negative expectations. It is difficult for them to motivate themselves for better performance because of negative feedback and lack of resources. Take the case of Emre, his self-fulfilling behaviors unfolded due to his hopelessness about recovering the situation. Emre, as part of the vocational school he was attending, was doing an internship one day and he decided not to go there anymore. The motivation behind this decision lies in his belief that whatever he does will not change the outcome:

*“...So, then, after going a couple times, I said myself 'forget it, why should I go there!' and also you know I was about to be kicked out of this school, I mean in Oberneuland. They said you are hundred percent going to be kicked out, I thought, OK good, then I did not go to internship as well. I thought, why I should go there they will kick me out anyway” (Emre, 607).*

This shows that Emre's withdrawal from schooling evolves parallel to his feeling of hopelessness about recovering his situation; *“The grades won't be good anyway”*. His withdrawal is a form of self-fulfilling prophecy confirming the label he thinks others have placed on him. Emre, however, actualizes more self-fulfilling behaviors with time:

*He [the teacher] kicked me out of school for a week. I just turned on a song in front of the door, they kicked me out... I jokingly held the mobile to the door, he then gave a discipline penalty just because I played one song, he gave one week discipline penalty, he told me not to come to school for a week.. (Emre, 609)*

Being asked why he held his mobile phone to the classroom door, he replies;

*I was doing it because I wanted to annoy him. Another teacher came and kept asking 10 minutes to put the mobile into his open hand, I said no, no, no! He*

*was going to call the school director. He went and came back and told me “you are lucky, the director is not there”.I said “good, then beat it” I swore. (Emre, 611)*

Emre wants to annoy his teachers because they have been communicating the expectations negatively for long time. As the exchange of negative expectations makes him think that putting efforts for changing the course of events are useless, he resists and exhibits more disruptive behaviors and, in doing so, he finds himself more and more a person who behaves in the 'expected' way. Emre states that in one occasion he swore at a teacher and he was given temporary suspension for two days. But he, in order not to let his family know about it, continued to get up early, leave the home as usual and come to school to spend time nearby.

*“...I was sitting there, a teacher passed by as I was playing with a knife, I showed it him jokingly, he thought it was for real, he went and told it to another teacher, then next day, when I went to school they asked why I did such a thing and gave me disciplinary meeting... (Emre 101) “...I was fucking up before too, so he [the teacher] said 'that's enough, go'. They kicked me out of school...” (Emre 117)*

At the end of a range of incidents in which negative expectations have been communicated, Emre came to be a student who pulled out a knife on a teacher, which caused his expulsion from this particular school. Developing a set of confirmatory behaviors, extending from distancing himself from learning to pulling out a knife on a teacher, Emre seems to have germinated a way of seeing school as a hostile environment that strongly interacts with the feeling of irreversibility of the situation.

The share of the feeling of irreversibility in the emergence of self-fulfilling prophecies is visible in Temel's case as well. He reports that he and his friend fought tooth and nail with a teacher. Temel was kicked out of school owing to this incident but as he talks, we find the same state of mind behind his motivation:“...I had thirteen school meetings in this school, it was my last chance,. They had just set a meeting date, I was knowing that I will fly, the teachers were saying , too, that I wont stay there for too long anyway..,then I will slug him one or two times, I am already leaving, right.” (Temel, 450). Thirteen disciplinary meetings in one school suggests a sort of *career* along which the expectations of others are firmly established and, thus, difficult to change. It is undeniable that Temel thinks he does not have anything to lose and he internalizes the irreversibility of the course of events and develops self-fulfilling attitudes and behaviors.

*“...in the schools I went I never buttered up the teachers like other students do. I did not do that, I was yelling at them, they were refraining from me”  
(Temel 486)*

In addition to denoting the way in which Temel's actions are erected on the feelings of seeing no way out of the situation, his statement also shows how his disruptive behaviors turn out to be a potential master status for him over time.

For these students, such interactions make the school a hostile place for them and the teachers are seen as hostile people. They interpret the control and disciplinary treatments that they are not liked and not wanted in the classroom, and they are expected to behave in the worst ways. In some cases, this perception seems to have intensified some students' aggressiveness against the school over time and culminated in extreme self-fulfilling events. For example, Özgür tried to set the school on fire, and it becomes clear in the interview that the motivation for this lies in his deep anger at his teacher.

*The problem was there again the teacher. I did not do anything, I did not go to the school and this and that. Then, I set the school on fire and yes that was it. (I mean, did someone chill you an hour before, or I do not know, did someone say something?) Nothing. Just the teacher was a bit strange, he was really strange. (Özgür, 429)*

This incident is proof of how the school turned out to be a hostile place for Özgür. The bonds of trust are broken and the school lost its legitimacy for him. His anger at school, which results from the communication of negative expectations throughout the control and disciplinary treatments, embodies as an extreme self-fulfilling behavior.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have sought to show, that the control and disciplinary treatments cause communication of negative expectations – negative labels - resulting in perceived irreversibility of the students' situations and sets of self-fulfilling behaviors. The attitudes and behaviors resulting unfold in a sequence of intensifying events. These events constitute a *process* of school disengagement. There is rarely one single event that causes a student to leave school. In the next section, I will draw attention to social identifications of the interviewees, as these are closely interwoven with self-fulfilling demeanor and procedural trajectories of students leading them to leave school.

## 6.6 Social Identifications

As self-fulfilling prophecies emerge in reaction to various forms of control practices, the interviewees shift toward social identification that in opposition to school. This identification joins them with a peer network that is ideologically 'anti-school'. While the peer effects have existed in the previous sequences, they become distinctively pronounced in the sequence of identification shifting away from school entirely. The formation of peer groups occurs around certain values and norms which are alternative to pro-social and pro-school. The analysis of the interviews shows that peer-based values are on solidarity and cooperation as opposed to *what they perceive as values of pro-school boys*. They empty their daily interactions of school related topics and replace pro-school values with peer group values that are explicitly anti-school. By allocating status and prestige on the basis new values, the peer groups seem to protect their members from the damaging effects of school. In this process, similar past experiences take on a social function, connecting the students with their peers. The peer groups offer feelings of 'success' for interviewees who experienced mostly feelings of 'failure' previously.

In addition to explaining formation, I will also investigate the content of anti-school values. The anti-school attitudes are based on assumed differences between Turkish/Kurdish and German students. I call it "*the natural differences*" as they are explained in reference to irreconcilable social cultural borders by the interviewees. Accordingly, Turkish-ness and German-ness are assumed to have intrinsic features. The anti-school attitudes also concern teacher treatment of the interviewees. The students, almost without exception, report mistreatment by the German teachers and favoritism of German students. The students commonly believe that the reason for unequal teacher treatment is their cultural background (national/ethnic/religious). I first discuss peer group formation and the emergence of anti-school values. Then, I unpack the two main constituents of the contents of the students' social identifications.

### 6.6.1 The Formations of Social identifications

#### 6.6.1.1 Homogeneity of Peer Profile: the lived experiences as basis for friendship

Despite school biographies including ups and downs, these students failed mostly to attain full 'memberships' or feelings of belonging in the schools they attended. Explicitly, their articulations regarding conflicts with teachers and classmates explained in previous sections are clear indications of psychological tensions they experience in daily school life. They

interpret in such conflicts that they are not liked or respected. These all seem to undermine their sense of belonging in school. Perhaps due to a need for recovering their losses of belonging, these students are getting closer to certain peers. From the reports of the interviewees, there is a strong link between background of the students and profile of their (new or further developing) peers. Without exception, the interviewees are attracted to the peers who have the similar lived experiences and hold like attitudes. Almost as a rule, they developed peer groups without friends having good grades.

*(I see. OK if one of your friends gets a good grade...)Heh!, there was no such a person (Ibrahim, 358).*

Ibrahim emphasizes that he was, and still is, spending his time in and out of school with the same peers and no one among them has pro-school attitudes. The homogeneous structure of the peer group suggests that the lived experiences at each sequence described so far has a great influence on the friendship strategies of the students. By keeping in mind the role of the structural limitations of school, such as the tracking system, on the formation of peer groups, it appears that the interviewees actively search for peers who have particular profiles; they for example do not make friends with the students holding pro-school motivations.

Deniz, being one of the close peers of Ibrahim, also confirms the absence of school oriented peers in terms of school success; *“there is no such a friend around”* (Deniz, 847). Deniz says that he has had only Turkish friends and he spent time with them both in weeks and weekends and they never talked about school related topics. That all the interviewees report the absence of school-oriented peers in their close circles underscores the fact that the friends are not chosen randomly. Instead these friends are a product of similar experiences. Emre's following comment evidences this non-randomness of peer selection from the school grades level:

*I mean there were better than mine but theirs (grades) were also not good, I mean theirs were like 3 or 4, not good, you know. Most of their grades were either normal or bad. There was no one whose grades were good (Emre 497)*

It appears that the students are attracted to each other around particular characteristics. Despite his temporary contacts with Russian and German students, which is not the case for most of the interviewees, the profile of Emre's peers in terms of school performance and orientation is quite homogeneous. Low school grades of the peers are an indication that the

students approach each other by virtue of their attitudes to school, which are outcomes of previous school experiences or ascribed labels. This preference is clear in the efforts made by some to befriend new students. For instance, answering a question concerning finding new friends in a new school, upon being expelled from the previous one, Ahmet replies as follows:

*I was finding. I mean at the beginning, I'd look to understand who is who, you know. I'd be quite for a couple of days, first I'd look at him, how is this one, how is that one. Then If I think that OK he is like me, like he'd get along with me good and so on, either they'd come to me or I'd go them, then we start talking. (How do you understand that he is like you?) I mean, how to say, it just happens, I feel it, you know, I mean when I see what he does, I say OK that's it. (Ahmet, 379)*

What does Ahmet exactly look for in his new friends? Having internalized the previous experiences and expectations, Ahmet exhibits a strong tendency to befriend the peers who are similar to him. It can be argued that there is a certain *rationale* the students have in friendship selection. This rationale seems to be an outcome of their socialization that has been described so far. And it is toward a particular set of anti-school values and cultural similarities.

#### **6.6.1.2 Emptying daily interactions of topics concerning school**

*“What no... I mean we don't talk about lessons among us, I don't know why”  
(Deniz, 863)*

In addition to homogeneity in peer members, another equally important quality of peers, as Deniz testifies above, is avoidance of the school related topics from daily conversations of the students. Although the students are attached to, or close to, different peers, they without even a single exception report that;

*we don't talk about school. We talk about, well us, what we want to do, who we want to become later. About school we don't talk much, OK, maybe we talk school was like this, it was a good day today, but we don't talk about homework or stuff, we're more into things like getting out, going for a walk and stuff (Metin, 343).*

Compared to Deniz, Metin has completely different peers, nevertheless he makes the same point. The interviewees say they were talking about football and girls, like many other students do, but *never* about school. School could only be part of the conversations if there



was an interesting incident there on that day, such as a fight (Temel, 358). This common feature among the interviewees is a clear indication of indifference to the educational properties of school in the first place. Ahmet's following statement illustrates this point; *"Not at all, I mean maybe sometimes but we do not give a shit about it...(Ahmet, 581)*. However this indifference should also be seen as an attempt made by the students to trivialize the symbolic importance of school for themselves. The indifference in Deniz's and Metin's statements is witness to their loss of belonging in school which comes out as result of constant disappointment. Furthermore, Ahmet's disregard for schooling also signals that the school values and norms are losing importance as references against which he judges himself.

Against this background, the avoidance of topics concerning school in daily conversations seems to give the interviewees an opportunity to free themselves from a domain where they are not feeling attached or successful, and feel labeled or experience anomie. Taken together, the avoidance is also a strategy followed by the students in order to replace school values with a set of peer values. Ahmet cannot do such a value replacement individually; peer group is essential in making the symbolic meanings of school values and norms insignificant because a peer group offers reinforcement, nurturing and legitimation of these meanings that would otherwise be deviant and cause conflicts within the individual. An example for this can be found in Emre's following statement;

*"We were talking about it very rarely, only when we got the report card, for example, 'like hey let me look at what grade you got' . Or sometimes one says, I don't know, 'hey I got six from German (class), then we were saying 'ahh very good go on like this'"(Emre, 493).*

By embracing failure collectively, Emre and his peers successfully lower potential damages of school failure to their self-esteem. Plus, with joking gestures, the peers show that low grades by no means undermine someone's status and prestige within the group, in fact this reinforces it. Similar to Emre, Hakan also highlights the ways in which peer groups immunize their members against low school performance:

*"...it wouldn't make any difference even if you go to Oxford and come back, this would never interest them, they'd say, so what! There was no such a thing like I will be better than you, or something like that you know..." (Hakan, 433).*

Such indifference to school values is only possible with the condition that group members

should agree upon the point that school success is not credible capital in that group. Perhaps, this is the strongest underlying motivation of peer group formations. *They devalue school success by forming an alternative set of values and norms as a result of collective action. With the legitimation of these alternative norms and values, they do not only get rid of negative stigmatization at school but also gain a place (a status) in their own group.* They also embrace their commonly shared label of deviant with respect to school. In other words, in trivializing commonly shared meanings attached to high grades and good performance by school, the peers create their own norms and values, on the basis of which status and prestige are reallocated.

### 6.6.1.3 Group values and social control

But what are the makings of this anti-school alternative set of norms and values? The answer to this question comes from the practices of the peer groups. It seems that the actualization of the alternative norms and values is not only limited to avoidance of topics about grades, lessons and school from daily conversations, instead there are active valuation strategies in devaluing school success. First of all they separate themselves from the others unambiguously:

*There were, yeah, yeah, there were some hard-working guys, you know, like, 'I am going home' I must work, there is lesson tomorrow, you know, like this. We were not hanging out with them, we were saying 'ahh OK then bye'. We were going out to play. (Ersoy, 621)*

Ersoy and his peers distinguish themselves from “hard-working” students because those pro-school attitudes do not match with their group rationale. For Ersoy pro-school guys accept school values as reference points, whereas Ersoy and his friends do the same thing via anti-school group values. Based on such differences in value systems and self-reference to these value systems, not all but some of the interviewees go a step further and express feelings of resentment or hate toward those who have pro-academic motivations.

*A hard-working one is not for us, he knows too much you know, would not fit with us. (What do you mean?) Such one would not be like-minded, he is smart, he should go and hang out with other smarts, we hack around and smoking, such ones would not already come to us. Maybe there are some, but I do not like them, I beat them, I hate, I do not like really, we would not accept them anyway, we make fun of them...(Ünal, 607)*

Ünal's remark displays, among many other things, clearly the extent to which the students holding pro-school motivations are unwelcome by his peers. He delineates clearly the boundaries that separate in-group members from out-group members on the strengths of group values and norms. He identifies himself with a group of peers who do not engage in schooling and have certain attitudes toward school- "*hacking around*". This animosity presumably stands for full internalization of the group values as alternative to perceived pro-school student values. In other words, for Ünal, damnation of the others is done on the grounds of the group values to which he is attached, and against which working for school is wrong.

*I mean, it is not my business who gets what grade but I somehow find it wrong, it seems to me a wrong thing, I don't know why, maybe because I can't take it, (Grade) (Ünal, 611)*

He despises pro-school motivations presumably as they are perceived as a betrayal of the group values and norms. The peer group values and norms are anti-school and obviously defined in opposition to perceived pro-school groups as the out-groups. As Ünal fails at school, he prefers to judge and to be judged on the basis of the anti-school group values, against which he is not a failing person. Based on such rationale, the perceived pro-school attitudes are condemned. Crucially, the condemnation is not only restricted to out-group students. Rather, the peers exercise a strict social control on each other in order to ensure that everyone abides by the group norms, arguably the label now has taken on a reinforcing character independent of the teachers' and pro-school peers' enforcement. For those showing even the slightest tendency towards deviating from group norms, some sanctions are put into action and peers exhibiting pro-school motivations are brought into the loop:

*Some tell (that they got good grades), then we say "OK don't show off now, if you got it, go there and sit down". After that, we say "you are not one of us now", jokingly, you know, "why are you coming and showing off". Then we pat his back and say "come on, may lad ", then we are laughing at it. (453, Bekir)*

Existence of a peer deviating from the group norms causes discomfort and, as it exists in Bekir' report, leads to exclusion and sanctioning mechanisms. From the group perspective, the pro-school attitudes are perceived as a threat to group cohesion. Good grades are equal to "*showing off*" and the student in question is admonished to comply with the group norms, otherwise he would be sanctioned with excluding mechanisms. Thus, the alignment efforts in Bekir's statements are intended to regulate the group dynamic. The group presumably preserves itself from outer influences that could undermine it.

Besides social control of the group over their members, the regulation is conspicuous in the form of students' *self-control*, as well. The interviewees own aversions to mentioning when they get good grades are very telling in this point.

*For example if I get 1 in Math and my friends get 2 or 3, I mean worse than mine, then I was becoming the bad guy. It was happening when I was better than them, (why you are becoming a bad guy?) I mean, they see it like showing off, you now. (like what?) like they play a joke on you, I mean, like 'hey look at yourself and look at me, this kind of things' (Deniz, 839)*

This excerpt taken from Deniz's interview illustrates well, this time, the resonance of group control on individuals. It seems that internalization of group control turns into self-control in time. Such a self-control is also found in Bekir's following statement: *"I would not tell it in front of others, but to certain friends...I mean I would not like to show off by saying in front of others"* (Bekir, 449). In conformity with the group norms, which devalue school success, the interviewees hold a view that high marks in school are equal to being a 'bad guy' or unsuccessful group member.

