QUESTIONING HOME: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF ACCULTURATION OF TURKISH SOJOURNERS IN THE UNITED STATES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

DİLARA MAYA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

OCTOBER 2022

Approval of the thesis:

QUESTIONING HOME: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF ACCULTURATION OF TURKISH SOJOURNERS IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

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October 2022, 200 pages

The present Narrative Inquiry is based on the lived experiences of seven sojourning English language instructors who were in the United States with Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship grant at the time of the study. The aim is to observe the aspects that the participants question regarding their home country through the acculturation strategies that they use in the US and the sources of acculturative stress. Acculturation Theory of Berry is the theoretical framework of the study. The triangulated data was holistically analyzed by individual and focus group interviews, outsider comments, oral memos, and the content of social media posts shared during their stay. Personal, social, and academic contexts were evaluated along with the thematic analysis. Individual narratives of the participants were retold and the acculturation strategies they implemented were identified. The study presents that there are transformative changes in all participants mainly in personal and social aspects. They scrutinized norms of their own countries and had critical thinking over various aspects of life in both the home and host settings. This study will shed light on the life-changing overseas experiences of individual experiences of English Language instructors as well as be useful for future Turkish sojourn mobilities.

Keywords: culture, acculturation, sojourn, Fulbright, narrative inquiry

ÖZ

BİR ODİSE: AMERİKA BİRLEŞİK DEVLETLERİNDE KISA SÜRELİ BULUNAN TÜRK ÖĞRETMENLERİN KÜLTÜRLEŞME DENEYİMLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ANLATI ARAŞTIRMASI

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Bu anlatı araştırması, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde Fulbright Yabancı Dil Öğretim Asistanlığı bursuyla kısa süreli ikamet eden yedi İngilizce öğretmeninin deneyimleri üzerinedir. Katılımcıların ABD'de kullandıkları kültürleşme stratejileri, kültürleşme stresi etmenler ile kendi ülkelerine ilişkin sorguladıkları yönlerin gözlemlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Berry'nin Kültürleşme Teorisi, çalışmanın teorik çerçevesini oluşturmaktadır. Bireysel ve odak grup görüşmeleri, yakınların yorumları, sözlü notlar ve sosyal medyada paylaştıkları görseller ile bütünsel olarak analiz edilirmiştir. Kişisel, sosyal ve akademik bağlamlar, tematik analizle birlikte değerlendirilmiştir. Katılımcıların anlatıları tarafından yeniden hikayeleştirilmiş ve kültürleşme stratejileri ve stres etmenleri belirlenmiştir. Tüm katılımcılarda başta kişisel ve sosyal olmak üzere değişimler olduğu ortaya konmuştur. Kendi ülkelerinin normlarını incelemişler ve her iki ülkedeki yaşamın çeşitli yönleri ile ilgili eleştirel düşünceye sahip olmuşlardır. Bu çalışma, İngiliz Dili eğitmenlerinin hayatlarını değiştiren yurtdışı deneyimlerine ışık tutmanın yanı sıra gelecekteki Türkiye'den yurt dışına kısa süreli kültürel etkileşim programları ve katılımcıları için de öngörü sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kültür, kültürleşme, geçici konuk (sojourn), Fulbright, anlatı araştırması

For the ones who quest…
"to dream the impossible dream
to right the unrightable wrong"

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wanted to start my acknowledgements with my supervisor, Betil hocam, for her supportive feedback and comforting guidance even when I was in constant panic and rush. I am also thankful to the jury members, Betül and Hale hocalarım, for their valuable comments and time. With the help of all hocalarım, I was able to improve my thesis to make it more comprehensive and ready to be heard by a larger audience. I would also like to thank TUBİTAK for supporting me financially to pursue my studies through my master's journey. Writing this thesis was challenging, but I am truly grateful to my participant FLTAs, Beren, Denise, Elise, Maive, Maria, Olsen, and Pam for their commitment and belief in this study, which made the path manageable and inspiring through the bonds we built thanks to our shared once in a lifetime experience.

My best wishes to my study buddies, Serhat, Berna, Kumru, and Aybüke, whom we were about to accommodate at the library. In particular, for creating a study plan to enrich and encourage ourselves via Zoom even before our thesis writing marathon, I send cheers to Berna. Another special credit goes to my talented friend Serhat for countless weekends spent in the library. Finally, to beloved Chicas, with whom I had the best FLTA journey back in the day. May the best of the best always be with us!

On top of all, I would like to give my deepest thanks to my beloved family; to the invincible mom Havvaana and the invaluable dad Hayrettin for being supportive and best parents; my endearing brother Aykut for encouraging me throughout the process; and "Yes!" finally to Onur, my little family, for standing with me hand in hand beyond the challenges and glories of life.

For the captain's logbook, I can also thank myself for finally shortening my endless desire to write and finalizing my thesis writing for now. And now is the time to sail on new adventures, but this time with no more suffering or second thoughts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BNIM	Biographic Narrative Interview Method
C. Anatolia	Central Anatolia
COVID-19	Novel Coronavirus
FLTA	Foreign Language Teaching Assistant
K12	Kindergarten to 12th grade
SAD	Seasonal Affective Disorder
SE	Southeast
SQUIN	Single Question Aimed at Inducing Narrative
SW	Southwest
TA	Teaching Assistant
US	United States/American

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The present study is on a group of Turkish sojourners and their acculturation strategies along with the acculturative stressors during their time in the United States through their personal narratives. Cambridge Dictionary defines the term sojourn as a short period when a person stays in a particular place (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Moreover, in the literature, the group of people who travels to a particular country for a limited time and with a role is defined as *sojourner* (Ady, 1995; Ward et al., 2001).

During their stays in a foreign country, sojourners find themselves in a different culture and experience a series of challenges before they adjust to the host culture (İlhan & Oruc, 2020). On a daily basis, they are actively interacting with people and their behaviors while trying to develop abilities to read the cues of society to understand the expected and unexpected norms of behavior (Gordon, 1997). Through their initial efforts to catch the similarities between the home and host cultures, they might tend to see and learn the positive sides of the new culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1991) or start to observe themselves from the outside (Storti, 2011).

