

## Artifact F

### An Investigation of the Kurdish Community in Nashville

by

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“Most Kurdish people are bilingual. They speak Arabic and Kurdish. But even some do have good education in the past, they cannot find jobs here as they don’t speak English.” says Zied Guizani, a family involvement specialist I met in a lecture on “Islam, Culture & Diversity”. (Personal communication, 9/16/13) He works in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPO) and has lots of experiences working with families and talking to children from the Kurdish community. He said, “Usually kids have ELC services in public schools while there are English classes free for parents.” From the very beginning, however, how could teachers communicate with the Kurds, help them learn English and build mutual relationships? Robert T. Jimenez, Patrick H. Smith and Brad L. Teague (2009) introduced transnational and community literacies for teachers to build productive relationships with students in class instructions.

Literacies from Kurdish community can inform teachers of social, cultural and economic aspects; therefore teachers could create a cultural-related class and have a better understanding of children they are going to work with. In the article, I will display a series of transnational literacies in Kurdish community and elaborate on how to involve them into teaching designs so as to “meet children on their own ground in terms of culture and history and bring out their cultures’ strengths” (Igoa, 1995) In order to collect them and conduct a Kurdish community investigation, I went to the K&S market and a Baklava café owned by an Iranian in Nolensville Pike, Nashville. K&S is an international market where different communities, including Kurdish, Hispanic, Chinese, go there to purchase foods and daily articles. While Baklava café mainly sells

Mediterranean sweets and pastries, it welcomes all communities of customers, mainly the Kurdish community. Then I went on to interview a family involvement specialist in student services in MNPO.

During the investigation, I'm surprised to see a strong unity, vibrancy and pride within the Kurdish community. Nashville has the largest Kurdish community in the United States, numbering approximately 11,000. (Larry, 2006) According to what Zied said, 99 percent of the Kurdish is Muslim. (Personal communication, 9/16/13)

### **A Walk into Kurdish Daily Life**

The first literacy is a picture I took at the entrance of K&S market advertising an international express market and other service networks, written in both English and Arabic. As Zied mentioned, the first generation cannot understand English while some of the second and third generation are able to read but not to speak Arabic. So the flyer with two languages becomes extremely important for them to know social networks and services. (Personal communication, 9/16/13) In Figure 2, Little Kurdistan, the first program aired by Next Door Neighbors (Hero Karimi, 2010) in Nashville actively calls for unity and mutual acquaintance among Kurds. Besides, there's another post (see Figure 3) for a recent festival from The Tennessee Kurdish Community Council (TKCC), whose design itself can be seen as cultural fusion as English and Arabic are both signed. Through these transnational literacies, teachers could learn what social networks are essential in Kurdish community and catch up with what is going on among the Kurds. Gloria Ladson Billings mentioned teachers must practice culturally relevant teaching into classrooms, namely, knowing the children's family cultures through ongoing, meaningful, involvement in their communities (Allen, 2007). They could participate in activities with students to share moments and learn real-life experiences of Kurdish culture---a

good way to build mutual understandings as well. More importantly, teachers could contact social networks for translators and Kurdish people who arrive earlier to alleviate students' unfamiliarity and tense by doing some interaction work. Besides, they can set up voluntarily public activities together. Therefore, students could better adapt to the new environment and successfully go through the transition period.

Speaking of food, "it is such a huge aspect of Kurdish family." as Kasar Abdulla said. (Little Kurdistan) It plays a crucial role in Kurdish family union and maintaining their identity. In Baklava café, I got a past flyer introducing many regional variations in Baklavas. (see Figure 4) The woman clerk told me the history of Baklava, to some extent, can reflect the history of Kurdish territorial scope. (Personal communication, 8/31/13) It is a great example of transnational literacies. Teachers can use it to build on students' prior knowledge. (Robert et al, 2009) They could ask students to write a composition about their favorite Baklava or Baklava's history and explore their own heritage. As food is always an interesting topic in class, students can use texts (also see Figure 5) to do translations and increase their corresponding English vocabulary. Delgado-Gaitan finds in the study that the nonconventional activities, such as those coordinated by the special programs, validated the social and cultural experience, which allowed parents to feel a part of and be active in their children's schooling, thus becoming empowered. (1991: 42) From Zied's experiences, parents are scared to go to school because of the language, problems with Children and contact issues. (Personal communication, 9/16/13) So if possible, it would be a good opportunity for teachers to set up nonconventional activities to get Kurdish parents involved. For example, I would invite students' family to class. Parents could make a live cook show in the front of the class while their child play the host to present the ingredients and

recipes of Baklavas. In this way, teachers can include parents in their class while parents and children feel proud of their home culture.

