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Research Article

Orientalist Encounters at School: Security and Inclusion in the Education of Syrian Refugee Children in Istanbul

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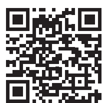

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ABSTRACT

After the Syrian crisis, the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey is estimated to be approximately four million. Currently, one of the most significant aspects of the integration process of refugees in Turkey is the education of refugee students. Investigating the process of the co-education of refugee and Turkish citizen students in public schools provides some insight into what the future might hold for these refugees and sheds light on the dynamics of living together with locals. The first aim of this research is to explore the reception of the refugee students by the teachers in order to understand inclusion and/or exclusion mechanisms in education. Second, this study examines the roles that ethno-religious and political identities play in relations between teachers and refugee students by focusing on ethno-religious identity and discrimination. Drawing on the debates on orientalism and securitization in migration, it explicates the ways in which teachers justify their judgments and impressions of the refugee students through orientalist codes. To achieve this, public school teachers from two districts of Istanbul were invited to take part in this ethnographic research which was conducted in 2018.

Keywords: Refugee Students, Syrian refugees, Education, Orientalism, Securitization

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1. Introduction

After the arrival of Syrian refugees in Turkey, the Turkish government's security policies, border security and the Syrian "integration" into the Turkish society became politicized and remain as contested issues. One of the contexts that portray current tensions regarding refugees and their social inclusion in Turkey is the school environment. The education of refugee children also presents a realm where the future of Syrian refugees in Turkey is debated and in which an impression can be obtained of how Syrian refugee subjectivities are imagined and perceived as a part of society. The inclusion of Syrian refugees and their co-existence in the local community indicate a structural problem in terms of the Turkish state's migration and refugee policies, with regards to the ambiguity of long-term policies towards migration in Turkey. This article investigates refugee education in Turkey through an analysis of schools as spaces of encounters and identity formation.

According to official estimates, more than four million people who fled their homes due to the armed conflict in neighboring Syria currently live in Turkey (UN 2020).[1] Although Turkey is a party to the 1951 UN (Geneva) Convention on Refugees and 1967 Protocol, it has maintained a geographic reservation and disallowed non-European migrants to gain refugee status in Turkey. Therefore, the Syrian population in Turkey has not officially been given "refugee" status and Syrians who were accepted into the country were given temporary protection status. When the Syrian crisis began in 2011, Turkey initially followed a welcoming approach by declaring "Syrians as guests" (Dağtaş, 2017). Since then, the prolonged war in Syria, growing anti-refugee discourses in mainstream Turkish society, and the indeterminacy surrounding Syrian refugees' status have sparked public discussions about the future of Syrian refugees in Turkey and the need to develop policies that would recognize Syrian refugees as permanent members of the Turkish society. Temporary Protection Status for Syrians has not changed but Turkey has adopted new laws and followed certain policies in line with global and European reactions to mass migration. Turkey introduced a new law in 2013 called the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, which paved the way for a coherent body of law on migration and asylum. However, through the discourse on 'migration management', the Turkish government plays a dominant role in controlling the migrant flows (Memişoğlu and Ilgıt 2017). There have been non-governmental organizations operating in the field of migration, but the government made DGMM (Directory of Migration Management), a civil authority on migration management, the main institution responsible for migrants (Memişoğlu and Ilgıt 2017, p. 323). Today, Syrian refugees have access to work permission, education, and health care. Nonetheless, ambiguity regarding the future of Syrian refugees in Turkey continues.

Ethnographic research on the integration (*uyum* in Turkish) of Syrian refugees into mainstream Turkish society has hitherto focused on the protection of refugees' social rights (Eroğlu et al., 2017; Yıldız and Uzgören, 2016), state responses to mass refugee flows (Can, 2019; Şahin-Mencütek, 2019), humanitarianism and border control (Fernando and Giordano, 2016), refugee "crisis" as a historical phenomenon (Chatty, 2017; Saraçoğlu and Belanger, 2019), and the Islamic notions of community (Zaman, 2016). Among these, migration scholars aimed at understanding the plight of the refugees but left out political polarization and its impact on refugee-host relations in urban areas. Drawing on the refugee and critical pedagogy literature, this article explores young Syrian refugees' inclusion in, and exclusion from, educational settings within a broader political context by investigating the encounters between educators and the Syrian chil-

1 Retrieved from https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-turkey accessed 06/22/2022

dren that shape and are shaped by existing ethnic and religious identifications and the ways in which these identities operate in the social sphere.

In the most recent research on migration in Turkey, refugee education figured as an important problem, along with refugees' socio-economic impact on society. Up until 2016, Syrian refugee children had two options to receive formal education: They could enroll in public schools, or they could register at Temporary Education Centers (TECs), which were developed specifically for the Syrian refugee children (Özer et al., 2017, p.115).[2] Alternatively, they could enroll in private schools. Due to concerns about the quality of education and future options[3] for Syrian students, the TECs have now been closed and the students have been moved to Turkish public schools. This means that more Syrian refugee students experience potential conflict with Turkish teachers and other students as schools become major sites of their social encounters. Today, more Syrian refugees[4] live in Istanbul than in any other part of Turkey, which makes Istanbul a major field site to observe refugee-host encounters. According to the 2021 UNICEF report, children make up approximately 45% of Syrian refugees, and almost half of those who live in urban cities are not enrolled in school.[5] As a result, thousands of refugee children are deprived of access to public education and schooling in Turkey.[6]

In this research, we aim to examine whether primary and secondary school teachers' ethno-religious and political identities play a role in refugee student-teacher relations by looking at exclusion and inclusion mechanisms of the refugee students inside schools. We discuss how teachers and administrators position Syrian refugees in a certain political and ideological realm and how this positioning facilitates or hinders the adaptation of Syrian pupils into public schools by using Said's Orientalism and the Copenhagen school's securitization as conceptual frameworks. Based on an ethnographic study[7] in Zeytinburnu and Sultangazi[8] in Istanbul, we argue that the exclusionary practices of school teachers regarding refugee children are intertwined with anti-Syrian discrimination in Turkey which perceives Syrian refugees as security threats and as belonging to the "Orient". We found that the teachers' ethno-religious identities and their own experiences of injustice in the political realm do not necessarily preclude them from engaging in discriminatory practices against the refugee students. Finally, we discuss the educational environment in Istanbul as one based on the securitization of the refugee children rather than one which stems from an inclusive approach to ethno-religious and racial diversity in public schools. This finding invites us to rethink educational settings as microcosms of the larger social and political landscapes and design long-term policies for "integration" of the migrants.