#### **6.6.1.4 Peer group protection; allocation of prestige and status among peers**

In spite of the fact that the group control is crucially important for promoting anti-school group values over school values, it should be stressed that the interviewees do not identify themselves with their peers just because of social control or peer pressure. They also profit from being a group member, they shed their anomie. The anti-school group values are centrally used in allocation of prestige and status among peers. In other words, in return for the prestige and status given at/by school, the peers create their own prestige and status system in direct contradiction. Being hardworking and successful are negatively judged and seen as 'uncool' and 'soft'. Instead, those who adopt the group values successfully are assigned higher status such as 'cool' and 'hard';

*In this time, we were cool, like laughing, being bad you know...I mean we were fancying ourselves cool, you know, because the courses were bad, we were not going there (school), we were not caring about it...(Temel, 374)*

Looking at what is valued among the students, there emerges forms of solidarity, being cool and bad, and challenging school authority. From the group standpoint, acting in the

guidance of such values translates into prestige, higher status and popularity among peers. Given that these students have a weak sense of belonging and fragile commitment to school, the fundamental attraction of peer groups for them is the positive attachment the group provides its members. For instance, as Temel's reporting both above and below illustrate, thanks to the bonds he has with his peers, he gains a sense of security and belonging.

*How to say, I was trusting my friends and they were trusting me, I mean I knew, if something happens, my friends would never leave me alone (Temel,494)*

Temel adheres to his peers and develops a sort of belonging to them. This comes in relation to his negative past history at school. The sense of security his peers grant him as a result of his social identification with them presumably helps him in recovering his previously damaged self-identity. Temel also prefers anti-school peers to any pro-school peers, because, in doing so, he finds a meaningful and secure place that reverses his school-failure anxieties. As the interviewees develop further attachment to alternative group values, they become less dependent on the binding values and norms of school, against which they are unsuccessful and underachievers.

*There was none there going against me cause all knew that if one goes against me, how to say, I mean they are not scared, but they know, I have lots of friends. I did not scare them, but they respect me, because thanks god I had friends guarding me, and still, I have. Wherever I went, there was always at least one, 'abi'<sup>47</sup> or friend, I mean, they were guarding...they were telling the others 'look, this is my brother, you will take care of him, tell it to others, whoever touches him will be in trouble' it was like this (Alper,186).*

As noted earlier, Alper's sense of personality was heavily undermined by harsh control and disciplinary treatments. His statement above underlines the fact that his sense of marginality at school causes his gravitation to his peer group because it offers a sense of belonging and protection, whereas his teachers and the school atmosphere made him vulnerable. His peers, in this way, provide Alper with a sense of belonging and further improve his social prestige in the eyes of others – the prestige which was damaged at school before.

Overall, the students having gone through the sequences so far become close to the peers who have similar backgrounds. The profile of the close peers of all the interviewees is

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<sup>47</sup>The literal translation for “abi” is elder brother. Yet, this usage in this context means an elder friend who protects his younger friend from troubles and feel responsible for him.

homogeneous in the sense that they have low grades and have an edge with school. The interviewees embrace anti-school values and define them in opposition to perceived pro-school students' values. The creation and preservation of the group values requires collective agreement upon them, which enables group practices. They for example completely empty conversations of school topics among friends. They keep themselves strictly apart from their out-groups which are the students who have pro-school orientations. Plus, a sort of social control is imposed on group members, if necessary, in order to balance the group dynamic, for example admonishment of in-group members for having high grades. The peers internalize the group norms; they do not find high grades important and give more value to anti-school solidarity and collectivity among friends. Furthermore, the social identification with peers gives the students a sense of security and belonging and helps recover their self-esteem which is undermined at school.

### **6.6.2 The Contents of Social Identifications**

Two vital assumptions constitute the core content of the social identifications of the interviewees with the aforementioned group-based values. These are '*the natural differences*' and '*the unequal teacher treatment*'.

#### **6.6.2.1 The natural differences between Turks and Germans**

*“I'd never trust a German, I trust only Turks” (Ibrahim, 316)*

*“my friends are generally from Turkey, I can't get along well with Germans. You know there is a saying like, 'there is no real friend of Turk except for Turk’ this saying is somehow correct, really, I mean it is not wrong.” (Ünal, 447)*

The social identifications of the interviewees with anti-school values is furthered via ethnic and cultural differences, and perceived irreconcilable differences between Turks/Kurds and Germans. Almost all of the interviewees maintain emotional commitment to their pro-Turkish or Kurdish identity<sup>48</sup>. The students have a tendency to choose their friends from, and spend time in and out of schools mostly with, Turkish speaking students. The number of German friends in close peers is quite rare; *“I mean cultural problems, language problems, I*

<sup>48</sup>Although, depending on the Kurdish conflict going on in Turkey, few interviewees express their uneasiness with Kurdish friends who identify themselves with PKK, it is not a central phenomenon in their world and they do not see Kurds any different as they speak Turkish and have same cultural characteristics.

*don't feel relaxed when I am with them. When I am with Turks I am like myself" (Ünal, 753).* When asked, the students, like Ünal, point out that social-cultural differences are the reasons for their rare contacts with German friends. Bekir makes a similar point: *"How to say, Germans are not like-minded, for me they are different, I mean their jokes and Turks' jokes are different, for example I can't explain them Recep Ivedik jokes right, hehe<sup>49</sup>" (Bekir, 381).*

Most of the interviewees consider their way of thinking and behaving totally different from that of German students. Their accounts highlight incompatible dissimilarities between Germans and Turks. It is noteworthy that there is a tendency toward considering Germans with 'negative' characteristics such as softness, self-seeking, stinginess and betraying, whereas Turkisness/Kurdishness is being related to 'positive' connotations such as trustworthiness, open-hardheartedness and generosity.

*In hanging out on the streets, or going to somewhere, no, I don't know, you can't trust a German, you can't turn your back to him, but when a Turk is next to you, you can turn your back to him, you can trust...look, I have lived many things with Deniz...we have done many things together. When we got into trouble with police, we were saying we did it together, that's it, but Germans, they sell each other out. If one of us could escape, we don't give his name to police, but Germans give the name immediately, you know (Ibrahim, 308)*

To Ibrahim, Germans are not loyal to their groups and, thus, are not trustworthy. As well as this, he implicitly refers to the notion of "common fate" (Brewer and Rupert J. Brown 1998:564-65-66), which exists among group members and binds them to each other. He hints that he shares such a feeling with Turks but not with Germans. Similar to Ibrahim, Temel also considers Germans unfitting into the 'correct' values. What is meant by correct values is roughly referring to the notions of solidarity, sharing, and helping your friends.

*You can't trust Germans, I don't know, maybe they are so cause they are Germans, they sell you out immediately, you know...lets say, there is a fight, first German one would run away, if police asks, he would be the one giving your name first. He'd never cover your back, never ever. (Temel, 514)*

In various statements, images of German students as soft, weak and individualist are common. As it is the case in Temel's remarks above, these characteristics are associated with less anti-authoritarian behaviors and individual self-seeking. However, there are exceptions to considering German students in particular and Germans in general in this way. For instance, Emre stresses that he doesn't consider Germans and Turks any different;

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<sup>49</sup>Recep Ivedik is a film character performed by a Turkish Comedian

*“I was getting on well with them (Germans), I mean as I do with Turks. I mean for me it is OK Turk or German, I mean, it's the same. I mean, if he is friendly, it does not matter for me what he is” (Emre, 565).*

Unlike other students, Emre has not taken for granted assumptions about Germans and he does not think that there are great differences between Turks and Germans. Like Emre, Turgay also makes positive comments about Germans:

*“...when you say asshole to Germans, they don't get angry, they understand, they say OK I might have made a mistake, but if you do the same thing to our folk, they'd always see themselves right, but Germans are not like that, you know, Germans have more Ansicht<sup>50</sup>...” (Turgay, 744).*

He positively values some aspects of German-ness over Turkish-ness and finds Germans more trustworthy and fair and attribute to them a better self-reflexivity. Interestingly, in contrast to the interviewees stating negative views about Germans, two common points attract attention in Turgay's and Emre's biographies; their contacts with Germans, and relatively weak attachment to a specific peer group. From his biography, Turgay's father's positive business experiences with Germans are highly influential in Turgay's views about Germans; *“I mean, my father thinks that Germans are better, because Turks in Germany, how to say, they always think, hmm, how to say, I mean, there is a saying in German ' wie kann ich ihn über den Tisch ziehen' <sup>51</sup>you know what I mean” ( Turgay, 740).* So, in line with his father, who prefers making business with Germans, Turgay finds them more trustworthy than Turks.

Additionally, Turgay's peer group attachment was also ambivalent and weak. Although upon his father's jailings, he got closer to a group of friends for a short time who have anti-school attitudes; *“Lots of my friends were addictive to alcohol and heroin, and grass and fag you know at that time. I was hanging out with them”*, he got away from them by changing his environment; *“I started to hang out with my cousin, we were going to Mosque and we were going there three times a week” (Turgay, 408).* Due to his mother and grandparents' control on him, he got closer to his cousin. Because he changed his peers completely, his social identification with the peers who appropriated anti-school values was temporary.

In a similar vein, despite the fact that he mostly had Turkish friends, Emre has considerable contacts with German friends, as well. Upon being expelled from a school he was sent to another one which was mostly comprised of German students *“...there my friends*

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<sup>50</sup>Literal translation of Ansicht is view or opinion. Here it is used more in the meaning of “self-reflexion”

<sup>51</sup>Here it means “how can I take the advantage of him”.



*were only Germans because there was almost no Turk in this school...in whole school there wasn't even ten Turks, all were Germans, because only Germans live in the neighborhood"* (Emre, 553). Emre befriended many German students on the basis of common anti-school values. It is presumably true that due to such school expels, Emre's affiliations with his previous peers were cut and he never bounded himself to a specific group. He spent time with students randomly depending on whomever skipped the school when he skipped. Overall, it is worth noting that these two characteristics, having contacts with Germans and no strong affiliation to a specific peer group seem to play a role in the formation of Emre and Turgay's views about Germans and German-ness. They do not find any incommensurable differences between Turks and Germans. Emre and Turgay, however, are semi-deviant cases where anti-school peer groups were not defined by culture and ethnicity as well as values. This is likely a product of their social situations, one with a father who is closely working with Germans, and one without constant access to fellow Turks.

Considering the identity formation of the students, Erdem is a more extreme deviant case exception. He, in sharp contrast to other interviewees, has had mostly German friends and feels more comfortable with them. Although incommensurable differences are also salient in Erdem's accounts, they are from a reverse perspective, this time it is about Turks; *"they are aggressive. They say, 'I know a lot of guys, they can beat 10 persons at once' and so on"* (Erdem, 641). To Erdem, Turks and Kurds are macho and he prefers to identify himself more with German friends *"I am the only one in my family, I mean, looking like German. For example, I go to a party and speak people for one hour. Then they say, are you really Turkish? I say, yes. They are shocked, I mean they think I am German, I mean, I have no Turkish accent you know"* (Erdem, 835). Erdem is acknowledged on the basis of his attitudes which are seen as *non-Turkish* by his peers. In other words, the extent to which he deviates from the picture of *"natural Turk"*, he is welcomed by his German peers. In his description of Turks, the share of his peers' world view is quite visible;

*"they think as I think about Turks. I mean they (Turks) they fancy themselves something, you know, bullying and so on. And they, for example, they chat up girls on the streets, they (German friends) don't like such things, they like only me as a Turk (Erdem, 847).*

Just like other interviewees who claim social-cultural differences between Germans and Turks, Erdem's views also highlight such differences through the lenses of his peer group. Turks are assumed to be maladjusted, bothersome and have disruptive behaviors. Thus,

despite this 'reverse' perspective compared with the other interviewees, the categorization based on culture and ethnicity is the same; the assumption of irreconcilable dissimilarities between Germans and Turks. But, how do the students explain or legitimize such differences? Interestingly, the differences between Turks/Kurds and Germans are attributed to *natural* social-cultural characteristics.

*I mean, I don't know, I can't get along well with them, I don't know it does not work, and I don't want, too. I have German contacts but I don't hang out with them, I call them when I need. I get along with most of them, but I don't want to hang out with them... how to say, I don't like their habits, the way they are. (Ahmet, 794)*

Ahmet does not bother to find reasons for the dissimilarities and instead accepts them as 'natural' - *the way they are*. I call this perception *natural differences* because the differences, by being attributed to social-cultural characteristics, are *naturalized* among peers and because they stem from things that seem to occur *naturally* as a product of 'nature'. Accordingly, anti-authoritarian attitudes such as challenging teachers, school directors and police are seen through demeanor and attributed to Turkish-ness/Kurdish-ness, whereas soft, conformist attitudes, such as cooperation with teachers, working-hard and so on, are attributed to German-ness.

However, considering the exceptions to the perception of natural differences, Emre and Turgay both have contacts with Germans and are less embedded in their peer groups and do not refer to *natural differences* in their social identifications. Therefore, it might be argued that the assumption/perception of natural differences traces back to the conditions in which these students were socialized. Their cases suggest that, compared to the other interviewees, these two peculiarities - more contacts with Germans and being less embedded into peer groups - might contribute to their deviation from the perception of natural differences.

One might reasonably ask what if the ethnic/national category cuts across educational performances. In other words, how do the students react in the case of contacting anti-school German students?

*There were a couple of Germans, for us they were foreigners, I mean normal German guys, you know, how to say, if you see them, you'd not hang out with them. I mean, for example, if you say lets smoke, they'd say 'no it's better if I go home to work' it was like that you know. But there were one or two Germans hanging out with us, they were like us, they did not care about the lessons, like 'ahh fuck it off' and so on (Onur, 526)*

As Onur's statement underscores the stronger distinctiveness of the groups that binds the members and holds them together are the anti-school attitudes. Onur clearly distinguishes foreigner Germans- *for us they were foreigners*- from insider Germans- *they were like us* - on the basis of their posture toward school. Obviously, German students exhibiting anti-school attitudes and devaluing school success are part of the peer group. Their anti-school values take precedence over their ethnicity. As a strategy, their German identity is less emphasized and overlooked due to their internalized practices that are attributed to Turkish-ness/ Kurdish-ness- *they were like us*.

Similarly, Ahmet had a German friend in their close group as well; “...*there was one German, we were 3 Turks, we were going to his home all the time. He was not going to school, too...*” (Ahmet, 365). Although they are nationally from different backgrounds, the anti-school values and practices create common ground for friendship. However, if we remember Ahmet's statements in the previous page about Germans “...*I don't like their habits, the way they are* (Ahmet, 794), we can see that Ahmet does not consider his friend as typical German, but, by following the same strategy, Onur did, Ahmet turns a blind eye to his German-ness and, thus, evaluates his German friends still with the perception of natural differences. The transformation of German friends in the eye of the interviewees is done on the basis of group values and norms and without invalidating the perception/assumption of the natural differences.

#### **6.6.2.2 Unequal Teacher Treatments**

*...The teacher chooses only two or three persons together with me, he was mostly choosing us, it was always Turks, I have never seen the teacher telling Germans off [Emre, 627].*

Unequal treatment by teachers is another vitally important constituent of the social identification of the interviewees. The dispersed perception of unequal treatment of Turks by German teachers interacts strongly with the perception of natural differences and these constitute the core contents of social identification of the interviewees with anti-school values and practices. That notion that German teachers mostly approach the interviewees unequally and give preference to German students in the classrooms is commonly held without any single exception, thus the deviant label is blurred by easily accessible ethnic categories. For them, the underlying reason for the mistreatment is their background. They think that their Turkish-ness makes them disliked and disrespected. For instance, Emre above complains

about teacher mistreatment and infers from it that the teacher does not like Turkish students. The teacher's tendency towards disparaging only Turkish students regularly and never picking on German students in the classroom communicates with him negatively. Emre thinks, the problem is in his and his friends' national background. Similar to Emre, Deniz has the same perception; *"The teacher was like a Nazi you know, I mean he had a kind of grudge against Turks and Muslims..."*(Deniz, 413). However, next to ethnic/national background, Deniz points out religious dimension; for him the teacher was not respecting his Islamic background.

The commonness and intensity of the perception among the interviewees is surprising; interestingly, it is not limited only to those who have exhibited aggressive behaviors against teachers. Even Erdem, who withdraws from learning passively, separates himself from other Turkish students due to their macho attitudes, has only German friends, yet still complains about teacher mistreatments. After stating his discomfort with teachers, he states as follows; *"for example in Obervieland, we were talking in the classroom, if I say a word or laugh, she (the teacher) gets angry only at me, I was sometimes really getting annoyed..."*(Erdem, 461). And Erdem explains the reason for it; *"Turcophobe, I was the only Turk in the classroom"* (Erdem, 469). As Turkishness does not play a major role in his social identification, his complaint about the mistreatment due to his background is worth noting. As such the ethnic fractures between Turks and Germans are relevant in many of the school leaving processes found amongst these interviewees.