A vibrant Kurdish community in Nashville not only benefits from ties among Kurds, but also ties to other communities. There is an interesting change I noticed in their name and introduction for Baklava café. (see Figure 6) In the upper one, it says Mediterranean sweets & pastry and a long line of words in Arabic. Whereas the below I took on that very day, from my view, the design becomes more “Americanized” with Baklava displayed exactly and there are three languages, English, Arabic and Spanish. Why do they add another language? This is a good example of transformations for a Kurdish store under the influence of pluralist power. Teachers could use the changes in the literacy to design a series of discussions and assignments according to this phenomenon. For example, inspired by this community literacy, students could write down what’s changing in their family after they arrived at the U.S. How can it be explained within a global cultural context? I suggest it is teachers’ responsibility to lead students not confined to their Kurdish community but leap forward for a broader view.

### **A Walk into Kurdish Inner World**

Yet it can never be a smooth journey for Kurds to create another home in a second country. When Zied mentioned “Kurdish Pride”, the first thought came to my mind is another informative literacy that can be taught to students. (see Figure 7) At first glance, it seems to declare, “We are proud to be Kurdish in Nashville.” However, Kurdish Pride is actually a street gang formed by 20 to 30 teens and young adults. They committed 10 home burglaries including two involving rapes. (Emery, 2007) It is a negative example, but it proves the point “identities can be communicated through the choice of language code but also through how people use language to express their values, world views and so forth.” (de Jong, 2011) The Kurdish kids in

the gang chose English words to announce to American people, “We take pride in Kurdish identity and we want you to know”, though in a wrong way. Vamik Volkan describes ethnic terrorism to refer to such situations in which terrorist leaders have excessive attachment to their large group identity and seek to enhance it through widespread violence. (1997:157) When forced into another culture, immigrant children probably have difficult times telling what is appropriate behavior in their host country. Teachers could use this community literacy to initiate a discussion about “what should be true Kurdish Pride” to emphasize the right choice of being different but accepted. They need to set strict limits on moral behavior and occasionally, read stories of Kurdish heroes to children and help them establish a true Kurdish Pride.

Another intractable issue that easily results in conflicts in is religious beliefs. Figure 9, according to the clerk, a faithful Muslim in the Baklava store, describes something about “first crunch”(transliteration) in Muslim. (Personal communication, 8/31/13) During the interview with Zied, he told me students from mainstream culture and Hispanic community bully Kurdish kids and laugh at their dressing codes because they are Muslims. (Personal communication, 9/16/13) Different forms of discrimination play a key role in creating and maintaining inappropriate learning environments for many students. (Nieto & Bode, 2008) To avoid it, teachers could use them to help students contrast two main different religious cultures. Christians and Muslims are prevalent in Nashville, both religious beliefs dating back to centuries ago. Teachers could search for two pictures describing religious stories, such as one in Figure 9. Then students could explore and make objective comparisons of what’s behind the two pictures and respective values of Christians and Muslims. The teaching activity would be useful for immigrant Kurdish students to develop a critical thinking over religious issues. If there are

Muslim children in class, teachers indirectly show how to participate in the new society without losing their important cultural values. (Igoa, 1995)