2 As of 2021, there are 854,839 refugee children enrolled in formal education in Turkey (UNICEF 2021) accessed 06/22/2022 Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/media/118576/file/Syria%20Crisis%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20(Refugee)%20-1%20Jan%20-%2031%20Dec%202021.pdf

3 Initially, temporary education centers (TECs) were established in the 25 refugee camps built along the Turkey–Syria border as well as in communities with large numbers of refugees. They provided schooling based on the Syrian national curriculum, taught in Arabic, which was supplemented by Turkish language and history lessons. (Hauber-Özer, 2019 p.50)

4 Retrieved from https://multeciler.org.tr/eng/number-of-syrians-in-turkey/accessed 06/22/2022

5 Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/unicef-turkey-2018-humanitarian-results accessed 07/12/2020

6 Retrieved from https://t24.com.tr/haber/istanbul-da-yasayan-gocmenlerin-cocuklari-okullara-kayit-olamiyor,837785 accessed 07/23/2020

7 This study was conducted by following ethical considerations with the permission of the ethical board at Binghamton University-Human Subject Research Review (2015-2018). Every interlocutor was informed about the research and their consent was taken.

8 Over 500,000 Syrian refugees who reside in Istanbul are concentrated in Esenyurt, Başakşehir, Sultangazi, Küçükçekmece, Bağcılar, Zeytinburnu and Fatih districts (Narlı 2018).

2. Education System and Syrian Refugees in Turkey

Many critical social scientists and pedagogy scholars have pondered over the way in which school impacts societies by looking at issues such as discrimination and multilingualism (Çayır, 2014; Çayır and Ayan, 2012). In the Turkish context, since the rise of the modern state and the idea of creating a nation –a proper nation, much of recent scholarly work has investigated Turkey's education system in relation to Turkish nationalism and classes on religion (White, 2012). Scholars in Turkey have criticized the education system extensively due to its militarist and nationalist agenda and have revealed the deficits of Turkey's education system regarding the right to access equal education (for instance see Sen 2020; Aydın and Dogan 2019). Turkey has a very centralized education system in the sense that education policies are created by the government and implemented by the Ministry of Education through provincial directorates. However, the cultural landscape is far from being such a monolithic bloc (Tongal, 2015, p.15). This contradiction creates difficulties in the education of diverse communities and in providing multilingual education. The centralized system operates on the assumption of equal opportunities and "sameness". However, socio-cultural factors such as language, religion and gender cause inequality in education. Issues such as education in the mother tongue and access to schools in various districts in Turkey were already presented as major limitations in the Turkish education system even before the Syrian conflict.

The needs of Syrian students, such as the challenges they face during their integration into public schools and their coping mechanisms, as well as the needs of Turkish teachers, are relatively new areas of ethnographic research for scholars in Turkey. Scholars have examined Syrian students' linguistic and cultural adaptation (Çelik and İçduygu, 2018; Taşkın and Erdemli, 2018), their academic performance (Tösten et al., 2017), and their educational needs (Aydın and Kaya, 2017) through both quantitative and qualitative research. The current literature emphasizes in-class problems that teachers experience and refugee students' access to public school education (Uyan-Semerci and Erdogan, 2018) as part of the structural problems of the Turkish education system and of Syrian refugees within the Turkish education system in particular (Özer et al., 2017). Social scientists have drawn attention to the importance of building intercultural education and to the acknowledgment of diversity in classrooms (Tongal, 2015), in order to achieve an inclusive school environment. Our contribution to this existing scholarship is the way in which discriminative encounters lead to constructing 'the other' as a security threat. We argue that our critical framing of teacher-refugee student encounters from the prism of securitization and Orientalism could contribute to the debates over the ideological role of schools. In this way we could engage in a critical vocabulary sentient to enduring problems in refugees' access to education and social integration, such as human rights, migration policies and ethno-religious identity in Turkey. In this article, we argue that the inadequacy in multicultural and multilingual education and discriminative orientalist perspectives within the educational context in Turkey contribute to failures in refugee education and in Syrian students' access to an equal and non-discriminatory classroom environment.

3. Methodology and Fieldwork

This research was conducted by using qualitative research techniques. Our ethnographic strategies included focus groups, participant observation, and in-depth interviews while we also benefited from our own positions with respect to our experience as teachers at different levels and in various contexts.[9]

9 Our own subject positions and ethnic identities became part of the conversation we had with our interlocutors

In order to demonstrate the practices of exclusion and inclusion in the school environment in relation to larger politico-ideological subject positions, we conducted interviews with 30 teachers from 3 different elementary and secondary schools in two districts of Istanbul. The schools were all public schools and one of them was a TEC in transition to becoming a coeducation school. We began our research by interviewing teachers, who worked from first to eighth grade in the largest public school in Sultangazi and one of the most refugee populated public schools in Zeytinburnu from September to October 2018. Our fieldwork included many trips to both districts, and we held three meetings in our focus group interviews, one of them being in Zeytinburnu and two others in Sultangazi. The participants were chosen by considering their ethno-religious and political affiliations. The school we chose in Sultangazi is renowned for its high academic achievements and quality of education. We analyzed the data using qualitative research analysis software and categorized the interviews according to certain keywords and participant profiles.

The sampling strategy was through the snowball technique, however our criterion for the sample of the participants was based on ethnoreligious and political diversity. The teachers we interviewed were from different ethno-religious backgrounds including Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, Alevi, and Sunni identifications, as well as those from nationalist persuasions . Our goal was to understand the differences and similarities among teachers' approaches to the students despite their distinct backgrounds. The participants were fully informed about the research and their consent were taken prior to the interviews. We chose Sultangazi and Zeytinburnu to conduct our research because these two districts share certain similarities regarding demography, the local population's socio-economic status, and history of city planning[10]. The urban landscape in these two districts of Turkey is now host to 'the largest number of refugees worldwide, with close to 4.1 million refugees' (United Nations, 2020) and reshaped by decades of internal and external migrations, unplanned *gecekondu* (slum) growth, failed public works, and more recently gentrification. The arrival of the Syrian refugees impacted the labor market, and members of the local population from different migrant backgrounds have now become the ones who "host" the Syrians.