When asked how they sense that the teachers favor German students over Turkish students, the reports give numerous incidents and practices. Most of the interviewees signify rather subtle ways that make them think they are not valued as much as German students.

*...you start hating the teacher bit by bit you know. They were irritating. There were some fully irritating. (For example, how?) Huhm for example they are favoring the Germans, eehhm the German children. There were too few Germans in that school, the teachers were letting them pass the class because they were already a few, you know. (How were you sensing that they were doing so?) Hehh! If you are born and grown up here, then you know it. It already starts at fifth and sixth class (Tell me more, how?) Now how to say himm, you raise your hand, for example the other raises, too, he[the teacher] takes him first. You would say, come on you are both students, he took him by chance, or he raised his hand first. But it appears bit by bit, for example we were going to sport, the teacher was showing first what we will do and then he was calling a German guy "hey Martin come here, show it to the others again". Why Germans lead, why they don't ask us first, just like this you know, we feel like lagging behind, you know (Hakan, 317)*

To Hakan, mistreatment permeated daily practices in school and he bases this claim on accumulation of repetitive observations confirming that German teachers favor German students. It appears that the students get such an impression from verbal or non verbal reactions of the teachers or from classroom climate. Similar subtle ways of mistreatment seem at work for Onur as well;

*How to say, for example, I was sometimes late to the class, then she was punishing me like write this for one hour or stay half an hour longer in the class, but when some others getting on well with her did the same thing, she was doing nothing, just telling OK sit down. Then, we were seeing that look, she is coddling him but not us. (Whom was she coddling in general?) Usually, puhh, her own students Germans, there were a few foreigners, too, I mean working hard, but really a few (Onur, 290).*

From Onur's statement, the climate the teacher created in the classroom does not seem to be encouraging for Onur and his close peers. The perception of differential treatment leads these students to assume that they are not acceptable in the eyes of the teachers they are deviants. Additionally, this excerpt lays bare the way in which the perception of mistreatment strengthens the notion of 'common fate' and peer group identity among Onur's peers; “*she is coddling him but not us*”. Perceiving ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds as underlying factors of differing teacher treatments, leads the interviewees to take a position against German teachers. Apparently, the daily practices and statements of teachers are of major importance for what the students think and believe. However, it should also be noted that from the interviewees' perspectives this does not always mean that the German teachers are having overtly racist tendencies in their treatments; it instead means that they might not be sensitive enough to sociocultural differences.

*I don't know, they (Turkish teachers), how to say, they see me as their own people, but Germans (teachers) don't see me as they see German students. (What does this mean, can you explain more?) No, I mean, when a Turkish teacher speaks to me, he speaks closer cause I am of one of his people, get it? , but when Germans look at you, they do it as if they look at a lazy bastard<sup>52</sup> they approach you and Germans differently. (How, I mean how do you know that it is different?) Ohh, you dont understand, do you! it is very clear, I mean, the way he talks to a German student is quite different from the way he talks to you. (Can you explain little bit more, I mean, I wonder how..) for example, how to say, I had a bad teacher, Mister Klaus, he kept saying all the time, like, 'we Germans behave our women well and you foreigners do not let them do or say anything'. Like this you know, or for example, when there is a fight, they'd*

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<sup>52</sup>He uses the word “Faulkraut”

*not say anything to Germans, they'd never say anything bad to them, but if a kanake<sup>53</sup> did something, they'd talk it for a year, they say, he is already suspicious (Temel, 594).*

As it is obvious in the statement above, the teachers appear to the interviewees as not tuned into inter-cultural communication and, probably unconsciously, impose what they think as 'right' values on the students. Thus, the teachers likely face difficulty freeing themselves from the common assumptions and prejudices dispersed in the larger society. And the articulation of these common stereotypes in such manners in the classrooms doubtlessly hurts the students as did it hurt Temel and his peers. The students interpret that neither their family nor community values matter in school. They think that their identity and self-esteem are assaulted, as is the case for Temel in the statements above. Although direct and indirect institutional forms of discrimination in German Educational System has been documented elsewhere (Gomolla and Radtke 2009:65; Kristen 2002), my main interest here is to attract attention to the share of the *perception* of unequal teacher treatment in the anti-school identifications of the students. Crucially, the unequal treatment of German teachers toward Turkish students is common for *all* the interviewees and it is a force, whether 'real' or not, in formation of their social identities.

*The previous one, she is, I don't know, she was against Turks, she was Russian or Polish maybe, but she did not like foreigners, she did not like Turks, Kurds and Arabs at all. (How did you understand it?) I mean, cause there was a Russian guy, she was behaving him good, she was behaving polish students good, but when it comes to us, I mean, you are doing the same thing for example, I did the same thing in Math as Russian guy, she'd say 'well done' to him but would tell me 'why you are doing like this', but, we did the same thing, you know. You see? I mean she was irritating you, she was sneakingly looking for something to blame you. (Sinan, 201)*

In the sequence of control and disciplining treatments, it was noted that the students perceive that teachers change their attitudes and treat them differently most presumably because of their concern about the social control in the classroom. However, what we are here faced with is different. In this sequence, the interviewees believe that they are treated in certain ways owing to their ethnic, national, and sometimes religious backgrounds.

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<sup>53</sup> In German 'Kanake' is an abusive expression used mostly for male Turkish youth in Germany. It is very close to 'Nigger' in English and as it is the case for the term Nigger, some Turkish youth use proudly the term, Kanake, as part of their self-identification (Trost 2011)

*Miss Meier, how to say, I have never seen such a bad women in my life, she was one of the teachers I hated most cause she carries a grudge, how to say, against Turks, I mean, she was full of rage against foreigners. She was shouting always at us, giving lower grades, such a teacher, you know. I never liked her. (Mehmet,220)*

Mehmet highlights that the teacher intentionally targeting Turks because of their background. Quite different from the previous resentments in the sequence of control and disciplining treatments, these statements refer to dimensions of *collective identity*. To the interviewees' mind now the individual incompatibilities are no longer the reason for unequal teacher treatments. The reason instead is social identity. The interviewees think that their customs and values are not acceptable in the eyes of German teachers. The interviewees strongly perceive that German teachers favor German students and value their own culture, and this turns out to be a part of their social identity.

### **Conclusion**

I have sought to reveal in this chapter both the formations and content of social identifications for the interviewees. With regard to the formations, it was highlighted that they gravitate to peers who have had similar lived experiences. Therefore, the profiles of the interviewees' peers are almost completely homogeneous in terms of educational performance and ethnicity. Plus, such a homogeneous group structure contrasts pro-school values with anti-school values as the primary distinction for in-group and out-group. In these anti-school in-groups, norms and practices are based on shared experiences of failure, and a coping strategy to deal with this. Also social control is applied and status and prestige are reallocated to group members based on adherence to anti-school values and behaviors.

Additionally, I have also pointed out the two assumptions that form the core contents of anti-school social identifications. It was argued that the interviewees attribute some set of characteristics into German-ness versus Turkish-ness/Kurdish-ness and they consider them irreconcilable natural differences. Finally these identifications come from a strong and widespread perception about teacher mistreatment, whether true or not, as a shared experience of Turkish students. The perception of such culturally infused mistreatments by teachers leads to full blown stereotypes that German teachers favor German students over Turkish students, as a rule.

## 6.7 Peer Group Pressure and Risky Behaviors

In the previous section, I have sought to tackle the peer group characteristics and relevant social identifications of the interviewees. They identify themselves with anti-school values and they presumably do so, because it makes up for the need for acceptance and belonging. With prestige and status allocation that are made within peer groups on the basis of the anti-school values, the interviewees find a safe-ground for themselves. This safe-ground is in part based on what they perceive to be teachers' and others' expectations of them.

However, such social identifications undermine further school engagements. As the interviewees act according to anti-school values, they adopt risky behaviors that undermine if not jeopardize school commitment further. Some skip school for long spans of time, some sell and use drugs, some commit crimes such as robbery or assault; and all of these have potential detrimental effects on school engagement, and have a derisive effect on life-course outcomes.

### 6.7.1 From Direct Pressures to Risky Careers

Despite the aforementioned protections, internalizing anti-school values seems to cost interviewees in terms of commitments to school and this appears to compound over time. The interviewees' peers exert direct pressure on them within the framework of peer subcultures.

*I was entering one course then skipping the next, or, I don't know, there were friends, we were hanging out, we were skipping the school, I don't know, they were coming and saying 'lets go'. We were going to play football, smoking, I don't know, we were skipping the school all the time (Mehmet 227).*

Mehmet reports his peers' pressure on him and it obviously affects his attitudes in both the classroom and school profoundly. It is worth noting that Mehmet's gravitation to his peers lies in his difficulties in the family and school that induce stress, anxiety and psychological tension. Adding to that, he is also frustrated at relations with some classmates and is afflicted with the perception of unequal teacher treatment;

*I was skipping the school, I was having my cigarette and going to Internet cafe, I don't know I was listening to music, I was feeling, as if I am somewhere else, I mean I was feeling really different, I was asking myself, what would happen if my dad knows I skip the school and so on. I was listening to music, watching movies or playing games, I was going there because, there I was away from all the things. (Mehmet, 447)*



As this excerpt shows, Mehmet was baffled and alienated in school at that time. He felt suffocated and thus runs away from the threatening environment of school. This way he gets closer to peers having anti-school attitudes and influencing his school engagement negatively.

*When I am with friends, we were going to other schools, like visiting you know, they were smoking grass, I was smoking cigarette, they insisted a couple of times but I did not smoke grass, once I smoked but not with them but with different friends, we went to Gelsenkirchen by car, I smoked there, I thought it is OK just once in a year, you know (Mehmet, 451).*

This excerpt demonstrates that Mehmet's peers in multiple contexts are composed of those having weak or no pro-school attitudes. He is somehow structurally locked in disadvantaged situation in terms of family, neighborhood, school and peers. In term of the sequences of the process, through social identification with his peers, Mehmet adopts a set of anti-school behaviors such as constant skipping school, and smoking marijuana. As he fails to attain a full membership in school, he gravitates further toward his peers having anti-school attitudes and vice versa. Similarly, Onur also describes how he was being attracted to his peers and in what ways they were shaping his attitudes.

*Mostly you hang out with them and also if you go to the same classroom together, it gets worse, you know. They say lets meet at 7:30 in the morning there and we can go to school together, then you say OK and meet with them, they change their mind there, they were saying, lets go today to this place or that place, who cares about the lesson, then one of us says yeah good, then the second one, says yes, then the third one, yes, you know. You can't say no anymore, cause all your friends say yes. If you'd say no, they'd tell 'what's wrong with you, come on, come with us'...(Onur, 390)*

His statements illustrate existence of direct peer pressure that causes practices which lead to estrangement of the students from school. Onur's bonds with his friends compel him to act in a way that confirms anti-school group values. Given his dissatisfaction with, weak sense of belonging to school, it is very difficult for Onur to defy his peers' demands. Onur says that he had a girlfriend doing well at school and putting a lot of efforts into motivating him for doing the same thing;

*"she was telling 'hey look I am coming to school why you are not, listen I also don't like it, too, but I am coming because I love you' and so on, you know, but there were friends, you can't tell your friends 'hey dude my girlfriend is*

*waiting, I am going...they'd say 'what, dude you leave us, go to her, come on, stay here. It was like this before, you know, so we argued and I told her not to be involved into my business, then she said 'OK then you get your nose out of my business' then I slapped her once, so it was (Onur, 518).*

Onur's peers exert pressure on him due to his relations with his girlfriend who has pro-school engagements and attitudes. His masculine attitudes towards her and his resistance to acquiring motivations for school, despite her efforts, are partly outcomes of the peer subculture which he is part of. Obviously, the patterns of behaviors such as masculinity are valued among his peers and he is encouraged to spend time with nonacademic activities and to treat others who would try to have him be academic with aggression, if not violence.

The normative values of peers that were described previously demand that the interviewees act in certain ways. Since these values become reference points for perception of the self and the outer world, the interviewees seem to act in accordance with their frames. For example, Hakan, following a range of disappointments that conduce a sense of anomie in school, gets attracted to peers who share that similar profile. The sequence of the risky behaviors in disengagement from school solidifies again in his account:

*It starts, I don't know, 8th and 9th class already. You go smoking after school, then at some points comes grass, alcohol, then you go home late this and that, you know, then at some point you say, fuck the school. You are already fucked up by then, it makes no difference to you anymore. (Hakan, 245)*

The attitudes and behaviors which Hakan acquires with his peers are risky in terms of schooling and lead him to gradually final disengagement from school. In making up for Hakan's marginalization in, and loss of belonging to, school, his peer relations lead him into gradual estrangement ending up with complete disregard for school. He sums up;

*"Yeah, as you get closer, you see better what you are in need of, I mean, you see that some have driving license, some had motorbike driving license at that time, or I don't know, some wear brand clothes, but then you look at yourself, 'I am same age but having nothing' you know, because your family doesn't have anything, then, slowly, you don't wanna go to school, for instance, you are going out on weekends, you are trying to do something, you know, just to catch up with them, do you know, what I am saying? Yeah, you destruct yourself unconsciously, you yourself don't even realize it"(Hakan, 249).*

Hakan perceives his self-worth in the frame of anti-school peer values. He is concerned about what his peers think of him and wants to enhance his popularity among them.

According to peer values, there are particular ways that would bring prestige, and it requires him to fulfill normative expectations such as finding access to a car and wearing brand clothes. As academic identity demands particular ways of acting and understanding, social identity, in the same way, requires a set of attitudes. Hakan starts working in public markets on weekends and then as he implicitly hints in the last part of his statement he gets involved in illegal affairs.

*I don't know, suddenly we woke up to the matter, you know, it clicked on our mind, making fast buck. We're going somewhere and coming back soon with money in our pockets. We got used to it, then came to slot machines, my mother and father did not know about anything, then the school I mean it worsened completely, how to say, I don't know, like behaving like a gangster and so on you know...(But, can I ask what did you used to do? ) I was stealing money. (from whom?) from firms. (I mean how?) We were taking out their safes completely, sometimes there were inside ten thousand sometimes twenty thousand. We were entering inside, getting money and running away.(But weren't you jailed for that ?), But at that time as I was younger than sixteen, they couldn't jail you, they, how to say, they fine you for it, but it is clear that you can't pay it, so they give you some jobs, ehmm charitable work<sup>54</sup>, you work there for nothing, it is indemnification<sup>55</sup>, you know, sometimes 15 days and sometimes a year, (Ten thousand, twenty thousand is too much money) yeah, but insurance pays the money, we serve the sentence, they couldn't do anything to us because we were underage at that time (OK so you were finding money so) ehmm we were selling, I mean we were selling grass, too. (I see) we did every thing, we did what we had to do. So still some go on doing, there are some among us, they drive Mercedes, some succeeded it some did not, but I did not want to do anymore, if I wished, I could do it, I could have money in my pocket every day, you know, but it is, ehmm it has a dead-end, I was not feeling myself good, when I got home, for example, I mean, I was happy in the afternoon because I had money in my pocket, but as I go to bed, I could not sleep, I mean what I have done was flashing before my eyes, why did I do it? I mean, there were some-days that I wanted to go back and throw the money back to where I got it, I did not want it, you know (Hakan, 673)*

His motivation in getting involved in illegal affairs lies in his wish to meet his needs in his peer environments. He compares himself with others and feels ashamed due to lack of money and fashion clothes, these are symbols of the groups to which he hopes to belong. It is his full social identification with particular peers which makes him motivate to develop risky behaviors. Through the risky behaviors, he is assigned prestige and status among his peers something he believes he cannot obtain in school. So, it is increasingly difficult to talk about overt peer pressure at this point; it is rather that the interviewees automatically develop a

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<sup>54</sup> Gemeinnützige Arbeit

<sup>55</sup> Schandenersatz

sense of belonging to their peers due to intimacy, cooperation and trust they have with each other. According to their internalized value system, they are successful, prestigious and trustworthy within an anti-school framework.

However, Hakan's last statements also remind us that adaptation of anti-school values is not always a smooth process but is full of moving closer to and further away from anti-school attitudes and behaviors, although they follow a trajectory toward an ultimate disengagement from school. They are subjected to stressful and controversial situations and, in the face their frustrations at school, seductive peer subcultures are just around the corner both in school and in their neighborhood. Defining their self and developing a sense of belonging to their peers leads them both into legal and illegal risky behaviors; risky especially for their potential schooling, as Hakan states above.

The risky behaviors within framework of anti-school values, that undermine school engagement further are also common for other students in different forms. One of the most common is substance use/abuse. More than half of the interviewees use alcohol or illegal substances regularly and a few of them are selling drugs. And they report, they started to use it at school. For example, Ünal says that

*I was smoking pot at school, I was not doing it after school, I like smoking, you know, I was 14 or 15, they were there [the students at school], and I was smoking to feel a bit heady, you know. I was smoking and going home and eating, and watching TV (Ünal, 707)*

Ünal's substance use during the school day should be seen as a form of extreme alienation from the educational features of school. He internalized anti-school values and behaved accordingly. Schooling has almost no meaning at this point for him anymore.