During the investigation, the owner of Baklava café abruptly refused my interview. I suppose a word “investigation” makes me sound like an FBI agent. The unhappy experience makes me realize Kurdish kids may act protected in the beginning. Most Kurdish people come as refugees because of the war in their native country. Be prepared for disruptive behaviors, as refugee students, along with the compelled departure, cruelty, chaos and disorders, tend not to trust a stranger, especially someone from another ethnic group. Let them feel respected and loved. However, although I failed, I could require my Kurdish students to design questions like ”Do you find any language or cultural barrier that make you feel uncomfortable?” This could be a good experiment between Kurdish students and their community. Meanwhile, they could learn what their earlier peers have confronted or are facing right now. In a video “To be a refugee” (UNHCR), it’s heartbroken to see some children still have traumatic memories inside their hearts. Filmstrip stories (Igoa, 1995) can be an effective teaching method to reach children’s inner world. Teachers could offer academic supports as well as psychological counseling to make them feel secured and a sense of belonging.

Ahearn proposed a concept ”psychosocial wellness”, meaning the ability, independence, and freedom to act the possession of the requisite goods and services to be psychologically content, (2000: 4) which should be a crucial goal in refugee immigrant education. Teachers are culture brokers linking mainstream and immigrant culture. They have the power to transform students’ lives to better. The Kurds, on the very basis, are grateful and longing to contribute to the new community and creating their own. By virtue of transnational and community literacies,

teachers could be well informed of students' former experiences and thereby endeavoring to improve their learning behavior and psychosocial wellness.

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Appendix



Figure 1 A Post in the K&S International Market

Nashville Public Television  
presents the original series

**NEXT DOOR  
NEIGHBORS**



**Next Door Neighbors: Little Kurdistan, USA**  
Nashville is home to the largest Kurdish community in North America. Explore 30 years of Kurdish life in Nashville. Meet your next door neighbors.

**Wednesday, May 28  
8:00 PM**

*Television worth watching.* **Npt** Nashville Public Television

Figure 2 A Program from NPT: Next Door Neighbors



**WORLD  
MUSIC & FOOD  
INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL  
Nashville, TN  
USA**

فستیڤالی جیهانی  
مێوزیک و خواردنهکان  
ناشقیل / تینیسی  
نهمریکا

Nashville International Festival will present Kurdish Culture, food, and Music on July 21st from 2-8pm

Come out and support the Kurdish culture

Location: Centennial Park, 2500 West End Avenue, Nashville, TN, U.S.A.

For more info call:  
Tabeer Sindi (615) 710-2355 ..... Falah Zerari (615) 506-3773