A combination of Sultançiftliği and Gazi neighborhoods, Sultangazi is one of the newer districts of Istanbul, which became a municipality in 2009. Gazi, a heterogeneous neighborhood in terms of ethnicity and religion, was established during the 1980s as a result of rural-urban migration arising from economic reasons. The neighborhood, which was portrayed as a site of left-wing extremism in the 1990s (known as the Gazi events), served as a refuge for the Sunni Kurds who were forcibly removed from their villages during the late 1990s and 2000s (Güneş, 2013, p.17). Although Gazi residents' experiences are different from the Syrian refugees, they seem to have more experience of "integration" into urban life and exclusion from social public life due to their position as internally displaced persons. Similarly, Zeytinburnu, which has the highest ratio of

and contributed to our negotiations of inclusivity and diversity in educational settings. One of us is a Kurdish scholar and primary school teacher, while the other is an Arab scholar and a former high school teacher.

10 We picked Sultangazi and Zeytinburnu as our research sites for a few reasons. First, even though both places have similar demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds, they differ within the context of schoolteachers' political orientations and ethno-religious backgrounds. Sultangazi and Zeytinburnu are microcosms in terms of showing the landscape of Syrian migrant population in Turkey. The Syrian refugees in both districts are from various cities and regions of Syria and they include different ethno-religious backgrounds. As per the teachers from Turkey, in Zeytinburnu they were mostly practicing Muslims and identified themselves as religious and pro-government. However, the teachers in Sultangazi were more diverse in their ethno-religious background including Sunni and Alevi Kurds and socialist/leftist Turkish teachers. Second, Sultangazi was more accessible to the authors due to one of the authors' long work experience at, and therefore previous affiliation to, one of the schools in Sultangazi up until 2017.

Syrian refugees in Istanbul (almost 9% of the population), is a working-class neighborhood housing many different migrant groups from a diversity of countries that moved into the neighborhood over a period of six decades. Established in the late 1940s, Zeytinburnu was one of the first *gecekondu* (shantytown) districts of Istanbul. As a residential area, it was constructed by rural migrants who came to the city in search of jobs in large industrial factories surrounding Zeytinburnu (Yonucu, 2008, p. 52). It is predominantly a residential district whose inhabitants consist of workers who are employed in the informal small-scale workshops, unemployed jobseekers, and the permanently unemployed who have lost hope of finding jobs. Rural migrants in Zeytinburnu, just like those in Sultangazi, are mostly Kurds who were forced to leave their villages in the 1990s. It also includes several groups of immigrants of Turkish origin, such as Turks from the Balkans, including Bulgarian Turks, Turkmen and Uzbeks from Afghanistan who mostly immigrated in the 1980s, and the Uyghurs from China (Narlı, 2018 p.275).

By looking at two districts of Istanbul with the densest refugee populations our goal is also to reflect upon the current debates and discriminatory practices against refugees in Turkey.

4. Theoretical Framework: Orientalism and Securitization

In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) explains that the West's relationship with the Orient has always been intrinsically connected to its usefulness to Western interests. Although rooted in colonialism, this Western-centric way of looking at the world extends far beyond armies and territorial ambitions, entering into the ideological realm by means of literary productions, media accounts, and ethnographic narratives (Arif, 2018, p.34). Through discursive and other practices, the Orient is homogenized and framed in fixed representations which, through portrayals of "the Other" as mysterious and exotic, depict it as strange at best, and uncivilized and barbaric at worst. Moreover, it is portrayed as a threat to its antithesis the West, which purportedly represents civilization, democracy and a vast array of other principles, deemed to be more virtuous (Said, 1978).

According to Said orientalism is an intricate discursive practice through which the West constructed the Orient as primitive or inferior to its self-image and thus legitimized its civilizing mission into the lands and societies of this mythical Orient (Said, 1978). Following Said's conceptualization, scholars refer to cultural hierarchies as "neo-orientalism" (Sadowski, 1993; Musarrat, 2000) taking place within their own societies. One such example of cultural hierarchies is discussed through the conceptualization of "nesting orientalisms" in the context of former Yugoslavia (Bakic-Hayden 1995). The author argues that "the gradation of "Orients" is a pattern of reproduction of the original dichotomy upon which Orientalism is premised. In this pattern, Asia is more "East" or "other" than Eastern Europe; within Eastern Europe itself this gradation is reproduced with the Balkans perceived as most "eastern"; within the Balkans there are similarly constructed hierarchies" (Bakic-Hayden,1995, p.918). According to Barbero (2012), after 9/11, these discursive forms were used to stigmatize immigrants, in particular those who came from Muslim and Arab regions, whose existence was posited as a threat to the so-called Western rational and democratic values and social order. The new discursive form constructed immigrants as incapable of integrating. This incapability is explained as having originated in immigrants' cultural backwardness (Barbero, 2012). Orientalist perspectives toward migrants began to become visible in Turkey as it transitioned into a country of immigration rather than a transit country for migrants. (İçduygu 2002). Although this study uses "Orientalism" as a tool to understanding the positioning of Syrian refugees in Turkey, there are many scholarly works which have focused on discrimina-

tion against Syrian refugees in Turkey. These scholars emphasized normalization of discriminatory discourses against Syrians (Terzioğlu 2017), more recently hate speech and discriminatory rhetoric on social media (Bozdağ 2020; Filibeli and Ertuna 2021) and migrant inclusion/exclusion mechanisms (Saraçoğlu and Belanger 2019; Sözer 2022). This paper builds on this literature by analyzing inclusion and exclusion mechanisms through the lens of Orientalism and the educational context. As this article suggests the educational context provides further evidence for the issue of "integration" by putting the migrant as the main actor responsible for the integration process.