Because the interviewees were directed to Lindenhof School soon after their leaving the School of General Education, it is also possible to observe the continuance of anti-school actions. For example, Özgür uses and sells marijuana – and he started – like many others - to use it with friends in school. Parallel to this, he says, he got into trouble with school authorities because of scams. *“I was scamming<sup>56</sup> you know, like, I was paying with Turkish money in the cafeteria, and also fights, such things” (Özgür, 285)*. It is noteworthy that, the more the interviewees identify themselves with peers having anti-school values, the more they exhibit the practices that accelerate school disengagement. Many of them use and sell substance and some of them get involved in more risky behaviors that are indications of deviant life courses. Özgür got involved in burglary in his school time, and upon a court's

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<sup>56</sup>Betrug

recent decision, he will complete his sentence in the upcoming semester break in juvenile home<sup>57</sup>.

*ehmm I will be put inside (When?) in a week, in break time <sup>58</sup> (why?) because of this notification<sup>59</sup>, I mean burglary, you know burglary, I broke into flats and I was caught, such things, you know, (Alone?) no, with friends (Özgür, 903)*

As careful readers might have already noticed, Özgür developed such a career step by step; low socioeconomic family profile, having incompatibilities and frustrations in school, the control and disciplinary practices, following fights with teachers, attempting to set the school on fire, using and selling substances and burglary. Among other things, this pathway gives a map of school disengagement in his biography. Yet, in his late anti-school practices, a complete social identification with peer values, other than direct peer pressure, is at work. They fully identify themselves with particular ways of seeing the world and these function independent of the actions of the peer group, and perhaps even the teachers.

Özgür represents by no means an exception for the interviewees. Substance use and dealing, fights and gambling, are very common and almost half of the interviewees committed various crimes. For example Ahmet was jailed twice:

*(What was the reason?) why was I put inside? (yes, the reason?), stealing, I stole something. (in or outside of School?) I did it outside, I mean, I stole more than once, but it [notification] was because of fights, when I fought with someone outside and so on. Mostly that was the reason, like fights (Ahmet, 441).*

It is important to highlight the role of peer values in transformation of disruptive behaviors into criminal ones later. As it has been shown, some of the students exhibited disruptive behaviors in the classroom as result of their frustration and dissatisfaction in school. However here at this sequence, the criminal activity has a more collective dimension. It comes out parallel to social identification of the students with particular peers and internalization of respective values. Ahmet's criminal behaviors for example emerge in concurrence with his social identification with particular peers. He took two notifications due to fighting in school and got involved in a couple of stealing incidents.

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<sup>57</sup>Jugendhaft

<sup>58</sup>Ferien

<sup>59</sup>Anzeige

In this risky behaviors sequence, there is another sub-sequence for some of the interviewees that greatly contributes to final school disengagement of them. Some interviewees are not given, by court decision, a full residence permit to stay in Germany, although they were born in Germany or came as a child. The main justification of the court for this is in the childrens' involvement with crimes extending from burglary to physical injury<sup>60</sup>. For example, while being born in Germany, Ahmet's residence permit must be extended every 6 months; *“It happened because of the notifications<sup>61</sup>, they did not want to give me unlimited (residence permit)...(Ahmet, 521)*. Similarly, Temel, came to Germany in his childhood, and still holds a limited residence permit, which used to be extended on a monthly basis; *“also ehm I'm criminal, you know, that's why they did not give me unlimited [permit], it is always like 1 year, 1 year, 1 year, you know (last time was it also for one year?) it was again for 1 year, then it was for one month, I was going there every month, then they gave again for a year” (Temel, 54)*. Likewise, Bekir, came to Germany seven years ago, and reports that he has limited residence permit; *“they look at if I came to school regularly...”, (Bekir, 301)*. Along the same line, Mehmet, like his elder brother, carries a limited residence permit, as well. In addition, Özgür got his unlimited permit just weeks before the interview took place, whereas Hakan has still a limited residence permit. Their anti-school attitudes and subsequent behaviors impact residence opportunities and these can impact their ability to attend school, in case of residence refusal or in case they do not extend their permits and are then living illicitly as aliens.

Considering the matter in terms of school engagement, the interviewees who got involved in crimes and holding limited residence permits are already in a different world than school. They find the studies in school quite irrelevant for their life and they are engaged in non-academic peer group activities. They are known as criminals in school and they sense these labeling practices. The anti-school identity features are becoming parts of their personal self-definition. This is a significant point to make because, in contrast to the previously damaged self-concept, this time they presumably construct a stronger self-definition than before and keep high self-esteem due their social identifications with their peers.

*“You know sometimes one argues with teachers, and the teachers go counter him, so if such a thing happens, then I would prefer to run counter to them, too” (Temel, 550).*

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<sup>60</sup>The interviewees are required to have their own permit as of 16. Before this age, they do not have their own passports and they are dependent on their parents.

<sup>61</sup>Anzeigen

The effect of full social identification and legal situations as criminal seems to germinate a type of personal definition which not only helps immunize against the threats of negative school experiences and teacher treatments but also *defines* itself in opposition.

It is argued that there is a direct connection between success and failure in a particular domain based on self-esteem in that domain (Crocker, Major and Steele 1998:528; Crocker and Major 2003:233; Osborne, Major and Crocker 1992; Bandura 1999:3; Park, Crocker and Kiefer 2007:1504). The data herein support this argument. The interviewees disengage themselves from the negative feedback of school via social identifications with peer values presumably as a part of self-protective tension management. The interviewees, by devaluing pro-school values, protect their self-esteem against the potential damages the low test scores and bad grades might cause, and potentially protect against the labels attached to such low performance. Solga asserts that as a kind of coping strategy, the devaluation should not be considered as a passive adaptation but rather a preservation of personal identity which requires a careful self-selection of the situations which they seek into or avoid (Solga 2005:165). Based on the interviews, it is plain that together with the rationale of the group, relevant social identity and risky behaviors, the interviewees at some point do not see courses important for their life and develop a particular way of grasping (anti)schooling.

*Huh, ahm, the teachers in the schools knew that I am not like other students who butter up teachers, I was not doing this, I was yelling at them, that's why they were shrinking away from me. (But as you were yelling, weren't you thinking that I am yelling at him but he will give me a bad grade?) what, hehe! Not at all. When I got angry, I do not pay any mind, I mean I do not care if he will give me bad grades or something else. (Temel, 490)*

The interviewees devalue school achievement. The test scores and school grades lose their meanings. Instead, they take risks for schooling and develop anti-school personalities based on peer group values. Temel's statements above exemplify an aggressive version of such a state of mind, yet it is not to argue that each student has the same level of aggressiveness. However, what is common to all is the fact that the school success loses its significance, they see other fields to be more important for judging success, failure, friends and friendship; and the risky behaviors, legal and illegal, lead them into various forms of incidents that cause school leaving.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have sought to demonstrate the strong relationship between peer group

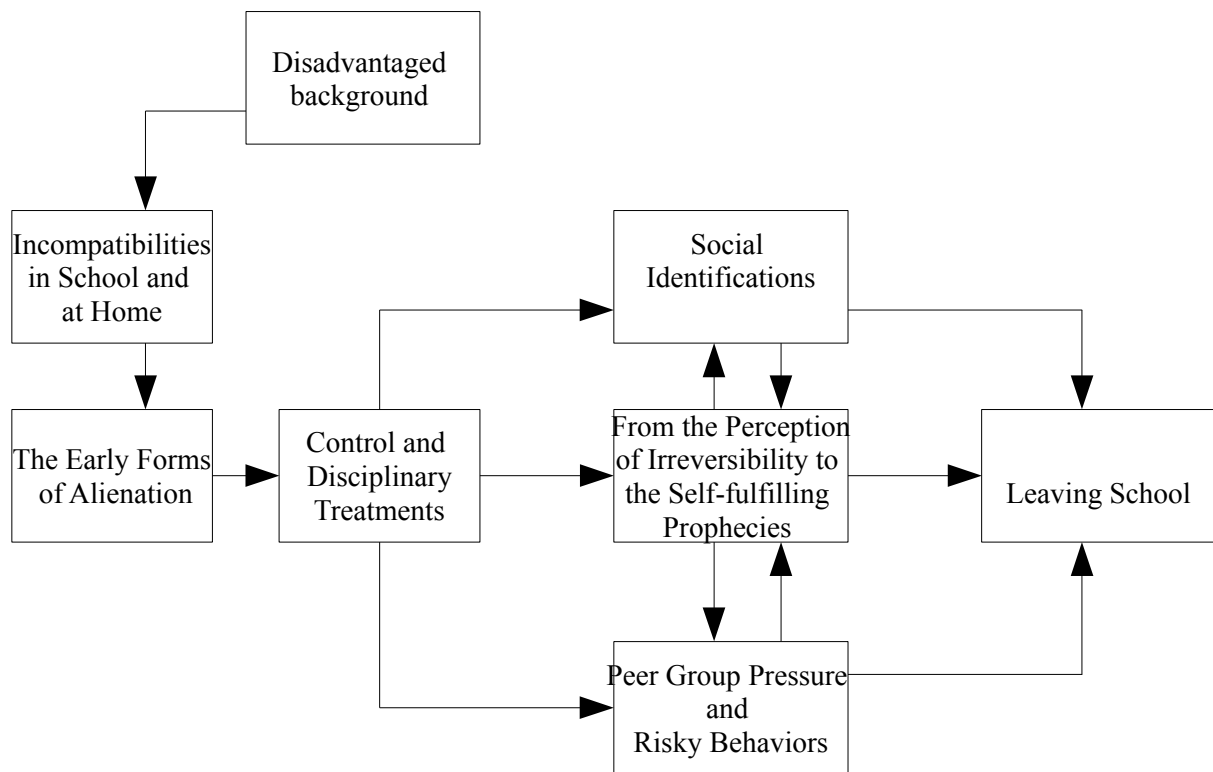
identification and risky behaviors in the formation of final sequences of the disengagement process. While the peer pressure is direct at the beginning, the interviewees identify themselves more with anti-school values, they develop risky behaviors such as fighting, dealing drugs, stealing and committing crime. In most cases, practicing these risky behaviors leads to complete, if not anti-school personality, alienation from school. I shall now discuss the school leaving incidents in the next section and seek to present the diagram which maps out the general pathways of school disengagement described so far.



## 6.8 Leaving School

So far, I unpacked the different aspects of the sequences leading students out of school. In particular, in the last section, the shares of different versions of peer effects in the final disengagements of the interviewees were shown. For the interviewees, being at this sequence, which generally means being involved in highly risky anti-school attitudes and behaviors, leaving school is just a matter of time. The actual leaving from school happens as a result of various incidents; constant truancy, exceeding the maximum school age limit, using drugs, assaults in school, physical fights with teachers, fraud in school cafeterias, threatening teachers with weapons, and jailing for example. The findings suggest that whatever the final ostensible incident is, the leaving behavior is cumulative in character and follows, despite ups and downs from biography to biography, some specific pathways. Having explained the sequences of school leaving one by one, it is now time to present a consistent theoretical diagram of the general school disengagement process. Figure 3 presents an ideal type that represents the common points of the pathways that the interviewees have gone through along their disengagement from school.

Figure 3: The pathways of school disengagement followed by the interviewees



Disadvantaged Background   Incompatibilities in School and at Home   The Early Forms of Alienation

Very low socioeconomic status  
 Low socioeconomic status  
 Self-employed status

Hardships at home  
 Achieving low in school  
 Hardships in school

Frustration  
 Powerlessness  
 School fatigue  
 Not playing truant  
 Playing truant  
 Severe alienation

Control and Disciplinary Treatments

Over-monitoring: Warnings and Disparagement  
 Trainingsraum Penalty  
 Disciplinary Meetings

From the Perception of Irreversibility to the Self-fulfilling Prophecies

Perception of irreversibility of the situation  
 Completely giving up putting efforts into schooling  
 Extreme disruptive behaviors

Social Identifications

Group values and Social control  
 Homogeneous peer profile  
 Trivialization of School topics  
 The belief of natural differences between Turks/Kurds and Germans  
 The perception of teacher mistreatment

Peer Group Pressure and Risky Behaviors

Peer values as reference values and risky behaviors: working in school time, long term truancy using and selling drugs, gambling, criminal activities

Leaving School

Leaving School Incidents: constant truancy, exceeding the maximum school age limit, dealing drugs, assaults in school, physical fights with teachers, fraud in school cafeteria, threatening teachers with weapons, robbery, jailing and so on.

Based on the types that erected on the categories, Figure 3 denotes the ways a sequence is related to the previous and the later sequences. The list of the categories given below also makes possible comprehension of how steps in a sequence results from previous steps in the sequence. However, there are still some questions left unanswered. For example, are the sequences always the same for each interviewee? Or does a sequence follow the same pace for each student? Or does going through all the sequences guarantee that a student will be a school leaver? More specifically, are there any points of no return between these sequences from developing a school leaver career, and if there are, what are they? These are all important questions in terms of fully analyzing the process of disengagement from school.

To begin with the question, “does a sequence follow the same pace for each interviewee?” it should be stressed that not each interviewee experiences a sequence in the same manner as the same sequence does not always make the interviewees experience the same outcomes. To explain, take the sequence of “the early forms of alienation”, most of the interviewees suffer from the feelings of powerlessness and school fatigue, whereas Mehmet and Bekir experience a very heavy form of alienation from school due to the combined frustrations stemming from the hardships of family *and* school. Or in the same sequence, while playing truant is very common for the interviewees, Ibrahim, Ersoy, Metin and Turgay never skipped school. This means that each sequence consists of different variables, which are experienced by the interviewees in different ways. Theoretically articulating, the variables of a sequence stand for potential passage channels into the later sequence. Now, we can forcefully highlight the argument that each person does not have to experience all variables of a sequence but different persons, depending on many other dynamics, go through some same or different variables within the same sequence. For example Ersoy never skipped school but suffered from the control and disciplinary treatments and then reached into the self-fulfilling prophecy sequence by giving up putting effort into bettering his school performance.

*It was bad there I was not caring the teachers too much, the courses were kind of, ehhm, I was not caring them at all...I was not doing the homework, I was not paying attention...(Ersoy,214).*

Again he never committed extreme disruptive behavior, which is one of the variables of the sequence of “the self-fulfilling prophecy”, but he went through other variables of this sequence; for example the perception of irrevesibility of the situation. At the same time, he experienced a parallel sequence, social identification of anti-school, and identified himself with this group of peers;

*There were, yeah, yeah, there were some hard-working guys, you know, like, 'I am going home' I must work, there is lesson tomorrow, you know, like this. We were not hanging out with them, we were saying 'ahh OK then bye'. We were going out to play (Ersoy, 621).*

The emphasis on “we” such as “*we were not hanging out with them*” explicitly shows that he identifies himself with specific peers and differentiates himself from the others on the basis of anti-school values. Importantly, he reached into this sequence by experiencing not all but some of the variables of the previous sequences.

Now, is it necessary to go through all the sequences described so far to be a school leaver? The results from the data analysis show that some interviews get involved in the disengagement process via some specific sequences. In other words, it is not here argued that each person has to reach into the latter outcome of the sequence with the condition of experiencing all of the previous sequences. Some interviewees entered into the disengagement process as result of a crises or devastating events brought about in other areas of their lives. For example, Turgay did not experience early forms of alienation, as he had no incompatibilities in school. However, with the jailing incidents of his father, he performed low and exhibited adjustment difficulties in school;

*“then three months he stayed in investigative custody. After three months, he went out as innocence, but so that's why, psychologically, I mean, we felt down at home, I mean, that's why the courses got worsened too much...(Turgay, 348).*

These two jailing incidents were so detrimental to Turgay's school commitment that they caused maladjustment and low performance and, following, due to his indifference to school, he had to confront reactions of his teachers and, thus, entered into the disengagement process directly from the sequence of “the forms of the control and disciplinary treatments”. Instead of developing a linear leaver career from the start, Turgay got involved in the process with a family incident. He moved back and forth along the process, once he entered into it. Following confrontations with teachers and problems with classmates, he, at the sequence of self-fulfilling prophecy, completely gave up putting efforts into bettering his school grades and got closer to some peers who hold anti-school values. However, as noted earlier, this convergence was for a short time and, he, with the influence of his mother and grandmother, changed his environment completely and started to visit a mosque regularly. Such ups and downs in his school disengagement reflect on Turgay's views about the natural differences

between Turks and Germans at the sequence of social identifications. Unlike most of the interviewees, he does not believe in the natural differences owing to his relatively weak peer group attachment and his father's satisfaction with working with Germans. Thus, like the cases explained above, Turgay's case, reveals that one does not have to experience each variable of a sequence but also that one can enter into the disengagement process at any point due to an external incident. This suggests that there is no common duration of the school disengagement sequence or sequences, but that it can happen slowly or quickly based on different events.

Sticking to the same question: is it necessary to go through all the sequences described so far to be a school leaver? we should also look at Erdem's case. He had no incompatibilities in school until he changed the school and neighborhood, and more importantly, he had to share his room with his “problematic” brother in their new flat. Therefore, it seems that he got involved in the process relatively early due to events in his private life, a change external to the school experience. Also, his experience of the variables of the sequences follow somewhat a reverse pathway. That is to say, he identified himself with anti-school German peer members but shares strongly the belief of the natural differences from the side of German peers' perspective. However, he did not reverse the process and followed the sequences and left school due to exceeding maximum school age limit.