**Date: July 21st 2013** **Time: 2-8 PM**

KAWA DIZAYEE 2013

Figure 3 Nashville International Festival

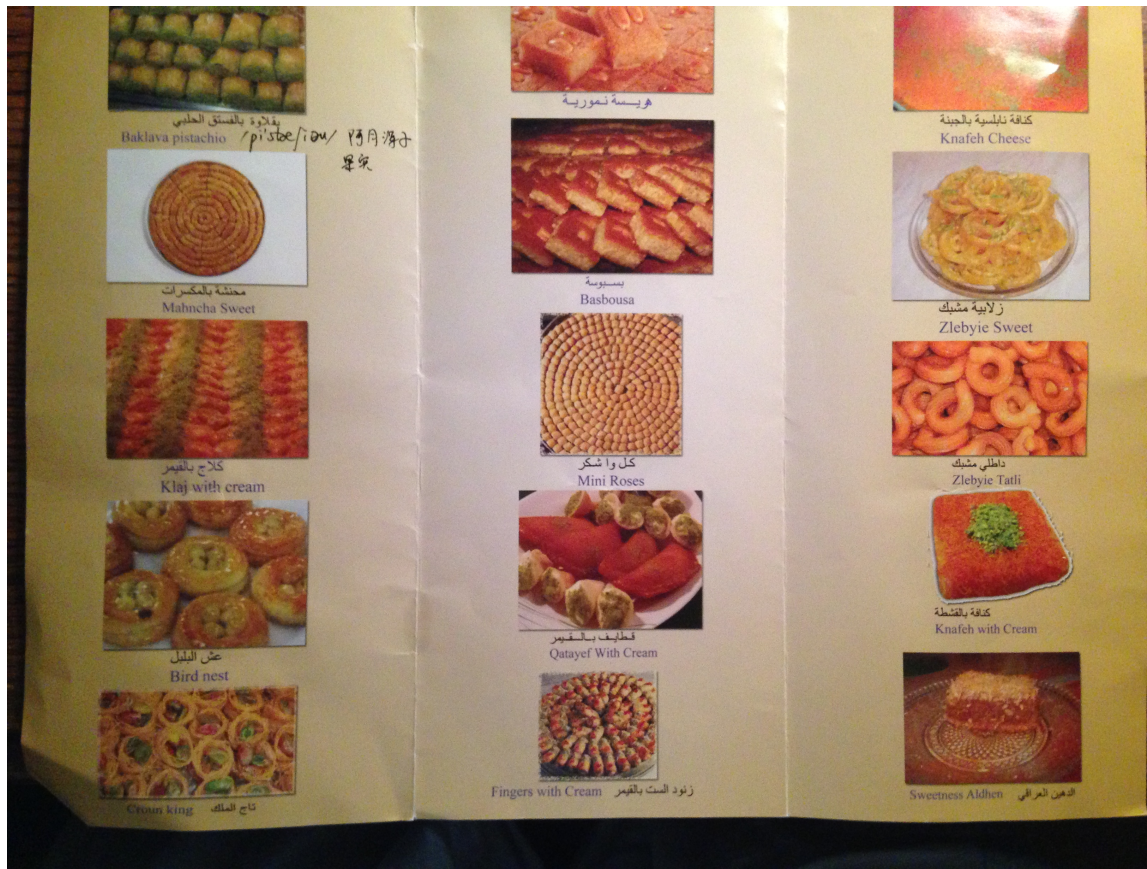


Figure 4 A Flyer in Baklava Café



# Hookah Bar

4651 Nolensville Road \* Nashville, TN 37211  
 204 Commerce Street \* Nashville, TN 37201  
**(615) 601-3025**  
 Phone: (615) 833-1113 • 615-678-8952  
 Fax: (615) 833-0488  
[www.TheShishKabob.com](http://www.TheShishKabob.com)  
 Comments or Suggestions: [food@TheShishKabob.com](mailto:food@TheShishKabob.com)




Authentic Middle Eastern Restaurant

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**\* Appetizer & Side Dishes \***

1. Kashke Bademjan	\$3.99
2. Dolmeh	\$2.99
3. Maast-O-Khiar	\$2.99
4. Maast-O-Musir	\$3.49
5. Falafel	\$3.49
6. Hummus	\$3.49

**\* Soup & Salad \***

1. Garden Salad	\$3.99
2. Salad Shirazi	\$2.99
3. Taboli	\$3.49
4. Soup	\$1.99
5. Adas Soup	\$2.49

**\* Specialties \***  
*All specialties are served with Basmati Rice & Salad*

1. Zereshk Polo	\$7.99
2. Khoreshht Ghormeh Sabzi (Stew)	\$7.99
3. Khoreshht Ghaymeh (Stew)	\$6.99

**\* Lunch Menu \***  
*Lunch is served 11 am - 4 pm  
 Lunch Dishes are served with Basmati Rice and Charbroiled Tomatoes, or Shirazi Salad or Flat Bread*

1. Chelo-e-Kubideh	\$7.99
2. Kubideh and Teka	\$7.99
3. Kubideh and Shank	\$8.99
4. Khoreshht Ghaymeh (Stew)	\$5.99
5. Chicken Shish Kabob	\$6.99
6. Chicken Salad	\$6.99
7. Chicken and Kubideh	\$8.99
8. Chicken and Lamb Shank	\$8.99
9. Chicken and Teka	\$8.99
10. Chicken and Gyro	\$7.99
11. Lamb Shank (Mahicheh)	\$6.99
12. Salmon Shish Kabob (Maahi)	\$6.99
13. Shrimp Shish Kabob (Meigoo)	\$7.99
14. Salmon and Kubideh	\$8.99
15. Hikmat Special	\$8.99
16. House Teka	\$6.99