The second conceptual framework used in order to understand the relationship between teachers' perceptions of Syrian refugee students in public schools is the securitization theory. A leading school in security studies, the Copenhagen school, focuses on the ways in which the process of securitization in the domestic context plays out in relation to migration. The Copenhagen school introduced the concept of securitization to critical security studies (Rumelili and Karadağ, 2017), which is concerned with how security problems are constructed and exercised in politics (Baran, 2018). The securitization process is analogous to a "speech act" (Buzan, Waever and Wilde, 1998). Instead of attributing the act to something tangible, this process considers utterance itself to be the act. Something is accomplished by defining the words (such as making a promise, wagering, or naming "something"). When one says 'x security issue,' one is speaking of a 'performative' rather than a 'constative,' and thus there is no true status but a 'felicity condition' (Waever, 1995; Butler, 1997). According to the Copenhagen School, security is intersubjective and a problem becomes a security matter through the process of securitization. In this sense, the issue of security does not stem from an actual threat that already exists as such, but is constructed through speech acts (Buzan, Waever and Wilde 1998:25). The facilitating conditions for securitization are based on the historical relations with the subject of the threat. Securitization practices that include both discursive and non-discursive forms attempt to secure the "host community" against the "collective dangerous force" of migrants (Huysmans, 2006). In Europe, with growing asylum applications and international migration numbers, a politics of *unease,* where migrants and asylum seekers were not individually described as threats and enemies, emerged (Huysmans, 2006). Instead, migrants were lumped together with other more traditionally "scary" threats such as international crime and/or domestic criminal activities (Hammerstad, 2014; Huysmans, 2006). The securitization of Syrian refugees has also been studied in the Turkish context particularly on issues such as public security, labor market and socioeconomic problems (Donelli 2018; Toğral Koca 2016). For instance, in his recent research, Erdoğan finds that as a result of a comprehensive survey data, security concerns are quite high in society, and these concerns will eventually influence politics, which shows that securitization is a bottom-up process in Turkey arising from "society/grassroots" (2020, p. 76). In a similar vein, this article discusses these increasing security concerns in society in the context of educational settings and Syrian refugee children.

5. Orientalist Encounters: Ethno-religious Identity and Discrimination

In October 2018, we met with Bahar[11], a 36 year old Kurdish woman, and her friend Ayşe, a 38 year old Turkish woman; both were public school teachers in Sultangazi. Bahar, a primary school teacher in Gazi, was one of the employed teachers and defined her political position as 'leftist'. Bahar was concerned about the refugee children and their future in Turkish society. She was also very vocal about migrant rights and often emphasized during our conversations the need

11 All interlocutors' names are pseudo names in order to maintain confidentiality.

for political solutions, which means structural changes and right-based solutions. Perhaps that is why she accepted our request for a series of interviews. We met with Bahar and Ayşe in the headquarters of the teachers' union. Both teachers considered themselves to be not only educators but also activists. Both were involved and active union members. Both had Syrian students in their schools.

When we asked them about their experiences in the classroom, Bahar began talking about the difficulty of achieving "harmony" in the classroom due to communication problems. In our conversations and follow-up interviews, Bahar and Ayşe highlighted their perception about the Arabic language and Arab ethnic identity. Ayşe jumped in when we asked further about the linguistic aspect of failure in communication with Syrian students: "You know what, whenever I hear my students speak it feels like they are reading the Quran. I don't know, I guess the language [Arabic] is just not appealing [to me]." Ayşe's response urged us to investigate what the underlying reason for her statement might be. We had often heard similar statements from the teachers about their sense of Arab culture, epitomized by language and ethnic identity, and how they associated culture with student behavior in the classroom. Teachers also affiliate Arabic with a geographical area and/or region, namely the "Middle East", and situate it in a "backward" position.

Bahar and Ayşe talked about how "Arabness" and Islam played a role in their perception of Syrian refugees. The meanings attached to "Arabness" directly informed teachers' relations with both the students and their parents and triggered stereotypes by leading to a dismissive attitude in their encounters with the Syrian pupils. Bahar and Ayşe admitted multiple times how the way they imagined Arab identity and their own bias against the Arabic language impacted their relationships with their students. Bahar and Ayşe's mindful statements indicate a distinction between political consciousness as opposed to a cultural "inclusion". Although they are aware of their bias and make an effort not to reiterate mainstream exclusion practices, their engagements with the Syrian students remain limited. When we asked more questions about how this language as a signifier was constructed by the teachers, Bahar and Ayşe talked about the link between Arabic and Islam by revealing the adverse effect of Arabic education on Turkish people. Ayşe was an activist engaged in quite a few non-governmental organizations that worked on migration and women's rights. According to her, there were not enough training materials for teachers who had refugee pupils in the classroom. As we continued our interview, she lamented: "I tried to learn Arabic to be able to communicate with my Syrian students. I really wanted to but there is no secular Arabic book, which is discouraging." She admitted that she had not learned Arabic, since it sounded like an Islamic language. For her, Arabic served as a metaphor for Islam and as a representation of the times before a secular and modern Turkish state. Bahar stated similarly: "Arabic is a language which is over-identified with Islam. We can't learn Arabic. For example, I immediately perceive [Arabic] speakers, as if they were Islamists. I know it might be wrong but it is what it is." The language of Arabic and the Arabness of refugees have become categories of the racialization of the "Arab" as argued by De Genova regarding Muslim/Arab asylum seekers in Europe. He highlights how Muslim/Arab asylum seekers are assumed to be dangerously deficient in terms of "European values" and how they are presumed to be culturally alien, newly arrived and unassimilated (De Genova, 2018, p.1774). For instance, De Genova states that the migrants in Europe with brown/black bodies are perceived and treated as sexual predators, terrorists and thus as disposable lives (De Genova 2018). As discussed in the following sections regarding securitization, Syrian refugees in Turkey have also (even more recently) been stigmatized as "pervert" and as threats to public order, which is directly associated with "brown" bodies, in our case, with

Arabs. This becomes more salient in our interviews when it comes to the level of development and "progressive" cultural backgrounds.

In almost all subsequent interviews, these teachers talked about how Syrians were different from "us" and how "backward" their culture was. Our interlocutors identified themselves as social democratic and left-wing in terms of their political views and voting behaviors. Regardless of their political party preferences, both stated that their attitudes towards and relations with the Syrian students were bound by their ideas and prejudices against Arabness or the Arabic language. Even teachers who were zealous supporters of progressive politics in education, such as education in the mother tongue and intercultural approaches, did not distinguish between Islamism and Arab ethnic identity, which impaired their individual interactions with the Syrian students. This new form of exclusion indicates a new form of discrimination, which complicates a linear understanding of traditional racism. Stolcke (1995) distinguishes cultural fundamentalism from conventional racism by arguing how it legitimizes the exclusion of "foreigners and strangers". In this sense, Stolcke adds that "contemporary cultural fundamentalism is based on two conflated assumptions: that different cultures are incommensurable and that, because humans are inherently ethnocentric, relations between cultures are by 'nature' hostile" (1995, p.6). Following Stolcke's conceptualization, what the schoolteachers' statements show is that the cultural barrier between Syrian and Turkish culture bearers is insurmountable, which naturalizes cultural differences and hence exclusion of "others".