Acculturation begins when such dilemmas are activated since the individuals are challenged by the proximity of contact with the host community and the maintenance of home culture (Berry, 2003). Moreover, clashes and challenges in many aspects of life during the sojourn experience are inevitable when there is a distance between the values of the home and the host cultures (House et al., 2004; Hofstede et al., 2010; Ward et al., 2001). Therefore, they develop acculturation strategies such as assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization which are regarded as acculturation universals by Berry (2019).

These strategies refer to one's way of coping with the changes in the host culture while each has a certain amount of effort by the individuals in aspects regarding the culture and contact. According to the acculturation framework by Berry (2003), individuals apply assimilation strategy when they feel comfortable with the host culture by leaving the home culture behind. Separation, on the other hand, is when an individual separates themselves as having a strong need to preserve their home culture as if it was threatened by the host culture. When it comes to integration, it might be seen as the most welcomed strategy both by the individuals and the host cultures since here the individual tries to merge both cultures by equally respecting and caring for the differences. As being the least favorable one, marginalization strategy is utilized by the individuals who believe they do not fit into either culture**.**

Among these strategies, sojourners tend to use integration strategy over others (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). It is argued there are specific aspects of sojourners such as duration of stay, need for close relations, and eagerness to interact. Compared to other groups of people who leave their home culture behind and sailed to another one such as immigrants, refugees, expatriates, or ethnic minorities, the sojourner groups stand out with the assigned duration of stay through visa prerequisites or grant end dates (Ward et al., 2001; Berry, 2019). Moreover, they are always aware that their time in the host culture is limited to a certain extent as well as have purposes like a position or a duty in the host community, which makes them closely and voluntarily involved in the host culture (Berry, 2003; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). Those aspects urge sojourners more into having close contact with the host culture or make them hesitate to do so (Berry, 2019).

While living in the host culture, they might face challenges, and the norms of the home culture that they brought with them to the US might be in question. Therefore, this study is exploring the language instructors' questionings about their home culture in the United States through acculturative stressors and their acculturation strategies.

1.1. Impetus of the Study and Researcher's Position

Since the researcher was a former Fulbright Foreign Language Assistant, she had experienced changes in her personal and social views and understandings as well as the academic outcomes of the grant. Nonetheless, although individuals experience transformational changes, those remain unnoticed when there is no demand from the outside to extract the delicate life instances and tangible expressions from the agents as real people other than theories or inferences. Hence, she would like to conduct the study to hear from the individuals as well as witness the plurality of realities and vast possibilities of journeys that one could go through during their sojourn in another country. It needs to be noted that to maintain the most accurate representations of those individuals' own acculturation journeys, the researcher's opinions or feelings were left outside and not included within the narratives of any sojourner in this thesis.

The stance of the researcher on *culture* was not an absolute phenomenon. Each individual brings their own home culture that they acquired through their family and neighborhood and developed through education and personal development. Since Turkey is a diverse country that is home to many cultures, the term "home culture" was used to describe the values, rituals, symbols, and practices that the Turkish sojourners brought to the US. Therefore, culture was addressed as a multifaceted, plural understanding of individuals.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The study will help understand the ways in which the sojourn Turkish instructors felt it was worth criticizing their own country through their first-hand observations in the United States through their acculturation journeys. Moreover, the study intricately shows how and in what aspects they experience acculturative stress during their sojourn along with the acculturation strategies. The findings can also provide insights for the US and Turkish Fulbright programs and the grantees, as well as other mobilities regarding Turkish sojourners in intercultural contact.

1.3. Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The aim of this research is to investigate how seven sojourn English language instructors who have a nine-month long stay in the US as Fulbright Turkish Foreign

Language Teaching Assistants experience their unique acculturation journeys by questioning their home country via their narratives. The main research question and the sub-questions are as follows:

1- What are the lived experiences of seven English language teachers who have a nine-month stay in the United States as sojourn Fulbright Turkish Language Teaching Assistants?

a- What are the acculturative stressors in social, personal, and academic aspects?
b- What are the acculturation strategies that they utilized during their stay in the United States?
c- What elements about their home country do they reconsider through their sojourn experience?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study aims to bring clarification and exploration to the acculturation studies of a rather disregarded aspect of the literature sojourners by taking a closer look at the Turkish sojourner instructors' acculturation experiences in the United States. To clarify the scope and the aims of this study, the present chapter introduces the review of the literature starting with the definitions and theoretical examination of acculturation and the core concepts for the sojourner group subjected to the study. After the definitions, the following parts review the research on acculturation strategies and the acculturation studies of various sojourner groups in the world. Then, the sojourn studies were visited with studies on educators' acculturation and the acculturation of various groups of Turkish sojourners as well as the acculturative stress by visiting the overall acculturative stressors across the literature. Next, the culture layers and the comparison of the cultural value dimensions of the US and Turkey were reviewed. Finally, the relevant studies on the specific group of individuals were presented.

2.1. Definition and Theoretical Examination of Acculturation

Early definitions of acculturation suggest that it is the contact of two cultures resulting in changes in both (Redfield et al., 1936). Since then, acculturation has been a popular area of interest in many disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and education. Berry (2003) has formed acculturation into a framework by identifying four main strategies of individuals or groups during their stays in the host country integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. These strategies are formed in accordance with the groups' or individuals' tendency over preserving their home culture and identity, and their intended degree of interaction with the dominant culture.

One of Berry's four main acculturation strategies is assimilation, which means individuals or groups try to adopt the host culture's attributes while abandoning the home culture's values and practices. Another one is separation where individuals isolate themselves from the host culture. The rarest strategy is regarded as marginalization since both cultures are suspended by acculturating individuals or groups in the host culture setting for this specific strategy. As the most efficient strategy, integration is when individuals or a group seek ways to integrate two cultures by negotiating the values and practices of both the home and host culture (Berry, 2019). Among those strategies, Berry emphasizes that the integration strategy is a way to improve relations in the intercultural context, which is generally an expected purpose for sojourners since they voluntarily exist in the context of the host culture.