Another question to deal with is, are there any points of 'no return' between these sequences from developing a school leaver career, and if there are, what are they? This is indeed of great importance as to understanding the working of the disengagement process. As specified earlier, the sequences do not represent a smooth process for the interviewees. Conversely, they sometimes try to change or recover their situation in school as best as they can. For example, Hakan made efforts for bettering his poor school performance. His passing into the sequence of self-fulfilling prophecy was not smooth at all:

*“I worked, worked and worked, then I told him [the teacher] to give me one or two weeks Realschule probation, I want to try, I said. They did not do it. I had no chance, they did not do it. I mean they did not take me into there even for a week, if they did, I believe I could do there, I am believing that I could do there, because I found the right way then again,. They did not do it, afterward I totally gave up” (Hakan, 213).*

Hakan felt the danger and tried to reverse the flow of the events. However, his efforts were not enough to do so, and following, he proceeded along the process and identified himself with some peers on the basis of anti-school values. He got involved in a range of

highly risky behaviors for his schooling such as smoking and selling grass and finally left school due to committing burglary.

Nonetheless, despite different points of entry, it should also be said that the majority of the interviewees proceeded along the aforementioned sequences. For example, Ahmet, having incompatibilities in primary school, experienced almost every variable of the sequence of “early forms of alienation” and “the forms of control and disciplinary treatments”; he felt school fatigue, played truant, and took discipline penalties. These led him into conflicts with teachers and he believed that reversing the situation was impossible. He gave up putting efforts into the course and gravitated to the peers having anti-school attitudes. *“I mean at the beginning, I'd look to understand who is who, you know. I'd be quiet for a couple of days, first I'd look him how is this one, how is that one. Then If I think that OK he is like me, like he'd get along with me good and so on, either they'd come to me or I'd go them, then we start talking. (How do you understand that he is like you?) I mean, how to say, it just happens, I feel it, you know, I mean when I see what he does, I say OK that's it”*. Having internalized anti-school peer values *“Not at all, I mean maybe sometimes but we do not give any shit to it...”* (Ahmet, 581) he adopted the rationale of his peers' social identifications and used them as justification of his own way of believing in natural differences *“I mean, I don't know, I can't get along well with them, I don't know it does not work, and I don't want, too. I have German contacts but I don't hang out with them, I call them when I need. I get along with most of them, but I don't want to hang out with them... how to say, I don't like their habits, the way they are”* (Ahmet, 794) To continue with his biography, upon such a strong identification with anti-school values, he got involved in serious criminal incidents and committed a range of crimes: *“(What was the reason?) why was I put inside? (yes, the reason?), stealing, I stole something. (In or outside of School?) I did it outside, I mean, I stole more than once, but it [notification] was because of fights, when I fought with someone outside and so on. Mostly that was the reason, like fights”* (Ahmet, 441). In the end, Ahmet, was expelled from twelve different schools until the end of his school biography in the School of General Education and due to criminal behaviors, he is not allowed to have a residence permit even though he was born and grew up in Germany: *“It happened because of the notifications, they did not want to give me unlimited (residence permit)...”* (Ahmet, 521).

Like many others, similar smooth transitions between the sequences is also the case for Emre. He comes from a very low socioeconomic family background. Upon problems in family and compatibilities in school he experienced frustrations, skipped the courses at which he thinks he was unsuccessful and felt strong school fatigue: *I mean either I did not like [the*

*courses] or I did not feel like going, you know. I was just wanting to go home, no lust for it” (Emre, 297) and faced with the teacher reactions: “the teacher told me, ‘you are not coming to school on, you are always sick on Tuesdays’”. As a result of these reactions, Emre started to experience a range of control practices such as over-monitoring, Trainingsraum visits and disciplinary meetings “...he was telling me a word and I was telling to him, but everyone in the classroom was speaking, he [The teacher] was telling only me to ‘shut up’ only yelling at me. Then I was just yelling at him, what of it? Everyone is speaking here, why are you only dealing with me...” (Emre, 309). By this background, he passed into the sequence of self-fulfilling prophecy, “He [the teacher] kicked me out of school for a week. I just turned on a song in front of the door, they kicked me out...I was doing it because I wanted to annoy him... “he [the teacher] kept saying I will send you him [the school director] and in the end fuck your ass, I said (Emre, 607). Parallel to these developments, the profile of Emre's peers homogenized over time so that there was no pro-school friends around him. “I mean there were better than mine but theirs (grades) were also not good, I mean theirs were like 3 or 4, not good, you know. Most of their grades were either normal or bad. There was no one whose grades were good” (Emre, 497). In line with the practices their social identifications required, he and his peers devalued school and gave preference to alternative anti-school values among themselves: “We were talking about it very rarely, only when we got the report card, for example, ‘like hey let me look what grade you got’. Or sometimes one says, I don't know, ‘hey I got six from German (class), then we were saying ‘ahh very good go on like this” (Emre, 493). Emre, due most probably to his temporary attachment to specific peer groups and contacts with Germans in his biography, does not hold the belief of natural differences as a strong ingredient of his social identity. However, like all of the others interviewees, he strongly believes that Turkish students are categorically mistreated by German teachers “... then the teacher chooses only two or three persons together with me, he was mostly choosing us, it was always Turks, I have never seen the teacher telling Germans off” [Emre, 627]. Emre was expelled from different schools three times before his last expel from the School of General Education. The reasons for expels were tardiness, long term truancy, pulling out a knife at a teacher, and again long term truancy.*

Having a look at the different biographies of the students, we now can get back to the question of whether there are points of no return in the disengagement process. The more the students advance in the sequences the harder for them to reverse the school leaving process. This might be explained by the fact that the sequences are “memory-endowed” (Sackmann and Wingens 2003). The later stages of the sequences remembers previous sequences through

the individual experiences, identities and resources (Sackmann and Wingens 2003) which an individual acquires to the extent that he is immersed in a sequence. It seems that the resources around the person are indeed of major importance for reversing, or at least changing, the process. Any point of no return is different for each individual, but the longer they follow the aforementioned sequences, the more likely they accept their failure and realize a self-fulfilling prophecy. As noted earlier, Hakan put efforts into reversing the flow of events in the sequence of self-fulfilling prophecy by working hard for Realschule, but he failed. In contrast, however, Turgay managed to become distant from his peers who adopted anti-school values and practices, although it was too late for his school career. Strikingly, process reversing was a matter of resources, as it was the case for Turgay; his grandmother and mother stepped into the process and weakened his relations with his anti school peers.

Nevertheless, compared to other sequences, the sequence of social identifications seems to be the most difficult in terms of reversing the disengagement process. The reason lies in the role of peer values and practices. Indeed, in contrast to the previous sequences, the formation of anti-school values as alternative to school values provides the interviewees a rationale that justifies their world view and a sense of belonging to a common fate. The feelings of uneasiness and anxiety with school seem to lose their effects, as the interviewees become full members of their anti-school groups, which give them social belonging and commitment. Instead of school where they are unsuccessful, they now are successful parts of a unified group which comes together around specific values and practices. The disengagement process takes a different turn in this sequence, the pace of it gets faster, as the peers provide the interviewees protection, assign prestige and status and give justification for behaviors. Although the peer effects exist in differing degrees in each sequence of the disengagement process, it is here in this sequence that the peers are the main actors for the students' social identifications, pushing them into risky behaviors.



## Chapter 7 Meaning of Schooling

In the previous chapter, I mapped out the disengagement process the interviewees went through in leaving school. However, as the school engagement of children of immigrants is mostly considered in relation to the notion of culture, the ways in which these students value schooling needs to be further elaborated. As noted earlier, it is occasionally argued that the reasons for devaluing schooling might lie in the cultural beliefs and practices of the students—in other words the beliefs and practices of immigrant groups. The findings of the present study support partly other studies showing that students attach value to schooling in particular ways and for school leavers they usually do not see it meaningful for their life and future plans. However, the present study also suggests that, first, in contrast to the cultural explanations, the students do not attach to schooling one stable meaning. Instead, the way they value school changes over time. That is, there is no culturally determined negative meaning attached to school from the start. Second, and more importantly, the reasons for perceiving schooling in certain ways, rather than being cultural, are embedded in the interaction of cultural components and structural constraints experienced in daily life.

Against this background, I shall turn back to the process of school disengagement in order to unpack the sequences in which meaning of schooling for the interviewees alters significantly, however, this time I shall do it by beginning from the final sequence. Thus, the way the interviewees consider schooling presently can be traced, compared and analyzed with their previous ways of thinking of it in the light of the data. I will also seek to disclose the structural conditions that confirm and consolidate students' comprehension of schooling.

### 7.1 What is School For?

At Lindenhof School, I entered the classroom slightly late and came in on the top of the incident; Temel was yelling at a teacher “*you can't tell me what I should do, you can't tell me go and close the door [cupboard door], you close it, not me*”. Temel was standing up and the teacher was sitting at his desk, which is situated in front of the blackboard. The teacher was taking Temel's reaction calmly, showing that he is used to such outbursts. He was saying a few words silently, which were difficult to hear from where I was standing near the entrance of the classroom. A social worker came in, probably passing by in the hallway and wondering what all the fuss about. After waiting a little while, and probably seeing the social worker in the room, the teacher said impassively “*Temel go out, to the Trainingsraum*”. Temel was

angry and started to walk towards the door, some of his friends sitting next to him looked like they were not interested in what was going on. One of them was Hakan, wearing a white cap and looking away from Temel, perhaps because he does not want to run into trouble with the teacher as it would hamper his future plan which he stated in the interview “...*Hauptschule diploma, then three years training , you know then I would have an occupation, not to say even Realschule diploma. This system is very new in Germany, I guess it is so for one or two years...*”(Hakan, 539). In the meantime, the social worker held Temel from his arm gently, and told him in Turkish not to do anything stupid. Temel went out with him and in the hallway his clamor was echoing, which I could not understand. While being sent to Lindenhof School upon leaving the School of General Education, for most of the interviewees, the passage into Lindenhof is not a breaking point in their school career. Most of them continue to behave similar to the way they did before leaving school. However, as the field note above shows, only a few students, like Hakan, see it as an opportunity to get at least a diploma in the end.

Temel is known as a troublemaker, and a social worker whispers to me that he might be expelled from Lindenhof. During the interview, Temel says that he is at school just because he is required by law to be there; “...*I am coming to school because there is this parole, they said, I have to come to school till the parole ends*”(Temel, 978). In case he does not show up in the school, he will be jailed by court decision. Obviously he does not see any meaningful connection between his life and schooling, and therefore, the time he spends at school is, for him, wasted time. He remarks that he will run a snack shop with his elder brother who has no school diploma and is working right now in his uncle's snack shop. “*For the future, how to say, if the school finishes, I would open a shop, yeah, something like self-employed. I don't know, maybe, like a snack restaurant*” (Temel, 950). Schooling is simply a delay of his future plans.

Unlike Temel, Hakan, as stated above, considers schooling positively and believes a diploma from Lindenhof might better his chance for his future. Nevertheless, the number of students like Hakan are quite rare. For the majority of the students, although the importance of schooling is accepted at some points verbally, the school is wasting their time and they see no use for their lives. For instance, Bekir states “*I have many plans now, I mean, I have become wiser you know, I am trying to stay away from bad things, my first goal is to get my diploma from here, then I will get a driving license, before, no, no I go to school and I will get it at the same time, then I want to have a car, I mean when the school ends, you know. I guess after two years I will marry...*”(Bekir, 499). Bekir speaks of having a driving license, buying a

car and even marriage, but schooling is more of a formality or a chore to get to his real goals. Talking about future plans, he mentions a person who will supposedly help him in finding a job as an auto-dealer; *“he wants me to be an auto-dealer; he wants me to work with him, he tells to me to finish the school, then he will give me a job, he says, we can work together. For example he buys cars from e bay and sells them for 600, 700 Euro profit, you know, 600, 700 Euro directly into pocket”* (Bekir, 539). Alongside many other things, looking at his job plans, Bekir perceives schooling irrelevant for his future. Bekir never took the diploma step and left Lindenhof school about two months after the interview. A social worker told me that he is simply 'gone', and he does not come to school any more.

For the students, the perceptions about schooling can perhaps be classified as follows; useless, boring, unnecessary, a place and time to get through until getting a *“toilette paper”* (diploma) (Alper- 609). Most commonly, they do not see any concrete connection between their present life, future plans and schooling, or if they do, as with Bekir's contact in the auto-trade who wanted him to finish school first, they often do not follow up on the plans. Schooling is not usually grasped as a useful tool that can change things in their lives. Similar to Bekir, Deniz also interested in opening his own place; *“maybe a hookah cafe, or working in an office. I don't know, I mean, I am thinking about these two things”*, (Deniz, 1005). Or taking Emre's case, he says that he does not know what to do in future but it *“maybe auto thing, you know, actually I don't know much about it, I mean really nothing...”* (Emre, 603). Like Bekir above, he speaks of a future for which he does not have to invest in schooling too much. Emre also left Lindenhof school sometime after the interview took place, as he came to school under the influence of significant amounts of alcohol one day. Considering *“an average attendance is enough to get a certificate from Lindenhof school”* (social worker), lack of motivation of most of the interviewees and their comprehension of schooling might be better understood. They see schooling as something mandatory or imposed and expect hardly anything from it for their life.

But, then the question is why is this so? Regarding this point, a good deal of research attracts attention to the culture of immigrant groups. It is occasionally assumed that some immigrant communities attach particular values to education culturally and this is why they perform educationally worse or better compared to native-born children. Although being reluctant to use the term culture, Lindo (2000), in his study comparing Iberian and Turkish immigrants in Netherlands, argues that the group characteristics of the Turkish community, such as cohesive networks based on the region of origin, might force the children to behave in traditional ways that can undermine their school motivation (Lindo 2000). However, cultural

assumptions are not always negative for the immigrant groups. For instance, Crul (2000) focuses on the actual help provided by the community in school careers of children, and, in contrast to Lindo's argument, he concludes that the cohesive networks of Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands have positive effects on the children's school engagements as they can shield them from raining significantly in the sequences of 'disadvantaged background', 'control and social hostilities' (Crul 2000). Similarly, the educational performance of Chinese children is explained by cultural factors that encourage different types of learning than the western style (Li 2003).

Nevertheless, the findings of the present study indicate that the way the students consider schooling *differ along the process* that has been described in the previous chapter. Considering the sequences the students are going through in their disengagement, it is argued that the way the students value schooling is changing significantly in the sequences of 'disadvantaged background', 'control and social hostilities' (Crul 2000). Similarly, the educational performance of Chinese children is explained by cultural factors that encourage different types of learning than the western style (Li 2003).

disciplinary treatments' and 'social identifications'. I shall now try to unpack these sequences in detail in order to show in what ways they are important for the changing meaning of schooling for the interviewees throughout these processes. disciplinary treatments' and 'social identifications'. I shall now try to unpack these sequences in detail in order to show in what ways they are important for the changing meaning of schooling for the interviewees throughout these processes.

## 7.2 The Disadvantaged Background and Meaning of Schooling

As I showed in the previous chapter, most of the interviewees are disadvantaged in terms of their family and neighborhood backgrounds. They are affected by low socioeconomic constraints and disadvantaged networks harboring limited resources. Such disadvantaged background characteristics are at work regarding the way the school is valued. For example, future prospects of the students and the place of schooling in them are heavily compliant with the environments the students experience in their daily life. Low educational profile of the parents, absence of role models within family and neighborhood combined with poor socioeconomic conditions are basic facts for most of the interviewees and they appear to play a major role in how school is perceived.

As noted earlier, the interviewees lack information about the school system and this might

give rise to having no awareness of the potential opportunities that school success might bring into their life. However, it should also be emphasized their daily experiences counteract developing such a consciousness. That is, the conditions in which they live support a schooling perspective that is short term in some interviewees. For instance Onur, as noted above in the section of family background, mentions of his parent's expectations for him to earn money, something prized above schooling. *"...with time, you are thinking differently, you grow up, your mother asks, my son don't you work, you know, then you think about the problems, you think about bread, ooh I should bring bread home, just like that, then I started to work... (Onur, 394).* The burdens of poor socioeconomic circumstances and deprivation of resources presumably cause a short-term schooling perspective. That is, the families might develop an outlook that schooling is for investing shorter and paying off earlier. And this might play some roles in the students' consideration of schooling. A similar point emerges out in Hakan's statements, too.