During our interviews in Sultangazi, we found one of the main reasons for exclusionist attitudes of the teachers against Syrian students to be their perception of the Arabic language as a set of religious symbols rather than a means of communication. Many teachers we spoke with stated that the rise of the Arabic language was a threat to secularism. They suspected that the increase in the religious migrant population would pave the way for the Turkish state to reinforce its Islamist policies and ideologies. They were worried that Turkish society might become more Islamist as a result of refugees from Syria, who were deemed to be more pious than Turks.

The meaning of Arabic and Arabness is thus formed discriminatorily through institutionalized discourses and is reproduced by Turkish teachers who have essentialized culture, language, and identity. The reproduction of Arab identity with all its complicated connotations forces us to rethink the construction and the perception of the "Orient" in Turkey, which, in this case, refers to the 'Arab'. Public school teachers assume that the Arab population in Turkey will create a more conservative society and that Syrians are representative of political Islam. This is particularly due to the Turkish government's initially sympathetic response to the Syrian migration. The presumption that immigrants are conservative seems to be indisputable among teachers and this certainty stems from the fear that the presence of the refugees will eventually nurture Islamism and become bearers of the current Turkish government's Islamist policies.

6. Constructing the "Orient": Syrians as the New Others

School teachers and administrators adhered to Said's portrayals of the Orient during our fieldwork. When our respondents compared Turkey with Arab countries, they positioned the latter as "stuck back in time" and their people as ignorant. This trope of "ignorance" as an essential characteristic of Arab society establishes a hierarchy between societies. While this hierarchy identifies the host "Turkish" society as progressive and "Western", it deems Arab society as the exact opposite, which is "backward". Here, "backward" implies that Arab society would never keep up with "our society" as often seen in the Orientalist accounts.

When our interlocutors made cultural comparisons between themselves and the Syrian refugees, one of the ways in which they verbalized Syrian culture was by claiming their "lack of modernity" through the portrayal of Arab women. Many feminist scholars found that power relations were deeply embedded in Orientalism and problematized gendered constructions of the Orient. For example, Kahf (1999, p.9) argues that the figure of the oppressed Muslim/Arab woman was an important dynamic which created the French and British Orientalisms in the nineteenth century: "In subjugating whole Muslim societies, [the French and the British] had a direct interest in viewing the Muslim woman as oppressed." In a similar vein, while comparing Syrian women to Turkish women, they stated that Syrian women were not emancipated. The teachers stressed Syrian women's unwillingness to be outside of the home or alone in public. Our interlocutors based their argument about the perceived non-modern positions of Syrian women on their clothing and their care about school meetings. For example, another public-school teacher we interviewed, a Turkish-Sunni teacher who identifies herself with liberal and secular ideologies, Özlem (35), had experienced communication problems with Syrian parents. Özlem stated that the refugee parents did not attend parent-teacher conferences at all, but then acknowledged that teachers were responsible for not trying harder to reach out to the parents of the refugee pupils: "I don't want to see women wearing *kara çarşaf* (chador)! They are oppressed and do not send their daughters to school. There are cultural differences between us; they are not liberated. When I see these women, I immediately think we are going backwards." Özlem construed Syrian parents as a threat to "Turkish women's liberation," as she referred to the chador as a symbol of "Islamist and therefore anti-modern" Syrian culture. Moreover, she added that Turkish society might transform into a conservative Arab society if Syrian refugees were not fully "integrated" into Turkish society. These statements indicate the teachers' association of theocracy with the presence of religious students at their school and that they project their own fear of Islamization in Turkey onto the refugees. As Stolcke underlines, "a cultural "other," the immigrant as foreigner, alien and as such a potential "enemy" who threatens "our" national-cum-cultural uniqueness and integrity, is constructed out of a trait which is shared by the "self." (1995, p.8). Similarly, the schoolteachers we interviewed segregate cultures in a manner that allows cultural differences to become substantial through their political meaning, which may lead to the migrants being threatening to the national community.

Another primary school teacher we interviewed in Sultangazi, Zeynep, a 38 year old Kurdish Alevi woman, said that she was taken aback with Syrians' domestic practices. Zeynep observed that the "Syrians" were quite different from the "Turks" with regards to family structure in terms of parent-child relations: "Their families are different from us, they live in ghetto-like places. Their girls are not like our girls. Their girls cannot go outside by themselves. The Republic of Turkey and Syria are culturally different. They're simply different from us." The school was a space of cultural encounters for Zeynep, and the formation of cultural difference functioned in gendered terms, as she held migrants responsible for not "mingling" in Turkish society. Despite the fact that there has been prevalent discrimination against immigrants and poverty among the refugees, Zeynep blames refugees for spatial differentiation or for failure to integrate their children into Turkish society. The reiteration of cultural differences by the teachers refers to the "unassimilable" aspect of migrants (De Genova 2018), more importantly it refers to the construction of the Orient (in this case more Oriental than the Kurdish Alevi teacher) similar to what De Genova calls the construction of "European whiteness" in the context of Europe's migrant crisis.

Like Zeynep's construction of "our" vs. "their", we have often come across dichotomies like "us" vs. "them" and "our students" (*bizim öğrenciler*) vs. "Syrian students." These dichotomies

generalize individual behavior to an entire society and essentialize all Syrians as members of a homogeneous society.

Said addresses similar generalizations about the Arabs in his analysis of the 'Western gaze' about the Arab mind and character (Said, 1978, p.412). He notes that to speak about the Arab mind, psychology, or society in general means to ignore the recent history of Arab countries and the fact that Arabs comprise millions of people who live in countries that are, in some cases, not only geographically (Ventura, 2017, p.284) but also culturally very distant from one another. Similarly, the main feature of the mindscape of teachers conceives essentialist ways of categorizing Syrians as "Arabs": a group that is confined into a rigid, monolithic category, which dismisses diversity and heterogeneity in the Arab Middle East. For instance, the teachers often talked about Syrians using a particular grammatical sentence structure. Through statements which begin with "The Syrians or Arabs are…," they implied that all Arab countries are the same and, by default, they share the same determined characteristics regardless of ideological, religious, and denominational differences among dozens of Arab societies. Teachers associated Syrianness (Can, 2019) with Islam and Arabness, excluding other ethno-religious communities such as Christian Arabs. The categorization of Arabness reveals an ironic fact among teachers. On the one hand, the kind of orientalist perspective above clearly indicates how non-Turkish teachers who are indeed in a "minority" position in Turkey are politically conscious of the violation of migrant rights and they do empathize with refugee experiences in urban spaces. On the other hand, the teachers who identify themselves as internal migrants and/or as oppressed citizens of Turkey legitimize their "distance" from Syrian refugees through cultural codes, including but not limited to ethnic difference and religiosity.