Each strategy has two main constituents that enable the individual to perform in their intended way as attitudes and behaviors. However, social situations might not allow the individuals to perform (behavior) in a way that they are intended (attitude), which eventually forms the individuals' acculturation strategy tendencies (Berry, 2003).

2.1.1. Acculturative Stress and Stressors

According to Berry's acculturation framework, there are two levels when two cultures contact. The first level is the cultural level, where changes in both cultures are present. In the second level, psychological acculturation takes place including behavioral changes and acculturative stress experienced by the individuals. As a result of these changes, internal and sociocultural adaptations occur (Berry, 2003; 2017). In the meantime, the term acculturative stress is introduced to refer to both the stressors and the adjustments experienced during the acculturation process (Berry, 2006) while it was identified as a kind of stress resulting in somatic or psychological problems for individuals due to their sojourn experiences (Sullivan and Kashubeck-West, 2015). Furthermore, Bernal (2014) broadens the acculturative stressors since they may be present in daily life encounters of individuals. However, the core acculturative stressors were widely given in the literature by the following themes such as experiencing homesickness, use of language, loneliness, social relations, friendship, budget, psychology, and competitive academic environment in the form of acculturative stressors for sojourners and immigrants (Desai, 2021). In this study, the

daily occurrences which resulted in a reaction of the individuals due to the cultural differences of the circumstances were given within the acculturative stressors.

Although Berry's framework for acculturation is validated and widely used in the literature, there are some studies to develop the theory by building upon the four basic strategies (Ward, 2008; Kuo, 2014) and by disproving the effectiveness under specific circumstances or with other perspectives (individual differences: Andreouli, 2013; motivational factors: Vishkin et al., 2021). In her study with 33 new British citizens, Andreouli (2013) explored the acculturation of the participants by their self-dialogues and concluded that acculturation does not fit in certain strategies but corresponds to a process that is experienced uniquely by each participant through positionings of them in various aspects of life in the new culture. It was confirmed in the rather recent research that variation is expected among individual acculturation experiences (Sam & Berry, 2010; Berry, 2017). Vishkin et al. (2021), on the other hand, elaborated Berry's acculturation strategies by adding motivation as an essential factor by underscoring the inconsistencies of the immigrant's acculturation. However, the acculturation studies are multifaceted and the studies in the literature specifically focus on some aspects while missing some other indicators or effecters, which are presented in the limitations of the studies.

Moreover, as a response to "Thinking Outside the Berry Box" concept introduced by Ward (2008), Berry (2017) emphasizes that the acculturation strategies should not be classified as definite categories but rather as a spectrum, which is adjusted by the individual. He concludes by clarifying that due to the individual differences and nuances of the experiences, individuals might prefer showing more than one strategy such as both assimilation and integration or integration and separation in different circumstances through their experiences in the host culture. Berry's framework has been proven to be effective by much research in the acculturation literature (Nguyen et al., 1999; Sanchez & Fernandez, 1993).

2.1.2. Definition of Sojourn

Sojourning is an ongoing cultural phenomenon observed across countries in the form of short-term and rather long-term mobilities as "a few days to several years" (Bochner, 2006, p. 183). It is made possible by exchange programs, internships,

scholarships, awards, summer language schools, and partial employment programs such as Work and Travel. Due to the low number of mobilities in the past, there is an inclusion of sojourns within other groups such as immigrants and refugees across the literature (Kuo & Roysircar, 2004; Kuo, 2014). However, these groups differ by means of objectives and initial expectations from their overseas experiences. Unlike the other two, finding a permanent residency in the host country, escaping from a war or a crime, seeking asylum, and obtaining a work permit are not among the main objectives of the sojourners. The motivations and aim of sojourners are to have a chance essentially to expose the language and culture of a foreign country through various additional opportunities such as developing language skills and having a temporary role as teachers, managers, assistants, or students in their rather limited time in the host culture (Bochner, 2006). Therefore, it is crucial to spare close attention to this group of individuals. Since acculturation's scope is the context where more than one cultures meet, the sojourn experience is directly linked to acculturation and the strategies of individuals in their new cultural environment.

2.2. Studies on Acculturation Strategies

Acculturation modes, outcomes, attitudes, or orientations were used interchangeably to correspond to Berry's acculturation strategies across the literature. The present study refers to them as "strategies" to standardize the studies in the review.

Emerging initially as a concept by anthropologists, acculturation is introduced as the interaction between two cultures when an unfamiliar culture is experienced by firsthand contact (Redfield et al., 1936). While the main understanding suggests the interaction is expected to make changes in both cultures, in the special category of sojourners, the bigger ends such as the host and the home culture are not immediately affected by the individuals' acculturation experience. In this case, the interaction mainly occurs at the individual level and with close contacts in the host community. However, because of globalization and following dynamic economic and political situations of countries, those interactions between cultures are now happening exponentially as Berry (2005) depicts "new waves of immigrants, sojourners, and refugees flow from these economic and political changes" (p. 700). The impact those

individuals create is worth considering especially on the focus of this study which is exploring the acculturation of Turkish Educators in the United States.

The four main acculturative strategies (Berry, 2003) are the guides to shape the framework of the present study. According to Berry when an individual starts to live in a host culture there were two aspects that affect acculturation. The first aspect was the distance of the individual from the others and to desire to protect their own home culture in the foreign setting. The second aspect is about the interaction behavior of the individuals among the host nationals.