*"...working or going to school, I don't know really, for example if I go to Realschule for a year, then three years for a High School Diploma, then maybe three years for training, it makes eight years schooling, now I am eighteen, I will be twenty six by then, yeah maybe it might work but I really don't know, it is too much time, twenty six years old, puhh, I don't know, some of my friends are eighteen and drive Mercedes. Then I must fuck of all these things you know, I mean, having fun and so on, and it is a little bit difficult. It is something like falling behind you know. Then you must lock yourself into home, just like that. But if I do my schooling for three years and working for five years then, I can get my expertise, this would be also good, you know"(Hakan, 531).*

Hakan is reluctant to invest in schooling for the long term and wants to have his own car like some of his friends. Similar wishes regarding schooling are highly common among the interviewees. They want it to pay off as quick as possible. Therefore, from a social class perspective, it might be argued that these students, due to their background, develop a sort of short-term perspective about the (lack of) benefits of schooling. However, such a perception is not a result of the cultural background characteristics of their communities. It is instead a product of lack of interest in school, and the development of anti-school attitudes. Seeing schooling as something preventing working is confirmed repeatedly by the interviewees. The structural characteristics of their neighborhoods and families indicate material deprivation and lack of jobs combined with lack of schooling values and these lead to a desire for working *now* and 'bringing home bread', and someday also bringing home individual amenities such as a car.

*Sometimes I am thinking, you know, should I earn money or should I go to school. How to say, the life is too short, you know, eight years means a lot in this life, eight years you will go to school. For example I have an elder sister, I mean my cousin, she is twenty seven or twenty eight years old and she has gone to schools since I knew her, like art, and textile, she went to university and studied textile, she studies a lot and, she is twenty seven now and what happened now? She works in textile store, she works in such places, like clothing, she earns 1200, and I told her that she is gullible, 'if you did not go to school but worked and save your money, now it would be better for you', I said. But she goes and works, because there is no job here, no money. For example some go to school for thirty years and then maybe become unemployed, there is no job anymore, you yourself probably know, too. There are a few jobs and, the firms are closing down, look Karstadt closes, Opel closes this and that, I mean our future, I mean I don't know our future here very difficult, either going to another country or I don't know, I will not stay here anyway (Hakan, 539).*

In addition to a deprivation of positive school values role models, these interviewees live side-by-side with those who have had frustrating experiences in school and the job market. They are surrounded by a plethora of examples that encourage them to think of schooling in the negative. The excerpt above places the interviewees perception of finding long term schooling risky, into its context of restructuring labor market circumstances. In these conditions, school mostly is seen as nothing useful for being upwardly mobile in society. Instead, entrepreneurial activities are praised. It goes without saying that presumably some of their relatives run stores, mostly because they are not qualified for a job in the white-collar market, and this shapes their future prospects, such as auto-dealer, hookah saloon, Döner-snack and so on. Thus, rather than cultural background, the way the students consider schooling is a result of the interactions of the interviewees with their contexts, which confirm seeing schooling in certain ways.

Yet, even in limited numbers, successful siblings and comparatively less disadvantaged backgrounds of a few students, the disadvantaged family and neighborhood features cannot be the *only* reasons for attachment of relatively less value to schooling among the students interviewees.

### 7.3 The Control and Disciplinary Treatments and Meaning of Schooling

Another sequence in the disengagement process is 'the control and disciplinary treatments'. Here, those who have experienced some forms of alienation in schooling through

school fatigue and playing truant, are confronted with teachers' reactions leading to perceptions of teacher labeling. As coping strategies, the teachers engage in over-monitoring, such as constant warnings and disparagement and use disciplinary treatments such as Trainingsraum penalty and meetings. However, these practices have labeling consequences for the students not only in the classroom but out of it, as well. This bears importance in terms of the ways the interviewees consider schooling because they come to sense how they are seen by their teachers, school administration and classmates. For example Özgür says that “*she was yelling, when you look at your side...she didn't want me because I was bad, I was not coming to school*” (Özgür, 353). As it is clear from his statement, Özgür thinks, he is not one of the students the teacher likes and this perception has detrimental effects on his school commitment - “*I was not coming to school*”. As a result of the conflicts with teachers, next to experiencing stress and anxiety in personal self-definition, the way the students value schooling is deeply undermined, because they sense that teachers 'discarded' them. As also noted in the section of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' of this study, this feeling conduces to losing control over events;

*I was not able to do it. I said I cannot do it, I can't deal with it any more, I find it difficult and so on and my mum kept telling me, Can just go there and deal with it, I said no mum I am not good enough, that was it.[Can, 226]*

Can thinks his capacity is not enough to achieve. Yet, this consciousness forces him to re-frame the meaning of schooling, because low self-expectancy comes together with a sort of desperation that the situation cannot be changed. Similarly, the same desperation is visible in Emre's feelings statements:... *after going a couple times, I said myself 'forget it, why should I go there!' and also you know I was about to be kicked out of this school, ...Emre, 607*). His experiences with the control and disciplinary treatments cause feeling of irreversibility in him and he reframes the value he attaches to schooling.

Another equally important side of the control and disciplinary treatments that greatly undermines the meaning of schooling in the eyes of the interviewees is that these treatments make them perceive school as a primarily disciplining place. The treatments come together with a range of suggestive teacher language that effects the ways students consider schooling. As noted earlier, in most of the interactions, “a last chance” is given to the students with a menacing language. For example Ersoy remarks, he had fears as the school authorities instantly let the family know about his disruptive behaviors. “*I mean they let the dad about it, my dad gets angry, so I had fears you know, so I could not speak in the lessons properly*”

(Ersoy, 544). The disciplinary concerns dominate the relationships of school with the interviewees; they feel that the teachers are not at all sensitive to their personal realities. Most importantly, the domination of disciplinary concerns and usage of threatening language with the values attached to schooling. For example, Ahmet says that “...[in this school] the man (teacher) told me, nothing wrong with me, I was behaving good, I was not doing dirty things, but he said 'your grades are low, I cannot let you pass the class you know...'”(Ahmet, 211). Ahmet perceives schooling more in terms of discipline factors and less in terms of educational performance. He expects to pass the class because he did not do any “dirt things”. The share of disciplining language and treatments in school is high in arousing such an understanding of schooling in the interviewees. Thus, grasping schooling as a discipline-centered institution, which is boring and difficult to stand, stems not from cultural backgrounds, but from interactions with daily school practices. Given that they withdraw from school gradually upon the forms of control practices, they attach less value to schooling as a consequence of student – school interactions, a procedural development. This contradicts a cultural argument which would place their attitudes as something permanent or fixed coming from history.

Although the disadvantaged background and the forms of control practices have considerable influences on the attachment of certain values to schooling, the most appreciable shift comes out in the sequence of social identifications of the interviewees with the anti-school values.

#### 7.4 Social Identifications and Meaning of Schooling

The identifications with peers on the basis of anti-school values protect the interviewees from damaging effects of school. This is fundamentally important to understanding the changing meaning of schooling for these students because, as they attach themselves to anti-school values, they do not accept school values as reference points anymore for evaluating themselves. As the prestige and status are allocated among peers on the grounds of anti-school values and behaviors, these children come to see schooling and its requirements as secondary to their life perspectives and disengage from school. However, in order to understand better such social identifications that lead into alteration of value attachment, the constituents that form their contents should be analyzed deeper. We already know that the main constituents of the social identifications are the natural differences and the unequal teacher treatment. The analysis of the assumption of the natural differences between German and Turkish/Kurdish students is of great importance.



Anti-authoritarian attitudes such as challenging teachers, school directors and police are attributed to Turkish-ness/Kurdish-ness, whereas 'soft', conformist attitudes, such as cooperation with teachers, working-hard and so on, are attributed to German-ness. In her ethnographic study, Phelan (1998) finds similar assumptions held by Mexican students and she looks closely at the structural conditions in order to understand what generates such assumptions (Phelan, Davidson and Yu 1998:chapter 6). If a similar approach is pursued here, it should be asked then can the perception of *natural differences* only be attributed to the peer groups' beliefs?

In order to answer this question fully, I attract attention to a point; *the attributions attached to Germans by the students are associated with pro-academic motivations*. That is, a careful reading of the statements of the interviewees indicate that in most of the interviewees' eyes, German-ness is almost equal to exhibiting pro-academic motivations. The attitudes such as being soft, conformist, individual utilitarian, and not directly challenging teacher's authority can actually be classified as characteristics that a student should have, or at least better have, at school. For example, in talking about how having good grades is seen among friends, Alper reports that "*Germans were showing off but Turks not that much, they (Turks) were making fun of it, and it was not a showy thing at all*" (Alper, 527). Obviously, the pro-school and anti-school attitudes correspond to ethnic borders; pro-school attitudes are considered German attitudes, whereas anti-school are considered Turkish/Kurdish attitudes.

But then why do these students attribute pro-academic motivations to Germans? *The analysis of data suggests that equating pro-academic attitudes with German-ness is mostly confirmed by the sequences they have been experiencing*. That is, it is not an assumption breaking out at a point in time. Instead, it emerges cumulatively in the wake of interactions throughout the socialization of the students which are constrained by structures such as families and neighborhoods. Therefore, grasping the structural conditions in which these children have socialized so far bears major importance for understanding why, for them, pro- and anti-school characteristics correspond to ethnic identifications.

One of the most important triggers of the perception of natural differences lies in the composition of neighborhoods in which they live and of the schools they attended. Having socialized mostly in pro-Turkish/Kurdish environments, as has been showed so far starting from neighborhoods and schools, the interviewees have usually weak contacts with Germans. Additionally, the great portion of German students in higher tracks in the schools they attended contributes to their thinking that some characteristics have to do with ethnicity. Furthermore, along their schooling, they witness regularly Turkish students having problems

with teachers. Also, when they are sent to Traininggrasrum, they see most often Turkish students there and get closer to them. Besides, the school, with its design and practices, are seen as very 'German' for the interviewees, for instance there is not a translator even for disciplinary meetings. They share a common perception that their values are mostly not liked and respected by German teachers and German school authorities. Shortly, the interaction of all these dynamics cause an assumption or belief among the students that Turks/Kurds are tougher and cannot be controlled by school, whereas Germans are soft and conformist. *Therefore, the perception of natural differences existing among the students is not a groundless delusion but a contextual fact that is confirmed in daily practices of school and interactions of the students.*

On top of everything, as part of social identification, an assumption such as 'Germans are for school but Turks/Kurds are not', stands for a considerable shift in the meaning attached to schooling. Taken together with their perceptions concerning mistreatment by German teachers of Turkish students explained in the previous chapter, the structure and daily interactions at school work for confirming social and cultural boundaries that these children assume exist. The perception of teacher mistreatment interacts strongly with the perception of the natural differences. The perception that German teachers support German students does not only marginalize students of Turkish/Kurdish background but also clenches the perception that Germans have pro-school attitudes. And all of these heuristic perceptions are tapped and intensified in the students' experiences of feeling labeled as deviant by teachers and /or classmates.

Overall, the structural conditions and daily practices tighten the perception of natural differences for not only Turkish/Kurdish but also German students, as it is understood from Erdem's remarks above. Erdem, like his German friends, strongly refers in his talks to the natural differences, as well. Therefore, the beliefs/perceptions, which are fundamental to the interviewees' social identifications are not occurring in the air due to their pure cultural background; rather, what they think is being confirmed, consolidated and strengthened in their interactions is an active process.

## Chapter 8 Conclusions

The present study explored the interaction of dynamics that led the students out of school over time and the meaning of schooling from their perspectives. The reflective analysis of the former theoretical explanations regarding school performance provides a significant background for evaluating the shares of both institutional and individual dynamics in the emergence of school leaving behavior. Their critical perspectives enable us to understand better the relations of school performance with wider societal forces. However, the analysis also reveals that, due to theoretical and methodological commitments of the explanations, school leaving is analyzed mostly with the binary concepts such as 'dropout' and 'pushout', and thus, the process by which students disengage from school remains unexplored.

Adding to that, the analysis of the former theoretical explanations also displays that the educational performance of immigrant children is very often considered to be related to family or community values. Particularly in Germany, the sociocultural characteristics of immigrant communities are maintained mostly to contradict the 'individual' and 'modern' values of the educational system (see chapter 3). Although such approaches rightly emphasize the role of cultural factors in students' educational performance, they, however, mostly overlook the interaction of cultural characteristics with structural conditions. Based on these critiques of the former theoretical frameworks, the theoretical model of the study is reconstructed further to analyze both the process of school disengagement and meaning of schooling by placing the school leavers themselves at the center of the analysis.

Accordingly, Becker's "sequential model", which was originally used to understand the gradual development of marijuana addiction, was taken as a formal model and it was adapted to the school disengagement process with a symbolic interactionist perspective (see chapter 4). In so doing, it reconstructed an informing perspective, which allowed the examination of the disengagement process and meaning of schooling in a sequential manner and from the perspectives of the school leavers. Accordingly, the lived experiences and the perception of the Turkish school leavers from the School of General Education are analyzed (see chapter 6 and 7).

The overarching finding of the present study is the interactions throughout the process by which the interviewees disengage from school, taken from the interviewees' perspectives. School leaving behavior is *cumulative* in character and a variety of mechanisms work throughout the disengagement process in student biographies. Background characteristics are decisive in these sequences. The disadvantaged background in terms of socioeconomic

hardships, low educational profile and language problems cause stress and anxiety for most of the interviewees. Particularly, socioeconomic difficulties strongly interact with lack of commitment or attachment to the educational system and this combination leaves these children mostly alone to face their own fates. Deprivations also become layered within the disadvantaged neighborhoods in which they live (see chapter 6.1). However, in contrast to most of the explanations, the present study does not content itself with only arguing that the children leave school because they are of disadvantaged family and neighborhood backgrounds. Conversely, it points out the identity conflicts, hopes, disappointments and frustrations which shape the disengagement process and interact with the family backgrounds.

The study highlights the importance of the interactions between individual skills, disadvantaged background and the school practices from the perspectives of the interviewees. Upon entering into primary school, the students are faced with a range of practices against which they are categorized on the basis of their skills and efforts. The narratives of the children indicate their frustrations and disappointments in these occasions. Based on their accounts, there are strong connections between the feelings of frustration, of powerlessness and the ways they are approached in the classrooms and schools by teachers and other officials. The analysis of the data shows plainly that students' negative perceptions of their own performance atrophies integration of them into classrooms and this fuels forms of alienation (see chapter 6.3). In this respect, the finding of the study with *causality of the forms of alienation* indeed *empirically* proves the strong link between self-definition and psychological frustration. That is, the data unveils that the finding that school fatigue and playing truant comes after the frustrations is related to integration into social and the academic environment of a school. In some cases, this lack of integration stems originally from devastating events and maladjustment into new family life or school environments like in the cases of Erdem and Turgay. Whatever the reason is, the students, upon becoming frustrated, begin to develop some strategies such as playing truant in order to escape from potential conflicts. This link is also clear in the finding that the students cut the classes in which they consider themselves weak and unsuccessful, like Emre. However, when the students experience frustrations both in family and school environments simultaneously, the anxiety and panic they go through reach into the dangerous limits in terms of psychological disorder such as Bekir and Mehmet. In their cases, the findings of the study also show clearly the bridges between frustration, school fatigue and playing truant (see chapter 6.3.2).

As they are disadvantaged, the role of school is extremely important for the students in terms of acquiring a sense of commitment to, or belonging in, school. Motivations and

relevant aspirations for putting efforts into schooling are strongly linked with commitments to school. However, the students think that they do not get necessary support from school staff. They underscore that they get mostly negative feedback from their teachers and school staff and are faced with the control and disciplinary treatments such as over-monitoring in the forms of frequent warnings and disparagement, and trainingsraum penalty and disciplinary meetings. Strikingly, it is understood from the common grievances of the students that these practices point out undermining the image of school for the students. (see chapter 6.4).

In addition to undermining the interviewees' commitments to school, the control and disciplinary treatments cause them gradually to develop a perception that they are, in the eye of teachers, already discarded (see chapter, 6.5.1). They perceive that their teachers and, in some cases, classmates see them in certain ways and this perception plays a major role in having the belief that their efforts would be useless for changing the situation (see chapter 6.5.1). The feelings of irreversibility of the situation appear distinctively in the data, and they are strongly linked with self-fulfilling demeanors such as completely giving up and exhibiting disruptive behaviors (see chapter 6.5). The effects of peers in these incidents are clear. However, unlike the previous sequences where the peer effects exist in various forms, the peer values now gradually turn out to be *reference points* for the students' actions and attitudes. Strikingly, only parallel to exhibiting self-fulfilling prophecies, the peer values are emerging as alternative to school values. It is empirically shown that the peer values are erected on the basis of similar experiences and shared perceptions about schooling (see chapter 6.6.1 and 6.6.2) and the peers employ social control on each other via sanctions, and reallocating prestige and status on the basis of their rationale (see chapter 6.6.1.3 and 6.6.1.4). Interestingly, this rationale is constructed in opposition to the *perceived* values of pro-school students. That is, their values are assumed to be competitive, self-seeking, individualist and soft, whereas their anti-school values stand for solidarity, cooperation, collectivity and brotherhood (see chapter 6.6.2). Strikingly, underlying these values are the two common assumptions/beliefs that form the core contents of the social identifications. They are the “natural differences between Turks/Kurds and Germans”, and the “unequal treatment of German teachers” (ascribed labels as 'different' or 'deviant'). From the accounts, these stepping stones of anti-school identifications, function as a sort of cement that binds the peers together (see chapter, 6.6.2). However, while emphasizing solidarity, cooperation, collectivity and brotherhood on the one hand, a close look at the the social identifications with anti-school values demonstrate that they are also competitive and require highly risky behaviors for acquiring prestige and status among the peers (see chapter, 6.7). The risky behaviors, bringing

prestige and status among peers, cost the last commitments of the students to school and lead to full disengagement from school. Having disengaged in attitude leads to incidents that cause leaving behavior such as constant truancy, using drugs, assault in school, physical fight with teachers, fraud in school cafeteria, threatening teacher with knife, being jailed and so on.