Another teacher, Cengiz (40), whom we interviewed at a TEC in Zeytinburnu, identified "becoming Arab" as a notion that is truly "disturbing". Cengiz expressed: "There is also an overwhelming fear among the secular teachers of Arabization. The level of education in the Middle East is very problematic. They cannot even help themselves. Wherever there are Arabs, there is trouble. Look at Taksim. Everybody talks about how they are fed up with these Arabs." Cengiz stated that the Arabs were uneducated, hence "ignorant" and if "we [the Turks]" started to look like them it would mean that Turkish society would become more Islamist, which would not be progressive nor would move forward.

Teachers like Cengiz felt concerned about the Arabization of the Turkish society and about how any "integration" may be achieved between mainstream society and the refugee groups. According to the teachers in Sultangazi, the fact that the Syrians preserved their cultural identities in Istanbul was an indicator of their unwillingness to adjust into urban "Turkish" culture. Emre, a 33-year-old teacher and a student counselor, provided a good indication of this concern. Emre had been appointed by UNESCO through the "Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into Turkish Education System" (PICTES) project, a two-year-program which was run by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MEB) from 3 October 2016 and financed by the European Union to integrate Syrian students into the Turkish education system and develop their proficiency in Turkish (Sülükçü and Savaş 2018, p.1). Emre identified himself as a Turk and a secular, social democrat. During our interview, he explained how he was worried about "Syrians" who failed to "integrate". He said, "Just look at Cebeci (a neighborhood in Sultangazi): it already looks like small Syria. They don't feel the need to adapt, I think. We are getting Arabized instead [he laughed in an angry tone]. Even our lifestyle is changing; *nargile* [hookah] cafés are everywhere now.

Emre's reproach was that immigrants were not willing to integrate into Turkish society; on the contrary, "they", the Turkish people, have changed their lifestyle to accommodate the newcomers. One of the ways of constructing the Arab image as the Oriental was by rendering cultural differences as essential and natural. The cultural difference that teachers often referred to seemed to be an attempt to justify their discrimination against refugee students. As De Genova carefully puts, this kind of discrimination is made available through the "sociopolitical production of racialized distinctions" and as an "integration" dilemma or an affront to national (or European) "culture", "values", or "civilization" (De Genova, 2018, p. 1778). Cultural comparisons did not only essentialize cultural practices but became the sole referents of the "distance" teachers embraced in their interactions with refugee students.

One such cultural realm of comparison is parent-child relations at home. Teachers spoke about Syrian students' aggressive attitudes towards other students, which they imagined to arise from their families' non-modern practices to discipline their children at home. Modernity is constructed as an intrinsic feature of the Turkish culture, which is identified as "Western" and in opposition to the "Oriental" Arab culture. This way the image of the "Other" is built through oppositions to the West, which represents the "self" and the hegemonic center. Here, the Syrian "Other" is marginalized, and the boundaries between the Syrian refugees and Turkish society are accepted as rigid and insurmountable (Ventura, 2017, p.285). Our interlocutors often stated that the level of violence that Syrian parents used was extreme and unacceptable in child education in modern Turkey. "The students don't even understand us or listen to us unless there is corporal punishment," said Gül, another teacher we interviewed in Sultangazi. When we inquired further about why teachers thought violence was common within Syrian families, they explained it in terms of violence being cultural, implying that Syrians were not modern. Another teacher in Sultangazi, Sema (28), agreed with Gül and added: "These are classroom methods that we used 30 years ago. At home, the guy beats his wife and children; there is domestic violence among Syrian families. Three or four families would be living together in the same apartment." Our participants held Syrian culture responsible for their educational methods and ignored migrant and refugee experiences. The teachers we interviewed found family structure and values essentially different from Turkish culture. As they orientalized the way Syrian families engaged with their own children, they excluded other factors such as stress and trauma and found culture to be the culprit for domestic violence.

Discussing the perception of Arabs in the Turkish media from the perspective of Said's Orientalism, Bora (2014) illustrated how symbolizing everything backwards, the "Arab" was seen as the main obstacle by Turks on their way to modernity and Westernization. Drawing from Bora (2014), the "Arab," who is embodied by the Syrian students in our case, represents laziness, violence and idleness in the eyes of the Turkish public-school teachers. As the notion of immigrant in Turkey became synonymous with "Arabness," and by association with Syrianness, the Orientalist construction of the "immigrant" as the Oriental Other prevailed in public and state discourses in Turkey. As Bigo (2002, p.72) rightfully points out, the immigrant is politically meaningful only in a discourse of "struggle against illegal immigrants," or in a discourse of "regulation," but, in either case, in a rhetoric of cultural nationalism which regulated citizenship by difference from the Other. The rhetoric of cultural nationalism extends beyond ethno-religious discrimination as observed in school encounters and introduces another aspect of Othering by reframing immigrants as security threats. In this sense, one of the striking findings in ethno-religious encounters is that "Orientalizing" Syrians is not only a product of mainstream Turkish nationalist teachers. Even the

teachers who identify themselves as Kurdish and/or Alevi do not see their "minority" position enough to be in solidarity with Syrian refugees. Although the type and the reasons of exclusion vary, they still find refugees distant from their own culture and expect "them" to integrate into society.

7. **The Securitization of Refugee Children**

Since the early stages of the Syrian conflict, the Turkish state has followed a flexible approach, avoiding the discourse of securitization of the refugee movements and announcing that its refugee policy was on humanitarian grounds. After the EU-Turkey deal in 2016, the government's migration policies shifted (İçduygu and Aksel 2013; 2015; Üstübici and Ergün 2020). The government adopted a security-oriented discourse, due particularly to its position on the establishment of an official, state-like Kurdish-majority presence in northern Syria, which the Turkish government perceived as a threat to its national security (Donelli 2018, p. 5). Ambiguities embedded in Turkey's migration policy and its policies towards the Syrian conflict complicated the relationship between the Syrian refugees and the local population. The Syrian migration became over politicized as it became a major tool for the political parties' election propaganda (for instance please see Yanaşmayan et.al 2019). This is most visible in the realm of education. Despite the debates that associate security discourses with Turkey's foreign policy and migration regime, the ways in which Syrian refugees have been securitized in domestic contexts have hitherto been glossed over. The Turkish government's inability to provide long-term solutions for effective "social cohesion" systematically left Syrian refugees outside of the political landscape in Turkey. Today, the integration of Syrian refugees does not include the need for "living together," but focuses on preventing Syrians from becoming threats to the security of "Turkish" society.