Hereupon, Berry identified four strategies that the acculturating individuals apply as they are in the host culture. Firstly, integration is widely introduced and observed as the most ideal strategy among others. By integrating the home and the host culture, those individuals have fewer problems and make the most profit out of their experiences abroad. Whereas in another strategy such as separation, often occurring when there is discrimination in the host country (Sam & Berry, 2010), the individuals tend to reject the host culture and insist on continuing their own lifestyle in the norms of their culture. Those individuals separate themselves from the host culture and form their own communities or spend more time with their co-nationals, which might contradict the aims of the cultural exchange programs where the individuals are expected to actively interact with the host group by also representing their home culture.

Conversely, the third strategy that the acculturating individuals might utilize is assimilation. This specific type of strategy might be regarded as the opposite strategy to separation since the individuals abandon the home culture and adopt the host culture with the assimilation strategy. The last and the rarest occurrence of these strategies is marginalization where the individuals refuse their own home culture as well as reject the host culture and embrace incompatible ways of life in both cultures. Although placed within different groups, these strategies were not necessarily to be observed in isolation unless generalized as the overall tendencies since “there is no expectation of one single acculturation pattern” (Berry, 1992, p. 74) to occur through one’s acculturation experience but rather “highly variable strategies and outcomes” (p. 74) are observed on their way of an effective adaptation.

2.2.1. Studies on Sojourn Acculturation

While acculturation literature on the individual level focuses on immigrants, minorities, and later heavily on refugees, sojourn acculturation is not a deeply investigated topic in the literature despite the ongoing sojourn activities across the world (Yuniarti, 2004; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015). This might result from the sojourns' relatively short and temporary stays in the host countries which vary from a couple of months to years, making it harder to have a standardization for the specific group of individuals. However, Berry (2003) draws attention to the unique position of the sojourners' acculturation when compared to immigrants, refugees, or other groups of people since sojourners voluntarily choose to be in the host country and need to have close daily contact with the host communities with having assigned roles in the host country such as students, teachers, managers, or interns. Moreover, Sullivan and Kashubeck-West (2015) emphasized sojourners' unique standpoint as "international students experience the process of adapting to life in the U.S. differently from immigrant groups" (p. 7), mainly stemming from the competitive environment and high expectations from them in the host setting.

The majority of sojourn acculturation studies have been conducted on two main groups of students. The most studied group is the Asian international students which correspond to the largest group when compared to the student groups from other countries. The second highly focused group has been the sojourners of and in English-speaking countries such as the US, the UK, and Australia. The majority of the sojourn acculturation studies were heavily dependent on the scales developed to measure various aspects of acculturation experiences such as utilized strategies, stressors, and challenges.

In their quantitative research, Sullivan and Kashubeck-West (2015) studied the interrelatedness among Berry's acculturation strategies for 104 international students in the US and their links to social support and acculturative stress. They utilized the East Asian Acculturation Measure (Barry, 2001). The aim of the study was to contribute to the literature on counseling services at the host universities to maintain an optimum overseas experience for international students. As hypothesized, a positive correlation between the use of integration as a strategy, social support from the host

culture, and the lower level of felt acculturative stress was found. The study showed that social support mitigated the challenges that international students faced during their acculturating experiences in the host country (Bektaş et al., 2009; Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021).

Confirming the literature, integration was found to be the most chosen strategy (Hart, 2008; Balaz, 2017; Güler, 2017; Goodwin, 2018; Stroud Stasel, 2021; Hashemi et al., 2021) that contributed to the students' experiences positively by lowering the acculturative stress. For help-seeking patterns, different acculturative strategies were observed. For instance, assimilation was only utilized with the locals while integration was preferred when the sojourners interact with both the locals and the internationals. Since they tend to use the separation strategy with co-nationals, the impact of home culture's social support on their acculturative stress could not be explained by the study. The study revealed that the expected type of strategies would be implicated by the students according to various circumstances decreasing their acculturative stress such as the presence of support from the host community, home country, and the peer internationals that they are in close contact with during their stays. Although it reflects the findings in light of the indexes, inventories, or scales, quantitative studies lack the individuals' nuanced experiences.

Hart (2008) completed a study on 125 sojourner international students' acculturation strategies at a college in the UK. The sojourners were mostly from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam, which are regarded as the largest group in international educational mobilities. It is found that although the majority (46%) seemed to utilize integration strategy, an alarming amount of 37% of the participants showed separation from the host culture. Hart noted that the reason for the sojourners to utilize separation strategy in such an amount could result from discrimination and the individuals' preferences of staying in close contact with their co-nationals. However, to reach the level of individual stories and nuances, there is a need for more qualitative approaches to the acculturation of individuals.

In another quantitative study on the acculturation strategies of Chinese students in Germany (Yu & Wang, 2011), the proximity of social and psychological aspects between the two countries were in the scope of the study through 64 Chinese

international students' experiences. East Asian Acculturation Measure and Berry's (1990) scale of acculturation were adapted to address the cultural needs of the specified group as well as many scales to measure proficiency, L2 attitude and motivation, cultural identity and ethnicity, stress, sociocultural adaptation, and related data of the participants. The participants utilized both integration and separation to a great extent at around 47% and 46% respectively, which is parallel to what Berry (2017) explained as the co-occurrence of multiple strategies. For this specific group of sojourns, it was explained that they tend to keep a balanced distance from local people by implementing integration and separation according to the conditions when they need to utilize a strategy. It is also noted that the immigrant policies of the host country which show ethnocentrism to some extent might have an effect on the utilized strategies by the sojourning individuals as well as the individualist nature of the host culture parallel to the Turkish immigrants' acculturation in European context (Yagmur & van de Vijver, 2011).