The point is that there are certain overlapping events among the sequences and, as it was noted earlier, the process is not always linear for each interviewee. Some experience each sequence in the disengagement process whereas others get involved in it as of particular sequences (see chapter 6.8). This result stimulates further critical consideration about bindingness and contingency of the sequences for the students. It should be highlighted that the sequences are ideal types and they represent the empirically *constructed* common pathways followed by the students (see chapter 6.8).

The study clearly shows that, while proving to be highly valuable in terms of conceptualizing the process as sequences, Becker's three stage model, to be caught and labeled, turning of the label into a master status, and the identification with a deviant group are not fully sufficient to capture the complex interactions of the dynamics in school disengagement processes. The findings of the present study point out more layered and complicated pathways in emergence of school leaving behavior. For example, the informing perspective is not designed to capture the structural conditions from which the so called 'deviant behavior' originates. Instead, the model focuses on the deviancy through definition and labeling – remember the first stage; being caught and labeled. Therefore, it dramatically overlooks the opportunity structure of the contexts, in which the behavior in question is rooted. In contrast, thus, in compared to Becker's sequential model, the findings of the present study refer to longer and more structural dimension of the disengagement process. It points out the background characteristics, such as low socioeconomic status and disadvantaged neighborhood conditions and homogeneous student profile in schools as important dynamics in the process. It is also plain to see that they play one of the major roles in the meaning of schooling (see chapter 7.2). Thus, in the present study, the constraints and limitations of the interviewees' backgrounds and their shares in the formation of their attitudes to schooling are highlighted from their perspectives (see chapter 6.1).

Moreover, as the informing theoretical perspective contends itself with the process by which a deviant career is developing *after* the individual is labeled in a certain way, it fails to capture the ways in which the label come out and attach to the students. The present study, however, includes also the detailed analysis of how the individual is defined/labeled in certain ways, in other words it highlights what happens prior to labeling. One can find the dense and

detailed descriptions of the interviewees' hesitations, frustrations, disappointments and acting strategies when they perceive that they are defined in school in negative manners in the sequences of “incompatibilities in school and home” and “the early forms of alienation”.

The second major finding of the study is about the meaning of schooling and its strong links with structural limitations and practices. The study empirically points out that there is no stable meaning of schooling for the interviewees. Conversely, the way the interviewees consider schooling changes throughout the disengagement process (see chapter 7). Changes in the meaning of schooling, leads to some sequences that play more significant roles than others. In particular, the disadvantaged background characteristics, control and disciplinary treatments and social identifications come to the fore. The low socioeconomic resources in family and neighborhood and lack of role models limit the interviewees perspectives about the potential advantages of schooling. In addition, the control and disciplinary treatments cause deep changes in the interviewees' perspectives about schooling. In particular, such treatments make the students feel suffocated and furthermore they have the labeling consequences that make the interviewees see school as a hostile environment.

The findings refer to the sequence of social identifications in terms of meaning of schooling. Especially, the shift from school values to anti-school values in the students' social identifications and two underlying assumptions/beliefs the “natural differences between Turks/Kurds and Germans” and the “unequal teacher treatments” strongly interact with the way the school is perceived. Strikingly, the research shows that the interviewees attributed pro-school characteristics to Germanness, whereas anti-school features to Turkishness/Kurdishness. The findings point to the share of structural limitations, milieu features and school practices in the emergence of such a substantial shift concerning meaning of schooling (see chapter, 7).

The present study shows that school leaving is not a instant decision or reaction but it is a multidimensional process that unfolds over time. The role of disadvantaged family background and neighborhood is undeniable in the process of school leaving. However, the findings also point to primary school as the most important place and time for the intervention policies. As empirically shown by the present study, the negative treatments and approaches within school are, at least as influential in students taking a dislike to schooling. Because family and neighborhood conditions are mostly stable background characteristics, and thus difficult to alter, the treatments and practices of school are extremely important for inhibiting development of the school leaving process. This is why the findings point to the school as the target for reform and policy efforts. The reports of the students highlight the need for more

inclusive school environment, treatments and ways of coping with or even reversing the adverse effects of the disadvantaged conditions in which they live. The school leavers in this study, after some point, perceive school as an institution which favors Germans over them and disrespects their values. Examining school leaving as process, the study highlights the importance of both German and migrant teachers who are trained for approaching the students with an inclusive inter-cultural understanding. This should be the target of reform and policy efforts without any delay.



## Appendices

### Appendix A Interview Guideline

#### **PART I: THE PROCESS**

When were you born?

Were you born here?

When did your parents come to Germany?

Did you go to Kindergarten?

#### Primary School

- Do you remember when you started to the school?

- Where was the school?

- How was it at the beginning? I mean, the first year; did you like being at school, can you tell me more?

#### Passing from Primary School into Secondary School

- After Primary school which school did you go to?

- What kind of school type was it? (*Haupt-Real-Gymnasium- Gesamt- Sekundar-and so on*)

- How did you like the environment? (Specific events will be followed!)

*Do you have friends from other tracks like Realschule or Gymnasium?\**

- How good were you at courses in general?

- How were your grades in general?

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\*When the school is Gesamtschule type

- Were you getting on well with your teachers and friends in class?

- How was it, you had many friends at school whom you know also from where you live, or did you meet them first at school?

- Were there many foreign students in the class? How was it?

## Leaving School

- What was the reason for your expelling?\*

- So tell me, how many schools have you changed so far?\*

- Have you ever fought with your classmates?

*What was the reason then?\**

*So tell me how did it happen, how did you fight?*

- Have you ever had a conflict with your teachers?

*What was the reason then?\**

*So tell me how did it happen, how did you fight?*

*Do you think it was only you s/he had problems with?*

Did you have many Konferenz\* at school?

*How was it happening, can you tell more about the most serious one?*

-Can you remember how it started, I mean, did you start to skip the school first?

- How was it? Did you first stay away from school hours or days?

- What were you doing when you skipped school?

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\*I am asking also how many times he has changed the school.

\*I am asking each school change time, the type of the school and how he liked the school, and reason for his expelling!

\*Specific event question?

\*Specific event question?

\*Disciplinary meetings organized by Teachers, student's parents are also invited, when student has one or more problematic behaviors at school, such as fighting, using abusive language, troubling during classes, challenging teachers' authority and so on.

- Do you remember were there any specific places that you go to when you skipped the school?

- Can you tell more you were alone generally or together with your friends when skipped the school?

- Did you try to come back to and finish in the school again?

### School/Teacher Specific Questions

- How were your relations with your teachers at school? I mean, were you talking to them often after the courses for example?

- Do you remember how helpful teachers were when you needed help regarding homework or some other things?

- Were there any school activities\* at school that you can take part voluntarily?

- Can you tell more about school activities; were you voluntarily taking part in school activities, like football or dance!

-You said, you used to skip school, what kind of reactions did your teachers give then? For example, did you get any warning or letter from school or something like that?

- Have you ever get a help from your teachers or from someone else at school regarding a course subject that you don't understand well during class.

- Were you getting help from friends regarding a course subject that you don't understand well during class?

### Peer Group Specific Questions

- Do you have many friends at school?

- When you think, what would you say, how many of them your close friends were?

- Can you tell me more what makes them close friends?

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\*Extra-curricular activities is meant

- How were your relations with German, Turkish or other friends?
- Why you don't have German friends?
- Tell me more; what is the difference between Turkish and German friends?
- Do you remember what were you doing together?
- When you were together, were you talking about grades, or, who more successful is?
- How important was to get good grades for you and for your friends? I mean, did your friends care about good grades?

### Family Specific Questions

- Where do you live?
- What is your parents' education?
- Are they working?/ How do you live on?
- How many sisters or brothers you have?
- How is your brother/sister school situation?
- Did any one of your siblings leave the school?
- How about your family, what they were doing at that time; could you tell me more about this? (the times when you skipped/left the school)
- When school let them know about problems at school, how were they reactions?

### **PART II: THE MEANING OF EDUCATION (expectations, hopes and aspirations)**

- We talked about how it has been until now. Now you are here, can you tell me what your future plans are?

- Can you tell me what your jobs plans are? What you want to do now?

- If you manage to get a diploma from here, do you think that it will be enough for finding a job?

- If I ask, what is the most important thing that you learnt from the school so far?

- Do you want to stay here in Germany or going to somewhere else?

*What type of residence permit you have in your passport?*

- Are you happy in general in Germany?

*What do you mean by that can you open a bit more?*

- If you had a chance to start from Gymnasium, would you have started?

*Why/not?*

- Crucial events and experiences will be asked here!

## Appendix B The Coding Agenda

Category	Definition	Example	Coding Rules
Place of birth Germany	The interviewee was born in Germany		
Place of birth Turkey	If the interviewee was born in Turkey		
Divorcement between parents	When the parents are separated		Code according to the final family situation
Employed father LSES	Father working in construction sites, or under-the-table	He worked many years in DM time and worked a lot but illegally...we could not put it into the banks like Sparkasse, because he worked illegally...then they said they went bankrupt, fifty thousand (DM) just gone, left nothing, so now he does not like working much, because he has negative experience... (Emre, 417)	Code for the cases father works legal or under-the-table and when it is stated that he does not earn enough for living
Unemployed father	Father not working		
Self-employed father	Entrepreneur Father		Code only for self employed fathers
Employed mother LSES	Mother works as cleaning lady or general worker		Code for the cases mother works legal or under-the-table and it is stated that she does not earn enough for living.
Unemployed mother	Mother not working		
Parents living on welfare	Parents living on welfare		
Father's German Level low	Father's language competence is not good enough to communicate with school	“then, my father does not understand properly but he understands, they talk about me” (457, Emre).	Code for the cases father's communication with school points 'low'

			language competence. If it points out 'high' code the next one
Father's German Level high	Father's language competence is good enough	“in such things mostly my dad gets involved, because my mom does not speak German, because my dad does, they ask for my dad always, my dad deals with everything in everywhere” (Ahmet 461).	Code when it is stated that father does not have any language problem in communication with school
Mother's German Level high	Mother's language competence is good enough	My mom's German is really good. She speaks better than me (Sinan, 517)	Code when it is stated that mother does not have any language problem in communication with school
Father's German level low	Mother's language competence is not enough	“my mother doesn't speak any German at all but my father is not too bad, I mean, he speaks, if he does not understand, I would tell him” (508, Ersoy).	Code for the cases mother's communication with school points 'low' language competence. If it points out 'high' code the previous one
Disadvantaged neighborhood	Living in the areas overpopulated by migrants, having school leaver friends, having friends using and selling drugs, having criminal friends	Where we live is a little bit different, once they wrote in a newspaper, it is “Klein Istanbul in Bremen”. No German lives there (Temel, 150).	Code when the interviewee live in certain areas of the city which are heavily populated by migrants. Also code for the cases of having friends in the neighborhood who are having risky behaviors for schooling such as smoking grass, using or selling drugs

			regularly, are leavers, are committed crime.
German students in the class/school	Having German classmates in classroom and school	...there my friends were only Germans because there was almost no Turk in this school...in whole school there wasn't even ten Turks, all were Germans, because only Germans live in the neighborhood (Emre, 553)	Code for the cases of having German students in classroom and school in sizable numbers.
Very few German students in class/school	Having very few to none German friends both in classroom and school	“where we live is in Niedersachsen and there are not many German over there, it is a big quarter with only three or four German families. All are Turkish, Kurdish and so on, everyone knows each other, I was always in the same school with them, they were in the same school, my company was always them” (Temel, 130)	Code for the cases of having German students in classroom and school in small numbers.
German friends	Having German friends within peer circle	“...there was one German, we were 3 Turks, we were going to his home all the time. He was not going to school, too...” (Ahmet, 365).	Code for the cases of stating that there have been German friend(s) among close peers.
Very few German friends	Having very few to none German friends within peer circle	“German? I live here so long, but I have maybe only one (acquaintance) (Ibrahim, 300)	Code for the cases of stating that there has not been German friend among close peers.
Kindergarten	Attended Kindergarten		
No Kindergarten	Not attended Kindergarten		
School situation of sibling, Sonderschule/Gesamtschule/Gymnasium/Handelsschule/Hauptschule/Oberschule/Rea	Having sibling attended/attending Sonderschule//Gesamtschule/Gymnasium/Handelsschule/Hauptschule/Oberschule/Realschule/school leaver		Code when a sibling attended/attending Sonderschule//Gesamtschule/Gymnasium/Handel



Ischule/school leaver			sschule/Hauptschule/Oberschule/Realschule/school leaver.
Low educational performance	Not understanding the content of the courses and having low grades	“they were helping but I thought, I could understand [lesson] but then I found it difficult they passed into another subject, then it got more difficult...it was difficult for me then I did not go there...”(Deniz, 317).	Code only for the cases of stating not understanding and having low grades in main courses such as Math and German
Well educational performance	Stating no difficulties with the content of the courses and having high grades		Code only for the cases that the interviewee finds his performance good enough for the courses and having average and above grades
Low economic resources in the family	Low paid job status of family members		Code only by paying attention to job status and earnings of family members
Low social resources in the family	low educational background and language competence of family members		Code according to educational profile and language competence of family members
Retention in primary school	Whether the interviewee has ever experienced retention		Code only for cases of retention in primary school
Adaptation problem in primary school	Stating having difficulties with getting along with teacher and classmates and siblings and parents	“Yes, of course there were some, for instance, she [the teacher] was a bit kind of weird because I was starting to talk without permission and replying without raising my hand”. (Turgay, 300)	Code only for the cases of behavioral and attitudinal hardships with rules, classmates, teachers in classroom and school, with

			siblings and parents at home
Frustration in classroom	Feeling powerless and meaningless due to the incompatibilities experienced in school.	I did not understand anything because I was not learning, I was doing nothing, sitting there like a shit, just listening them (Ahmet, 271)	Code when the interviewee states feelings of powerlessness, bitter disappointment and meaninglessness upon having difficulties with both the courses and teachers and classmates.
School fatigue	Feeling tired and stating having no energy for learning and going to school	“...I was bored in the class and I was not listening, I did not know what they were talking about anyway, so I was bored and I wanted to go out...I was feeling too tired (Ahmet, 834)	Code for the cases of stating clear tiredness for courses, not wanting to go to school, and being late to class regularly due to oversleeping.
Short term truancy	Skipping some courses on a school day	Nastiness, I mean, I was not going to school till four. Two times a week it [the school] was until four, both in Tuesday and Thursday . Thursday was OK, I mean I liked the courses like music, and I don't know, art , such stuff, so I was going there, but on Thursday, there were boring ones, only writing on the blackboard and so on, like Math and German the ones I don't like, I never went to school on Tuesdays for a couple of months, the teacher told me, 'you are not coming to school on, you are always sick on Tuesdays'. I don't know, what can I do, I am getting	Code for the cases of skipping some courses on a school day regularly

		sick on Tuesdays, I said, and he said, 'OK I see'. Then they were going to kick me out of this classroom, but then they gave up they did not change my classroom. (Emre, 201)	
Long term truancy	Cutting full school day for more than three days	How to say I was in the classroom, it suddenly turned out to be a fight, you know, he [the teacher] came, held me he was going to kick me, because I was not learning and just idling there (I guess he would not kick you just because you idle there) I mean, you don't understand, do you? I was not listening because I just got that I could not do anything, only two months left, even if I came to school every day, they'd not have given the diploma because I did not go to school for three or four months...(Hakan, 233)	Code for the cases of cutting school from more than three days to three months regularly.
No truancy	Neither skipping courses nor cutting school	"i have never skipped the school, I have always gone there" (Metin, 243)	Code for the cases of going to school regularly
Seeing the situation irreversible	Having a feeling/perception that there is no chance to reverse the flow of events	"...then I said to myself, ahh forget it, don't look for any, all in my report card were six, there was only a four". (Onur)	Code for the statements showing that the interviewee thinks putting efforts in bettering situation is useless due to various reasons