Toğral Koca (2016) argues that a security framework that emphasizes control and containment has been essential to the governance of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Although Syrians have been depicted by the Turkish government and, initially, by the public as "brothers/sisters in religion," and as "victims" who needed to be welcomed with a "humanitarian" outlook, refugees have increasingly been associated, in the public discourse, with crime, socio-economic problems, "cultural deprivation," and internal security (Toğral Koca, 2001, p.56). During our research, we observed that Turkish teachers and administrators not only perceived Syrian students as a "burden" and a threat to the Turkish labor market, but also imagined and framed them as a security problem for Turkey, particularly through assumptions over the future of Syrian children and their well-being in Turkey.

A month after our interviews in Sultangazi, we went to Zeytinburnu to meet another group of teachers for the second time. The profile of the participants this time was different from our previous participants, since the teachers in Zeytinburnu were mostly practicing Muslims and identified themselves as religious and pro-government. When we arrived, three teachers were already waiting for us in one of the offices, including an interlocutor who had worked in Zeytinburnu a few years previously before being reassigned to another municipality.

Admittedly, we went into the interview with the assumption that pro-government Islamist teachers would likely have better relations with the students and that their encounters would be relatively familiar in terms of ideological backgrounds. At first, the teachers mostly talked about the lack of support they had and about the problem of language, because Syrian students' command of Turkish was still suboptimal, a topic which we had anticipated would come up. However, as the conversation moved to teachers' relations with the students and the challenges of the future of refugee education in Turkey, we

discerned a new facet of Orientalism that had been evident in conversations about Syrian refugees in Turkey in multiple other contexts, that is, the depiction of the "Other" as a security threat unless "we" educate "them" for our own sake. As stated above, drawing on Stolcke's conceptualizations of "new racism" and "cultural fundamentalism", although some of the schoolteachers we interviewed find the cultural barrier to be an insurmountable aspect of refugee-local relations, some teachers, such as Nilay below, adheres to the notions of cultural hierarchy and a non-conventional racism, and she still puts an emphasis on "winning refugee students over" for the future of society.

A 40 year old, dedicated teacher, who identified herself as a practicing Muslim and taught Turkish to the Syrian children, Nilay openly stated that the migrant students who were currently in her class were not well-equipped in terms of academic requirements and that this may be a "problem" in the future. Nilay relayed: "There is no social cohesion in our country. I doubt that schools can help all these tensions go away. If there happens to be some sort of integration, I am sure it will take four to five generations. Regarding the current generation that we are dealing with, well, there will be huge problems, this is a lost generation."

During our fieldwork, we often heard teachers, such as Nilay and others, talk about the danger of a "lost generation" and possible strategies to "win them over," which mostly focused on how to prevent refugee children from becoming security threats in the public sphere. Teachers seemed genuinely worried about social cohesion due to their everyday experience with refugee children. Some common experiences in terms of difficulties in communication and language or academic performance urged them to take action, so they began working harder to have children practice Turkish and to convince them not to quit school. Several teachers in Sultangazi were very caring and diligent in their efforts to build a cohesive classroom environment, fight racism and work extra shifts with the refugee students. After conducting interviews and non-participant observation of their activities at school, however, we found that teachers' motivations in working with refugee students were also for their "own security." In a focus group interview, two assistant principals Selin (32) and Dilek (40) stated that their prejudice against Syrian students had been broken down once they had begun working with them, but that migrant education was still significant in being "for our own sake". Selin commented:

> My own prejudices were destroyed by the children here. There is a serious problem of stereotyping [of Syrians] here in our society. People think that they "feed" the refugees and that Syrians have more rights than regular Turkish citizens. Well, I think there should have been regulations before the state accepted so many of them, but now they are here and Syrians are everywhere. So we have got to think about education. We have got to educate them for ourselves.

Both teachers and school principals were concerned about the upcoming Syrian generations due to the lack of education and schooling opportunities for them. Educators lamented about the lack of management and effective solutions on the part of the government, yet refugees were accepted unconditionally. While the teachers insisted that access to education was essential for the integration of the refugees, they equated the lack of education with the threat of "danger" for Turkish society, as a result of which discriminative assumptions over the "ignorant Syrians" were reproduced. "We should educate them for ourselves" was what we heard from teachers from different ethno-religious backgrounds. During our second focus group interview, one of the Turkish language teachers, Yusuf, a 27 year old pious man, talked about his and his colleagues' individual efforts and the lack of state support by the relevant institutions:

> Teaching Turkish as a second language is a brand new notion in Turkey. All the responsibilities and requirements regarding teaching Turkish are left to us. The Syrian children don't come to school. So many refugee children in the neighborhood are not enrolled. We visit them at home and enroll each one of them. Girls are married off, teenage boys have to work multiple jobs. These children don't go to school, and this is a big danger for Turkish society. They will be trouble in the future.

For educators, the education of Syrian children became a matter of security rather than a basic human right in the context of public schools.[12] During our fieldwork, many of our interlocutors stated, "*Başımıza bela olacaklar.* [They are going to be trouble for us.]" This phrase refers to the imagination of the Syrian youth becoming a palpable threat. Security must be understood as a "speech-act" (Williams, 2003, p.512); the formation of a "new refugee threat" should similarly be viewed and the school discourse should be analyzed as a "speech-act". Through securitizing speech by means of "speech-acts", or language games of insecurity, the threat is vocalized and embodied (Huysmans 2006, p.7). The securitization of Syrian children and their families reinforces new forms of hierarchies between Turkish and Syrian people through a discourse of "educating" the "backward society." It also disposes of the possibility of right-based approaches to migration.