As a first study in the literature on the cultural distance of acculturating sojourner international exchange students in Russia (Galchenko & van de Vijver, 2007), 168 students from China, North Korea, Georgia, Armenia, and Sub-Saharan African countries were examined, and acculturation strategies were found to be less related to the perceived cultural distance and personality of the individuals when compared to self-esteem, stress, and lifestyles. The study also utilized scales on acculturation (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2004), personality (Eysenck Personality Scale), and coping strategies (Amirkhan, 1990), with the host and home community's contribution to the individuals' acculturation. With the perceived social and cultural closeness to Russia, the sojourners from Georgia and Armenia faced less acculturative stress and showed well adaptation. Sojourners from African countries also reported fewer challenges, but they observed balanced distribution of host and home cultures' proximity. North Koreans and Chinese individuals perceived more cultural distance and showed signs of separation by being reserved for their home culture. Although being lack of a longitudinal and in-depth literature on sojourners in Russia, the results confirm the overall sojourn acculturation literature (Yu & Wang, 2011).

In a doctoral dissertation (Lee, 2016), the acculturation strategies and acculturative stress were examined in 128 Chinese international students who were in their initial

years of sojourn in the US to contribute to the literature identifying the most used strategy for the specific group. He investigated the relationship between acculturative stress and their performance at college, and to find out the variables of demographic elements with the focus of the research as the strategies (Berry, 1997), acculturative stress, and academic performance. For this purpose, scales adapted for the sojourn group were used as the East Asian Acculturation Measure (Barry, 2001) along with the other scales for acculturative stress. The results were parallel to the former studies with Asian international students in the US setting. More than two third of the sojourners used the separation strategy while only less than a third utilized the integration strategy. Having a higher level of GPA and a low level of acculturative stress were more likely to coincide with adopting the integration strategy when compared to the other strategy revealed in this study. On the other hand, acculturative stress levels negatively affected the participants' GPAs. According to the larger demographic result of the study, lower grades history, being engaged with co-nationals, and low family income predicted high levels of acculturative stress while having more American friends and having highly educated parents corresponded to lower levels of acculturative stress for the given sojourner group.

The difference in sojourns was observed when Chinese sojourners were compared to local Chinese Canadian and immigrant Chinese groups (Kuo et al., 2006). The sojourners were the least acculturated ones; therefore, they kept a more collectivist stance and followed an avoidant defense mechanism against hardships as coping strategies, which are regarded as indispensable elements against life and cultural challenges. Being less acculturated showed strong maintenance of traditions and home social norms, which corresponds to the separation strategy among Berry's acculturation strategies.

The majority of the sojourn acculturation studies in the literature are based on the scales and mainly identify the overall groups' acculturative strategies. Mixed method studies were also conducted to support the missed elements and reminiscent details of the statistical data. However, they might be away from touching on the lives of quantitative studies. This study aims at lived experiences of Turkish sojourners through their narratives which "carry traces of human lives that we want to

understand" (Andrew et al., 2008, p. 2). The following studies were mixed methods and qualitative selections from the literature.

In a study of narrative inquiry of sojourning US students' challenges in Indonesia (Suwarno, 2019), students showed strong maintenance to their own cultures which communicate to the separation strategy. Following themes along with the excerpts emerged through their narratives; diet: "street food is very delicious but not hygienic" (excerpt 5), privacy and intimacy: "I cannot have my own privacy; they asked why I am not married." (excerpts 70 & 19), transport: "There is near collision every day, but there is rarely any serious accident", interactions with people: "they find white people being attractive; among close friends, jokes on body-shaming is common" (excerpts 28 & 31), littering and sanitation: "people throw trash everywhere. They throw the trash into the river" (excerpt 87), and religiousness: "they frowned on me when I said I am an atheist" (excerpt 15). Although the US sojourners liked the attention that they received, they were found to see their own culture as superior to the host culture by comparing and criticizing the culture in the host country with their own confirming Berry et al. (2006) that the economical differences might lead the individual's feel that their culture were superior when compared. Moreover, certain attitudes among the sojourners were explained by individualism versus collectivism as a cultural value dimension of the home and the host countries. Although some of the themes previously emerged in the literature by the acculturation-related scales, the individuals' striking utterances or emotions including comments and criticism would be inaudible in a quantitative fashion.

In her Master Thesis, Balaz (2017) examined Berry's acculturation strategies in the narratives of 24 US sojourning students and working adults in Western Europe and East Asia by using their blogs. The theoretical framework was based on Berry's acculturative strategies with additional use of the Relative Extended Acculturation Model which is based on Berry's framework with the inclusion of the host culture's attitude towards the individuals who are mostly immigrants. The study aimed to observe more individual-level information about the acculturation experience of American sojourners. To this end, the researcher made a qualitative content analysis through the narrations in the sojourns' blogs as well as utilized partial statistical tests

to assure the significance of the two different groups of sojourns living in different parts of the world.

It was found out that the integration strategy was the first mostly used strategy, which is regarded as the preferable strategy to reach successful acculturation. However, the next strategy was found to be the separation by the sojourners in East Asia while it was assimilation for the ones in Western Europe. The difference was explained by the proximity of those cultures to the US culture as in Kagitcibasi's study (1978) "the greater the similarity between the home and the host culture, the greater the likelihood of feelings of acceptance, positive attitudes, and close interpersonal relations with citizens of the host country" (p. 143). According to the literature, the European culture was regarded to be closer than the Asian culture to the US culture when the geographical, linguistic, and cultural value dimension aspects were compared (Hofstede et al., 2010). For these groups, the most distinct feature was that all participants were from the individualistic US culture, but they sojourned either in the individualistic culture of Western Europe or in the collectivist culture of East Asia. Balaz (2017) also found 18 sub-categories for the experiences of sojourns as food, daily life, language, socialization, and relationships, comparisons of cultures, tradition, interest in cultural differences, homesickness, connection, belonging, discrimination, politics, and interaction with the other sojourns or expats in the host culture. Entertainment, awareness of and about the host culture, and advising other people were among the newly discovered sub-categories that former quantitative studies could not reveal. In the present study, all these subcategories above visited in a natural flow through the participants' in-depth interviews as they guided the narrations.