**\* Greek Lunch Menu \***  
*Lunch is served 11 am - 4 pm  
 Sandwiches include pita bread with lettuce, onions, tomatoes, dressing and cheese.  
 Plates include rice, salad and bread*

**Combo**  
 Any Sandwich Fries, Rice, or Salad  
**\$6.99**

	Sandwiches	Plates
1. Gyros	\$3.99	\$6.99
2. Chicken Breast	\$3.99	\$6.99
3. Philly Steak	\$3.99	\$6.99
4. Turkey	\$3.99	\$6.99
5. Bar-B-Que	\$3.99	\$6.99
6. Vegetarians	\$3.99	\$6.99
7. Falafel (Veggie Burgers)	\$3.99	\$6.99
8. House Club	\$3.99	\$7.99

**\* Just for Kids (12 & Under) \***  
*Plates include Rice or Fries*

Chicken Shish-Kabob	\$4.99
Chelo Kabob e Kubideh	\$4.99
Teka Shish-Kabob	\$4.99
Any Sandwich (with Rice or Fries)	\$3.99

**\* Shish Kabobs \***  
*Dishes - All Kabobs are served with complementary Rice or Lavash*

1. Sultani	\$14.99
2. Traditional Shish Kabob	\$13.99
3. Filet-Shish Kabob (Barg)	\$12.99
4. Chicken Shish Kabob	\$9.99
5. Wing Shish Kabob	\$9.99
6. Chicken Salad	\$9.99
7. Chicken and Kubideh	\$12.99
8. Chicken and Lamb Shank	\$12.99
9. Chicken and Barg	\$18.99
10. Cornish Hen (Joojeh)	\$12.99
11. Salmon Shish Kabob (Maahi)	\$10.99
12. Salmon and Kubideh	\$12.99
13. Shrimp Shish Kabob (Meigoo)	\$12.99
14. Lamb Kabob (Barreh)	\$12.99
15. Lamb Shank (Mahicheh)	\$10.99
16. Jagar Shish Kabob	\$7.99
17. Lamb Chop	\$14.99

18. Chelo Kabob-e-Kubideh	\$7.99
19. Kubideh and Shank	\$9.99
20. For the Family (feeds 4-6)	\$46.99

**\* Greek Menu \***  
*Sandwiches include pita bread with lettuce, onions, tomatoes, dressing and cheese. Plates include rice, salad and bread*

**Combo**  
 Any Sandwich Fries, Rice, or Salad  
**\$7.99**

	Sandwiches	Plates
1. Gyros	\$3.99	\$7.99
2. Chicken Breast	\$3.99	\$7.99
3. Philly Steak	\$3.99	\$7.99
4. Turkey	\$3.99	\$7.99
6. Vegetarians	\$3.99	\$7.99
7. Falafel (Veggie Burgers)	\$3.99	\$7.99
8. House Club	\$3.99	\$8.99

**\* Sides \***

1. Rice	\$1.99
2. Fries	\$1.99
3. Skewer of Barg	\$10.99
4. Skewer Selman Kabob	\$8.99
5. Skewer of Chicken	\$7.99
6. Skewer of Kubideh	\$3.49
7. Piece of Lamb Shank	\$3.99
8. One Skewer of Lamb Kabob	\$8.99

**\* Dessert \***

Persian Ice Cream	\$3.49
Baklava	\$1.99

**\* Just for Kids (12 & Under) \***  
*Plates include Rice or Fries*

Chicken Shish-Kabob	\$5.99
Chelo Kabob e Kubideh	\$5.99
Teka Shish-Kabob	\$5.99
Any Sandwich (with Rice or Fries)	\$4.99

**\* Drinks \***

Dough (Yogurt Drink with Mint)	\$1.49
Turkish Coffee	\$1.49
Iced Tea, Coke, Diet Coke, Sprite,	\$1.29
Dr. Pepper, Mello Yellow, and Fruit Punch	
Hot Tea	\$0.99

Figure 5 Menu from ShishKabob





Figure 6 Changes of Baklava Café



Figure 7 "Kurdish Pride"





Figure 8 Islamic Painting in Baklava Cafe