Without a doubt, the anti-migrant discourse in Turkish schools and the public reaction to Syrian migration can be reduced to neither mere anti-Arab and Orientalist approaches nor sheer xenophobia. Our argument goes beyond the simplistic claim that our interlocutors always discriminated on the basis of purposeful ideological constructions and identities of their Syrian students. However, there are two main venues in which the educational context demonstrates discrimination in Turkish-Syrian encounters: first, the historical construction of the Arab subject as the one deprived of progress and civilization, and second, the stigma attached to the Syrian youth as violent and dangerous. The Arabness of Syrians is one example of the ready-made identities that fuel anti-migrant discourse and help build discriminatory practices around it. Therefore, Arab subjectivity and the historical understanding of Arab culture and the Orient, in our case the Arab Middle East, are at the heart of the alleged "incompetence" of the students in terms of both their behavior and academic success at school. Migrant students become threats in the classroom environment, which is an indicator of the difficulties of their "integration" into Turkish society. Failure to educate Syrian children presents itself as an essential threat to the shared spaces of the "citizens" of Turkey, risking turning "our country," Turkey, into Syria. The teachers who find Syrian refugee children a "threat" within the classroom seem to locate their difference in the realm of Orientalist perspectives such as lacking manners and being "backward". However, the teachers who particularly emphasize the need for education for the refugee children openly securitize the refugee "problem" and believe that Syrian children will harm society if they are left out of the classroom.

The behavior of Syrian children is construed as "violent" and teachers categorize these children as a dangerous group of students who threaten the school's safe and peaceful environment. All teachers, regardless of their ideological or ethnic backgrounds, agree on the "security" aspect of migrant student education. The "dangerous" children are seen as unpredictable, furious, and

12 Since 2017, the discourse of "the lost generation" has become more visible through the debates revolving around schooling of Syrian refugee children and child labor. The securitization process itself is intertwined with national policies. For further information please see https://news.un.org/en/audio/2017/01/621912 (accessed 06/23/2022) and for a discussion paper on the making of a lost generation please see Dayıoğlu et.al 2021)

inclined to violence, as their culture and families dictate. Our interlocutors stated more than once that Turkish parents frequently complained about Syrian children's behavioral problems and that the teachers were caught in the middle of them as Turkish parents did not want their children to be in the same class as Syrian children. During our conversations with teachers in Zeytinburnu and Sultangazi, one of our interlocutors emphasized how "cultural" differences and Syrian teachers' educational methods created tensions. Yağmur, a 33 year old fifth grade teacher explained that the Syrian students' violent behavior had a lot to do with the absence of Syrian parents: "Syrian students are prone to violence. I have 35 Syrian students and only one student's parents show up [to parent-teacher conference]. We do not even meet students' parents. The kids fight all the time; they joke through violence. They even fight in the middle of the lecture." Our interlocutors essentialized cultural differences and violence by emphasizing how Syrian students cause disorder and were violent against their Turkish peers. The parents' negligence is not interpreted as a part of their struggle to make ends meet but as a cultural matter. The cultural assumption is an extension of cultural domination. The fear of migrants is not exclusive to the teachers, but is a part of the historically established hierarchy between the West and the East.

The identification and recognition of a "threat" depend on the perceptions of those with the capability to frame them as such. In this regard, public schools are the sites where the securitization process closes off alternative debates concerning the complex and variable character of both education and migration and instead poses to be the space for the reproduction of refugee children as the new Oriental Others. Thus, Orientalist discriminative stereotypes pervade through accounts of the school's capacity and educational policies, making it very difficult to reach an accurate judgement of the actual situation of Syrian refugees in Istanbul and the processes and inequalities they encounter.

8. Conclusion

Turkey's educational policies that fail to promote the encouragement of diverse and intercultural educational practices hinder social inclusion and integration both for migrant groups and for different ethno-religious communities in Turkey. In this study, we have demonstrated that although the unresolved structural problems of the Turkish education system, which disregards ethnic and cultural diversity, are part of the failure of refugee education in public schools, the systematic social discrimination of Syrians as well as Orientalist and securitization discourses embodied in teaching practices and curricula in Turkey play a larger role in preventing the inclusion of Syrian refugee students into public schools.

The education system in Turkey disallows a multi-cultural school context in which ethnoreligious diversity would be accepted and practiced. This has been exacerbated by anti-Syrian sentiments in various cities in Turkey. The Turkish education system homogenizes students by encouraging monolingualism, cultural nationalism, and Orientalism among the student body. Furthermore, the imposition of central decisions fails to ameliorate specific issues that teachers and schools face in public schools, especially in Istanbul (Çelik and İçduygu, 2018, p.6). We agree with the scholars of education and migration that educational policies which have focused on uniformity and centrality in Turkey fail to meet teacher and student needs in the context of migrant education and social cohesion in schools.

The gradual integration of Syrian students into public schools was a much-needed educational policy decision, however, the sudden transition compelled schools to go beyond their existing capacities and create their own methods to "manage" refugee children successfully. The current

system of public schools serves as an "imagined" homogenous community and, therefore, can potentially result in pushing Syrian children out of school (Çelik and İçduygu, 2018, p.11). It also reinforces negative stereotypes and eventually contributes to perpetuating what has been done for decades and probably centuries: blaming the victims for not integrating and for failing at school. Moreover, our research offers another lens to understand exclusion and inclusion mechanisms of refugees in Turkey by showing how Orientalist approaches in schools as a racialization process portray refugees as either potential criminals and therefore a menace to law and order (De Genova 2018) or as "Arabs" whose culture is fundamentally different from modern "Turkish" culture. What is striking in this ethnographic research is that even the teachers who come from underprivileged and "minoritized" communities participate in and re-produce orientalist perspectives towards Syrian refugees in Istanbul.

This research has examined the ways in which securitization constitutes the foreground for the education and social support of migrants, which begets a larger challenge in their inclusion. Seeing refugee children as a threat stems mainly from the fear that society might be converted into a more conservative and dangerous one in the absence of education –assimilation- of the refugees. Teachers essentialize the need for cultural assimilation and perceive Turkish culture and language as the only viable options for the safety of the host society and the accommodation of refugees. The teachers' own positioning of Syrian refugees as the Oriental others and the failure in offering permanent solutions on the part of the government leave refugee children vulnerable to further discrimination, exploitation and inequality. Instead, educators should be part of the educational policies and undertake the responsibility of accepting education as a basic human right. The ramifications of securitization of migration in Turkey are yet to be unfolded. The issue of Syrians' permanent settlement is still politically explosive, and the Turkish government has been hesitant to acknowledge publicly that it foresees the long-term integration of the refugees into Turkish society. Ultimately, Turkey needs to recognize the urgency of long-term solutions, removing geographical limitations in the 1951 UN Refugee (Geneva) Convention to bestow refugee status for Syrians and follow a right-based approach for both its citizens and its Middle Eastern refugees.

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