In a dissertation (Garza, 2015), 207 sojourner students in the US were examined to identify their acculturation needs in academic, social, and daily life aspects. Another aim was to raise awareness of the necessity of orientation prior to their departure to the US. A survey followed by open-ended questions and additional interviews with 12 of the sojourns were conducted to draw the overall picture of the specified group along with the individual details. The participants' program orientations were also examined to enhance the triangulation of the data. While most of the students were Asian (37.2%) and Middle Eastern (36.8%), the rest was from Latin American (14.7%) and to a lesser extent European and African countries. Among all the demographics of this

mixed group of students only the region significantly differed for acculturation which was examined in the 12 interviews on the equally representative selection of participants. For academic, social, and daily life aspects under question, the challenges were found to be the written assignments, navigating the US city, understanding American humor while shopping for basic needs, university staff, and making friends with other international students were found to be relatively easy.

Among the daily life needs, the participants raised the following themes that are parallel to the literature such as lack of public transport, reaching nearby facilities, needs of international grocery stores, climate, paid health care system, visa restrictions, and work permits. For academic issues, they are only dissatisfied with the commitment to written assignments and academic integrity issues which might be acquired as being not important in some sojourners' home country. Social challenges were observed as the need to make friends with locals (İlhan & Oruc, 2020), the concepts pertaining to the individual nature of the American youth such as being independent after the age of eighteen, physical and social distance among people, and the notion of nursing homes affected their acculturation in the US. The findings suggest a wide range of themes that could affect the acculturation strategies of sojourns in the host setting.

Wang (2014) conducted a photovoice project on the acculturation of five sojourner Asian international students in Belgium. The aim was to explore the acculturation of the sojourners in the Flanders region as a non-English speaking setting since they were rather neglected in the literature. The study included photovoice data collection the participants were expected to examine 10 to 15 of their photographs and narrate their stories and feelings behind them. Along with the narratives, two focus group interviews created a platform to share individuals' stories with peers by evaluating the commonalities among their experiences via photographs. Detailed visual analysis was made on photos to decide on the themes, which formed the basis for focus groups. Their transcriptions went through a detailed descriptive thematic analysis. The findings added an aspect to the literature that integration and assimilation were utilized interchangeably by Asian sojourns when the differences occurred at the surface level in their home culture such as habits that requires intuition with less effort. However, the same group tends to choose the separation strategy, which is the most common strategy found in the literature for the sojourning individuals of collectivist Asian

countries, when they are challenged by the core elements of their home culture such as inherited ideologies or values. This specific study is one of the most similar studies to the present study since it was composed of various data collection mediums to reveal the closest possible narrations of the individuals' experiences overseas.

2.2.2. Sojourning Educators

Sojourn acculturation is largely examined within the immigrant groups or dominantly focused on international students while educators were sometimes included in the latter group or among immigrant workers as being vaguely represented. Many of the teacher sojourn studies are mainly around a few theories such as intercultural competence (Byram, 1997), transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), and teacher identity (Trent, 2011). Therefore, educators' sojourn acculturation is a gap in the literature since there are quite limited studies (Stroud Stasel, 2021). Therefore, this study intended to add another perspective by contributing to the rather desolate literature on sojourn acculturation with Turkish instructors' acculturation experiences in the United States.

Lived experiences of seventeen sojourning Anglo-Western educators' acculturation experiences were examined through narrative inquiry in a dissertation study in the international schools' context (Stroud Stasel, 2021). The individuals were in Macau, China, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. In addition to semi-structured interviews, fieldnotes, weekly reflections on specified and free themes, photovoice, artifacts, and focus groups were utilized in the study. The study offered a framework to be specifically implemented in educator acculturation. The aims of the study were not merely to show the challenges in the way of acculturation, but to highlight the strategies to overcome those in various aspects of the life of the individuals. While the preferred acculturation strategy was integration for the educators in the study assimilation was never taken into consideration for them. The COVID-19 pandemic was also at the setting of their acculturation in the host countries which alleviated the stressors. Although the participants faced acculturative stressors, developing new perspectives, and having experienced at personal, professional, and social levels helped them maintain the balance in their life occurrences in the host culture as could

be summarized in one of the excerpts “acculturation benefits outweighed the obstacles” (p. 196).

A study on Spanish teachers in the US setting (Goodwin, 2018) examined the acculturation experiences of educators in detail. The participants were native speakers from Spain who went to the US for professional development purposes to serve at a dual immersion school. Although the study did not specifically focus on acculturation strategies, it could be inferred from the results that the participants showed integration tendencies by bringing their previous home culture and being open to the US one to benefit from each for their teaching purposes.

All in all, the current qualitative research on the sojourner’s individual experiences of acculturation might be substantial to enrich the literature on the specific type of individuals differing from other groups such as expatriates, immigrants, refugees, and international students. Studies regarding the acculturation experiences mainly within the distinct cultural contexts of Turkish and the US along with other countries were given in the following part.

2.2.3. Turkish Sojourners’ Acculturation

Since there is an increase in the number of Turkish sojourn mobilities in the US (Bektaş et al., 2009; İlhan & Oruc, 2020), the Turkish sojourners’ acculturation is worth exploring. The following review is composed of studies that subject Turkish individuals mainly as sojourning students and immigrants in different host settings. Their tendencies over acculturation strategies in different aspects of life, reflections, and cultural challenges that they faced through their firsthand experiences were the highlight of these studies.

Although there are not many studies regarding Turkish sojourns in the literature when compared to other countries, the findings are quite interesting as being different from the examples of sojourn acculturation strategies in the literature. In a doctoral dissertation (Bektaş, 2004) with 132 Turkish students who went to the US for university education, the acculturation scale of Berry was utilized along with a series of psychometrical scales to investigate their psychological adaptation and acculturative strategies. Contrary to the main findings regarding sojourns’

acculturation literature that favors integration strategy, the results of the study revealed that the separation strategy was the most applied strategy by Turkish students in the US, which is more parallel to the Asian examples in the literature.