They do not talk about school and grades	Stating that school , courses and grades were not topics of the daily conversation among peer members	“What noo... I mean we don’t talk about lessons among us, I don’t know why” (Deniz, 863)	Code when the interviewee clearly states that they were not talking about school and grades
Getting closer to people who like him	Trying to befriend/choose peers who are similar to the interviewees in terms of attitudes to schooling	“I mean at the beginning, I 'd look to understand who is who, you know. I'd be quite for a couple of days, first I'd look himm how is this one, how is that one. Then If I' think that OK he is like me, like he'd get along with me good and so on, either they'd come to me or I'd go them, then we start talking. (How do you understand that he is like you?) I mean, how to say, it just happens, I feel it, you know, I mean when I see what he does, I say OK that's it” (Ahmet, 379) .	Code when the interviewee states that getting good grades and going to school regularly was not important among the peers.
Working parallel to school	Doing a permanent or temporary work while going to school.	(...) after school I was going to work, after work I was already feeling exhausted, I was going home, sleeping and coming to school, that was just like that (Onur 402)	Code for the cases of working in school times, except for summer time.
Peer group homogeneity	Having friends of same ethnic, national background.	my friends are generally from Turkey, I can't get along well with Germans. You know there is saying like, 'there is no real friend of Turk except for Turk” this saying is somehow correct, really, I mean it is not wrong.” (Ünal, 447)	Code for the cases of having almost only Turkish/Kurdish peers.
They talk about the school and	Stating that school, courses and grades were		Code when the interviewee

grades	topics of the daily conversations among peer		clearly states that they were talking about grades and school with each other
Coming late to class	Regularly not coming to (some) courses on time	“... so it was, I was always late to the school, I could not understand the teacher at all”. (Bekir, 317)	Code for the cases of coming late to class only regularly.
Probation and failing	It is two or three months time period given to the students in a new school upon being expelled from another one. Student is expected to show that he is not a 'problematic' student and can adopt easily to the school. In the end of it, the students are accepted or rejected by the school.	Probation, I mean, it is like a qualifying time, they give you three months to see if you stay in this school. I failed it, and they kicked me out of this school, they said, they don't want me there (Ahmet, 207)	Code for the cases that the interviewee was given probation in a new school and the school rejected him in the end.
Being jailed	Due to criminal activity being in Juvenile detention	“...Juvenile detention , ehmm I will be put inside (When?) in a week, in break time (why?) because of this notification, I mean burglary, you know burglary, I broke into flats and I was caught, such things, you know, (alone?) no, with friends” (Özgür, 903)	Code for the cases of staying in Juvenile detention in varying length.
Positive opinions for Germans	Stating positive remarks about Germans in general and German teacher and friends in particular	“I was getting on well with them (Germans), I mean as I do with Turks. I mean for me it is OK Turk or German, I mean, it's the same. I mean, if he is friendly, it does not matter for me what he is” (Emre, 565).	Code when the interviewee makes positive remarks and hold no negative stereotypes for German classmates, teachers and people.
Negative opinions for Germans	Stating negative remarks about Germans in general and German teacher and friends in particular	“I 'd never trust a German, I trust only Turks” (Ibrahim, 316)	Code when the interviewee makes negative remarks and

			hold negative stereotypes for German classmates , teachers and people.
Expelled from the school	Being expelled from school due to various reasons	We beat two persons, they were going to beat us with many people, there emerged out a fight, and a friend knifed one from middle of his back, then we flew [being expelled] from this school by then anyway...(Temel, 486)	Code when the interviewee was expelled from school by school authorities. Not code for the cases such as moving.
not attending to extra-curricular activities	When existed, not attending extra-curricular activities voluntarily		Code when the interviewee states that he did not participate in extra-curricular activities when existed in school.
Pleased with the teacher	Appraising teachers in terms of their help in courses, teaching style, and approaching the interviewees equally	“...He was like an Angel, really. I mean they were both actually so good, none has been so good to me as much as they were , they did a lot for my schooling...” (Mehmet, 231)	Code when the interviewee makes positive remarks about his teachers regarding the ways they approach him.
Short time future perspective	Future plans which aim at earning money as soon as possible and future jobs for which schooling is not necessary.	Sometimes I am thinking, you know, should I earn money or should I go to school. How to say, the life is too short, you know, 8 year means a lot in this life, 8 years you will go to school. For example I have an elder sister, I mean my cousin, she is 27 or 28 years old and she has gone to schools since I knew her, like art, and textile, she went to university and studied textile, she studies a lot and, she is 27 now and what happened now? She	Expressions hinting such as that the interviewee has tendency not investing schooling much, or that he is impatient to make money.

		works in H&M, she works in such places, like clothing, she earns 1200, and I told her that she is gullible, 'if you did not go to school but worked and save your money, now it would be better for you, I said. But she goes and works, because there is no job here, no money. For example some go to school for 30 years and then maybe become unemployed, there is no job anymore, you yourself probably know, too. There are a few jobs and, the firms are closing down, look Karstadt closes, Opel closes this and that, I mean our future, I mean I don't know our future here very difficult, either going to another country or I don't know, I will not stay here anyway (Hakan, 539)".	
Limited residence	Instead of full residence permit, keeping limited one in varying lengths such as monthly or yearly basis due to the long term truancy in school and criminal activities involved in.	"...you know, that's why they did not give me unlimited [permit], it is always like 1 year, 1 year, 1 year, you know (last time was it also for one year?) it was again for 1 year, then it was for one month, I was going there every month, then they gave again for a year"(Temel, 54)	Code each time the interviewees state that he keeps a limited residence permit and talk about its effects on their life
Using and dealing drugs	Smoking and dealing grass, drugs in and out of school regularly	...ehmm we were selling, I mean we were selling grass, too. (I see) we did every thing, we did what we had to do...(Hakan 673)	For the cases of stating smoking and dealing of grass regularly
Extreme disruptiveness	Harsh physical fights with teachers and classmates, criminal activity in school	The problem was there, again the teacher, I did not do anything, I did not go to the school and this and that. Then I set the school on fire and	Code for the cases of physical fights, and damaging school

		yes that was it.(I mean, did someone chill you an hour before, or I do not know, did someone say something?) Nothing. Just the teacher was a bit strange, he was really strange. (Özgür, 429)	
The valuelessness of school certificate	Finding, particularly, Hauptschule, school certificates in less value compared certificates taken from other school tracks.	I mean you cant do anything with the certificate I will receive...(Alper- 609).	Code for the statements pointing out that the interviewee findings some school certificates too less in value.
The unequal treatment of teacher because of the background of the student	Having feelings or observations regarding favoritism to German students over Turkish students in many levels such as encouraging, addressing, or grading.	How to say, for example, I was sometimes late to the class, then she was punishing me like write this for one hour or stay half an hour longer in the class, but when some others getting on well with her did the same thing, she was doing nothing, just telling OK sit down. Then, we were seeing that look, she is coddling him but not us. (Whom was she coddling in general?) Usually, puhh, her own students Germans, there were a few foreigners, too, I mean working hard, but really a few. (Onur, 290)	Code for the all statements showing that the interviewee has the perception that Turkish/Kurdish students, or migrant students in general, are approached unequally in many ways such as encouraging in class, punishment, addressing and grading.
Problem between teacher and student	Existing of verbal conflicts between teachers and students which do not include abusing language such as swearing and physical fight	“...Then I only bended my head to my side, she shouted me, she shouted me and I saw her writing a paper to send me to the Trainingsraum, I took the paper and threw it in front of her, I said “you go to the Trainingsraum, not me. I am here since 7:30, now you send me to there just because I bended my head to the side”, I said “what	Code when the students have only verbal conflicts, Not physical one.



		type of teacher you are. You should help me, but look how you behave at me”. Then she yelled and I yelled and I slammed the door and went out” (Mehmet, 291)	
The peer group based low social capital	Having peers who do have low grades, using or selling drugs and not into school	I mean there were better than mine but theirs (grades) were also not good, I mean theirs were like 3 or 4, not good, you know. Most of their grades were either normal or bad. There was no one whose grades were good (Emre 497)  “Lots of my friends were addictive to alcohol and heroin, and grass and fag you know at that time. I was hanging out with them”(Turgay, 408)	Code for the statements demonstrating that interviewee's peers have low grades, school success does not bring prestige for them, having risky behaviors for schooling such as using or selling drugs.
The passage into Vocational School	Being sent from the School of General Education to vocational school means being school leaver/Schulabgänger		Code for the time when the interviewee is sent to vocational school from School of General education.
Teacher disparagement	Having warnings and harsh critiques in front of classmates.	Hum, for example in that school, everyone in the classroom was speaking, but if I say a word or laugh she was getting angry only at me, I was really getting annoyed then, then squealing, and the fight with the teacher. (Do you think she was behaving in this way towards only you in the classroom)Yeah, she was always coming over me. (Erdem,465)	Code for the statements pointing that the teachers got angry at and yelled the interviewee in the classroom. Also code for the cases, the interviewee think the teacher was obsessed with him.
Swearing at teacher	Very harsh reactions to teacher following some	I was talking to him [a classmate] I was going to	Code only for the cases of

	confrontations	tell him something important, the women [the teacher] was yelling from the side, then I said 'why are you yelling at me, who do you think you are?' then she yelled at me, and I yelled at her, she said 'that's enough, you will fly from this school now' I got angry and started to swear at her like a trooper. Then we went to school director, there I said what is that, you kick me out just because I yelled at her, why is she yelling at me, then he also said, 'you are flying' then I swore at him like a trooper, too...(Ahmet, 355)	swearing. For the cases of physical fight including swearing NOT code this but Extreme Disruptiveness.
Stigmatization in class	Experiencing confrontations with teachers and, in some cases classmates, in the classroom	“...everyone in the classroom was speaking, he [The teacher] was telling only me 'shut up' only yelling at me. Then I was just yelling at him, what of it?, everyone is speaking here , why are you only dealing with me...”(Emre, 309).	Code each time when the interviewee states, he had verbal and physical conflicts with teachers and classmates in classroom. Also code for each Trainingsraum penalty and disciplinary meeting.
Trainingsraum penalty	Being sent to Trainingsraum mostly because teacher thinks the interviewee acts up in classroom	Sometimes everyone was chatting in the classroom, the teacher was always accusing the same persons, he was saying that you, you and you go out of the class now, and sending people to the Trainingsraum. Then we were getting more pissed off. Why he only sends us? Whole class was chatting, but he was sending only two or three of us. He was saying now go out, and then we were ripping the paper	Code for the cases only being sent to Trainingsraum as punishment. Code disparagement and over-monitoring only with the condition of including Trainingsraum penalty.

		in front of him and going out! (Emre, 631)	
Over-monitoring	Teacher control the students in classroom overly.	“In the school, yes OK. He knew I was acting up, he was looking at me all the time, if I say anything, then he was immediately saying yeah you again” (Ersoy, 258)	Code for the cases of that the interviewee thinks the teacher pays attention only him and over-control him deliberately.
Gambling	Playing with slot machines hines regularly	... We're going to somewhere and coming back soon with money in our pockets. We got used to it, then came to slot machine, my mother and father did not know about anything...(Hakan, 673)	Code for the gambling with slot machines.

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## Çetin Çelik

Department of Psychology, Koc University  
34450 Sariyer, Istanbul/TURKEY  
Tel: (90) 212-338 1641  
ccelik@bigsss.uni-bremen.de

### Personal Details

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Gender: Male  
Place of Birth: Istanbul/Turkey  
Date of Birth: 13.05.1977

### Education

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- 02/2011 - Present **KOÇ University**, Istanbul, Turkey  
Post-Doctoral Researcher, Department of Psychology
- 10/2007 - 02/2011 **Bremen International Graduate School of Social Science**, Bremen, Germany. Doctoral Fellow at University of Bremen
- Thesis Title: The Process of Leaving School and Meaning of Schooling: The Case of Turkish School Leavers in Germany
- Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Matthias Wingens, Bremen  
Prof. Dr. Michael Windzio, Bremen
- 03/2006 - 10/2006 **Humboldt University**, Berlin, Germany  
Exchange program, Institut für Sozialwissenschaften
- 09/2004 - 07/2007 **Middle East Technical University**, Ankara, Turkey  
M.Sc. in Sociology
- Thesis Title: A Critical Analysis of Transnationalism. The Case of Turkish Migrants Living in Berlin
- Supervisors: Assoc. Prof. Helga Rittersberger Tılıç, Ankara, Turkey
- 09/1999 - 06/2003 **Ege University**, Izmir, Turkey  
BA in Sociology

### Research Experience

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- 02/2011- present **KOÇ University**, Istanbul, Turkey  
Post-Doctoral Researcher in the project "School enrollment and dropout problem in primary school education in Turkey: determining individual, social and ecological factors" funded by Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK)

- 05-12/2010      **University of Bremen**, Bremen, Germany  
 Researcher within the project “Draufhaberinnen und Durchblicker – BMBF gefördertes Verbundprojekt in der beruflichen Online - Community- Forschung” It is an online video community for adolescents at the transition from school to vocational education.
- 09/2003      **Ege University**, Izmir, Turkey  
 Field-work interviewer within the project “The Emigrant: Problems of Identity and Adaptation of the Bulgar-Born Turks in Turkey,” held commonly by the Sociology departments at the New Bulgarian University and Ege University
- 04/2002      **Ege University**, Izmir, Turkey  
 Field-work interviewer within the project “Political Tendencies in Izmir” Department of Sociology
- 11/2000      **Ege University**, Izmir, Turkey  
 Computer assistant (Analysis of the survey data by using the SPSS program) within the project “Elimination of Child Labour in Izmir,” an ILO project (IPEC) Department of Sociology

### **Teaching and Workshops Organizations**

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- 03/2009 - 09/2009      **University of Bremen**, Bremen, Germany  
 Structuration Theories: Sociological Theories of Anthony Giddens & Pierre Bourdieu', Summer 2009 (with Jan-Ocko Heuer) Theory Seminar, B.A
- 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup>/10/ 2009      **Bremen International Graduate School of Social Science**, Bremen, Germany. Workshop with Bärbel Rothhaar “Art Trans-culture”
- 19<sup>th</sup>/01/2011      **Bremen International Graduate School of Social Science**, Bremen, Germany. Workshop with Prof. Dr. Heike Solga “Low Education in Comparative Perspective: Skills, Relations, and Meanings”

### **Professional Presentations & Invited Talks**

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- 06/12/2011      **Turkish Youth in Germany: The Effects of Prejudices, Class Injuries, and Disappointments On The Perception of Education**  
 Invited talk - Department of Sociology and Educational studies, Bilgi University, Istanbul, Turkey

- 31/05/2011      **The process of leaving school and meaning of schooling for Turkish school leavers in Germany**  
Invited talk - College of Social Sciences and Humanities, KOÇ University
- 11-17/07/2010      **Turkish School Dropouts in Germany: The Process of Dropping Out**  
Paper presentation - XVII ISA World Congress of Sociology, Gothenburg, Sweden
- 04-09/07/2010      **Turkish School Dropouts in Germany: The Process of Leaving School**  
Poster presentation - Higher education and beyond – Inequalities regarding entrance to higher education and educational credentials- Department of Sociology of Education at University of Berne, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zürich (Switzerland) in co-operation with the Centro Stefano Franscini (CSF) Monter Verita, Ascona, Lago Maggiore, Switzerland
- 11-16/04/2010      **Turkish School Dropouts in Germany: The Process of Dropping Out**  
Paper presentation - ESRC International Spring School Comparative Educational Pathways, University of York, York, United Kingdom
- 16-17/01/2009      **Turkish School Dropouts**  
Paper presentation - Second Generation Research Dialogues: Comparative Perspectives on Children of Immigrants - The Center for Metropolitan Studies, Berlin, Germany
- 29/09-03/10/2008      **The Meaning and Importance of Education for Turkish School Dropout**  
Paper presentation- International Summer School “Selected Concepts of Comparison and Methods of Empirical Migration Research”, Bochum, Germany
- 25–27/01/2007      **Transnational Connections in Multicultural Milieu**  
Paper presentation - Expanding Citizenship in an Age of Migration? Open Fora: Where Europeans meet. Berlin, Germany
- 04-19/07/2005      **Islamic Capital: A Transnational Tie**  
Paper presentation - The Joint seminar “Globalization and its effects” *held commonly* by Middle East Technical University in Ankara and Free University in Berlin (one week in Turkey, one week in Germany), Ankara, Turkey - Berlin, Germany
- 04/2003      **Student speaker**  
in “Turkish-German Youth Conference”- Goethe Institute in Izmir and Department of Sociology at Ege University, Izmir/ Turkey

## **Conference Appearances**

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- 18/03/2011 "On New Research on Education in Turkey", Koç University & World Bank
- 05-06/12/2008 "Migration and Life-Course Research", University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany
- 24-25/06/2005 "Religion and Nation in Tomorrow's Europe" German Embassy in Istanbul, Turkey

## **Research Interests**

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Comparative Education                      Educational Inequalities  
Social Capital                                  School Labour Market Transition  
Migration & Migrant Integration          Qualitative Research Methods

## **Skills**

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**Languages:**                      Turkish: native                      English: fluent                      German: advanced

**PC knowledge:**                      Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint); Internet; SPSS; Atlas.ti

## **Fellowships and Awards**

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- 02/2011- Present                      **College of Social Sciences & Humanities, Koç University, Istanbul**  
Post-Doctoral Fellowship
- 10/2007 - 02/2011                      **Bremen International Graduate School of Social Science, Bremen**  
PhD Fellowship
- 03/2006-10/2006                      **Humboldt University, Berlin**  
Erasmus Exchange Program Scholarship
- 04-19/07/2005                      **Free University in Berlin & METU in Ankara**  
Two Weeks Joint Seminar Scholarship

## **Publications**

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Celik, C (2008) *A Critical Analysis of Transnationalism: The Case of Turkish Migrants Living in Berlin* VDM Verlag

## **Referees**

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Prof. Dr. Matthias Wingers  
Bremen International Graduate School of Social Science  
E-mail: mwingens(at)bigsss.uni-bremen.de

Prof. Dr. Michael Windzio  
Bremen International Graduate School of Social Science  
E-mail: mwindzio(at)bigsss.uni-bremen.de