In Ataca and Berry's study (2002), a mixed group of 200 married Turkish sojourners and immigrants in Canada were examined. Psychological adaptation of the individuals was found to be affected by their personalities, received social support, implemented acculturation strategies, and the host countries' attitudes. The adaptation to the social life was linked to their language proficiencies and interaction with the locals. In addition, socioeconomic levels indicated their acculturative strategies in the host culture. In general, the majority of Turkish sojourners and immigrants chose the separation strategy. They also utilized integration to a great extent while assimilation was only observed with the participants with higher socioeconomic standards.

Another study (Bektaş et al., 2009) resonates with the findings where the focus was on 124 Turkish sojourners' acculturation experiences and the effect on their psychological adaptation to the host culture. The participants were composed of different levels from associates to undergraduate students mainly in universities in Texas and a variety of states across the US. They utilized a version of Ataca and Berry's acculturation scale (2002), which was adapted for Turkish participants, along with psychological and social scales to measure the sojourners' overall adaptation. It was in line with the literature since the separation strategy was the most preferred one among other by Turkish sojourners (Bektaş, 2004). The second and the third strategies were respectively integration and marginalization. Assimilation was the least preferred strategy. By drawing attention to the need for more research on the specific case of Turkish sojourns in the literature, the study elaborated on a few concepts that might affect the tendency towards separation such as the collectivist nature of Turkish culture and the limited duration of the mobilities in the host culture that might not be enough to build trust or bonds between the sojourners and the host culture. The latter was suggested contrary to the literature on sojourners where they specified that they tended to interact with the locals to benefit from their knowledge of culture and language (Berry, 2003).

In a study about acculturation strategies of 40 Turkish sojourners for a summer language school in the US and their relationship with the individuals' English proficiencies (Guvendir, 2016), Ataca and Berry's acculturation scale (2002) was utilized. While the most preferred strategy was observed as assimilation with the students with higher language development, the ones who preferred separation by maintaining Turkish culture over Americans had lower levels of success in their language progress. Besides, the strategies were tested in different domains on the scale. Accordingly, assimilation was preferred by most of the sojourners in social activities, decorations, using English more than Turkish, and having American friends instead of co-nationals. Separation was utilized by the celebration of Turkish special days over American ones and insisting on the consumption of and longing for Turkish food during their stay. The integration strategy was only utilized and was close to the usage of other strategies in the lifestyle, culture, and friendship domains as a non-dominant strategy. Marginalization was not observed in any domains when compared to the other strategies.

For Turkish people's acculturation in host cultures, there are many studies regarding the immigrant Turks heavily across Europe. Although the focus of the present study is specifically on the sojourn language teaching assistants who teach language classes and take classes as students, it could be useful to visit the acculturative experiences of immigrant Turkish people to have an insight about rather major groups which sojourners are widely classified within. In one large study (Yagmur & van de Vijver, 2011), 1085 Turkish immigrants' acculturation experience was examined as well as their language orientation in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Australia. Parallel to a later study of various sojourn groups of 382 Middle Eastern immigrants in Australia including the Turkish immigrants (Hashemi et al, 2021) that it was found that Turkish immigrants utilized integration strategy in Australia when compared to the European settings given in this study. The acculturation strategies were towards integration in the Netherlands but to a lesser extent than in the Australian example. In the French setting where French language use policy was strongly emphasized, the participants showed separation by showing high maintenance to their Turkish identity while utilizing assimilation strategy in their language uses to exist in the host country. Turkish immigrants also utilized separation in the ethnic and cultural aspects of Germany. The reasons were confirming the literature as being parallel to the host

countries' policies and attitudes towards the immigrants (Yu & Wang, 2011). More integrated attitudes from the host country and the culture result in improved acculturation in the integration of individuals into the mainstream culture. Another study on Turkish immigrants in the US (Güler, 2017) shows that although integration is adopted in the general aspect by more than half of the participants, there is nearly half of the Turkish population utilizes separation by maintaining their own Turkish culture alone in the host settings.

2.3. Challenges on the Way of Acculturation: Acculturative Stress

While the literature on Turkish sojourns is rather limited, there is a variety of aspects that the academics focus on to enrich and expand the literature with different theoretical frameworks and objectives.

In one of the earlier Turkish sojourn studies, Kagitcibasi (1978) studied the experiences of 335 urban middle-class Turkish high school students in the US. She utilized control groups to detect the causal effects of sojourn experiences in the US for an extended period, including their returns. Two questionnaires were administered before and after the sojourn experience to reveal the attitude changes of the participants. The study suggested that sojourning Turkish students gained open-mindedness while experiencing a decrease in their authoritarianism and religiousness. Besides, contrasting with the collectivist Turkish culture, the sojourners perceived increased intrusion into their lives from their parents. The results also portrayed that the attitudes towards the US or Turkey were not affected by the sojourn experience while the close contact relations contributed to the mutual liking for the host communities and the participants. It is noted that the sojourn experience promotes empathy and tolerance while diminishing ethnocentric and authoritarian views of individuals.

In a comparative case study of 26 sojourning Turkish students in Hungary and the United States (Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2022), the differences and similarities in many aspects, such as geography, history, climate, politics, language, food, and collectivism versus individualism, as cultural value orientations, were taken into consideration in individuals' sojourn experiences. The semi-structured interviews illustrated that the common historical background, positive political approach to Turkey, and shared

cultural elements such as food and common language items, as well as less power distance with professors that is unlike in the Turkish setting, contributed positively to the sojourner's experiences in Hungary. These findings confirm the literature by elaborating on the effect of cultural proximity between the host and the home country (Galchenko & van de Vijver, 2007). Nevertheless, the problems with health services and accommodation caused them to experience acculturative stress. Above them, the main challenges were explained primarily by insufficient cultural engagement policies for international students, the limited facilities of the universities, and the medium of education that was affected by the instructors' low English proficiency levels. At the social level, interactions with locals were limited due to the language barrier. There were instances when Turkish sojourns found Hungarians culturally close to themselves because of the current political stances of both countries and geographical closeness, as well as feeling separated in some aspects and values such as personal space and individualism, and when they experienced hatred due to past political reasons.

Compared to the case in the Hungarian setting, the challenges that sojourners in the US reported were mainly due to physical and cultural distances between the US and Turkey (Hofstede et al., 2010). The competitive academic nature of US universities and perceived discrimination because of not being local negatively affected their acculturation. On the other hand, the unlimited academic amenities, supportive social life, and fair academic connections with peers and professors improved the sojourns' acculturation in the host universities. For social interactions, recognizing the differences and improving their tolerance and empathy are mostly acquired through building close contact with other internationals rather than locals, which is parallel to the literature (Kagitcibasi, 1978; İlhan & Oruc, 2020). Moreover, Turkish sojourners willingly joined the activities and events of various co-national communities in the US. The need for co-nationals as a source of social support contributes to the sojourners' mental health (Bektaş et al., 2009).

In a phenomenological study (İlhan & Oruc, 2020) with eight individuals who were Turkish graduate students in the US, the experiences of sojourns were explored through semi-structured interviews. The three main dimensions, after the analysis of the themes, were classified as education, life, and Turkey. The sojourners inferred that "American education is less demanding before the graduate level; however, the

graduate level was more demanding than it is in Turkey" (p. 217). They compared the system with the Turkish one and stated that studying a week ahead of an exam would suffice in Turkey, whereas in the US, they had to maintain the pace of the curriculum by studying regularly and intensely. The students also found the academic staff professional and not affected by the background of the learners, unlike in Turkey. They were quite supportive if the students showed the required effort in their academic performance. Unlike a more recent study with Turkish sojourners in the US (Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021), this group was not exposed to any discrimination for their race or religion. This might be due to the highly educated environment that they are in constant communication with or to the general profile of the states where those universities are located. For the life dimension, while building a friendship with Americans was difficult at first and the sojourners felt isolated, in time, "interestingly, participants did not signal this loneliness to perish, yet they got used to this culture of individuality." (İlhan & Oruc, 2020, p. 218). The tendency to adopt the host culture's individualistic behavior was observed. Despite developing an appreciation for individualism as a result of the influence of West and East cultures, collectivism persists in Turkish culture (Mocan-Aydin, 2000). This could refer to the flexibility to change the outer layer of the cultural levels while the core values remain intact or even enforce the surface level observable outcomes.

In another study of 229 Turkish international students (Duru & Poyrazlı, 2007) across the United States, acculturative stress was evaluated with the background, personality, L2 proficiency, and sociability of the participants. A high level of proficiency and social connectedness decreased acculturative stress. Surprisingly, openness to new experiences was found to promote acculturative stress, which might be the result of the increased amount of contact with the host culture by increasing the chances of facing stressors as suggested by the researchers. The study found that single individuals might only have academic stressors, while married ones are likely to deal with additional cultural and familial stressors during their stay in the host country. The findings were presented to be used to advance counseling services for Turkish international students in the US.

In another recent qualitative study conducted specifically on the challenges and social support needs of 15 Turkish international students in the United States (Erturk &

Nguyen Luu, 2021), the data collection was done by in-depth semi-structured interviews on the individuals' cultural experiences. It was found that the limited language abilities, insecurities, and being parallel to the literature (Garza, 2015), the difficulty with understanding American jokes hindered their social interaction, especially with the locals, causing the interaction to stay at a superficial level. The issues, such as the competitive professional atmosphere and the unfamiliar academic workload at their institutions, caused them to experience high levels of stress and anxiety. Through daily exposure to the social norms of individualist US culture, the participants tended to compare them with their collectivist home culture, which made them feel separated and lonely.

While only one participant experienced an instance of non-racial discrimination due to not being American, there were instances where sojourners realized they were treated differently and sometimes got unusual reactions due to the misconceptions about Turkish people as being Arabs and being all Muslims. Some stereotype reactions were observed as a result of host nationals' lack of cultural knowledge, as evidenced by their inquiries about whether riding camels, living under religious rules, or allowing a man to marry more than one woman exist in Turkish daily life (Kirkgoz, 2017; İlhan & Oruc, 2020). Even one of the participants was labeled as a Muslim terrorist by a local, despite the fact that she was only an international student wearing a headscarf, which could be related to the low levels of acculturation experienced by religious internationals in the host country (Kilinc & Granello, 2003) and could be linked to the negative public attitude toward Muslims after 9/11 (Bastug, 2020). Other than those, the challenges were also present due to the financial instability of Turkey. The participants were depressed and felt restricted in their monetary actions to meet the needs of even a standard life in the host community. In addition, Turkish international students in the study faced homesickness and isolation in the host country due to their pursuit of a collectivist attitude from the host social circles and the geographical distance to their home (Galchenko & van de Vijver, 2007). As for the second focus of the study, in times of need, individuals seek help initially through their close circles with whom they have informal connections, such as family, co-nationals, peers, or academic advisors (Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021). Although they managed to utilize their universities' counseling services on academic issues, they had problems with the

other challenges and attributed them to the lack of cultural awareness of the counselors.

All in all, the literature review reveals the acculturation experiences and preferred strategies of Turkish sojourners. Although integration is regarded positively since it correlates with the overall satisfaction of the sojourn experience, Turkish examples are not consistent with the literature. The findings were mainly interpreted through the intensity of cultural values, the cultural and geographical proximity of two cultures in contact, politics, religion, the host cultures' attitude, the individuals' language proficiency, marital status, type of acculturating group, interaction with locals, co-nationals, or other internationals, and support seeking in the host culture. Therefore, individuals tend to form their preferences in accordance with the various scopes of their acculturation experiences.

2.4. Cultural Layers and Value Dimensions of The US and Turkey

Through the contact of cultures (Ward et al., 2001), individuals experience many challenges and have to react in different everyday situations in interaction with the host culture. According to Dwyer (2004), individuals with a greater knowledge of their own cultures have a better understanding of other cultures, which allows them to think in a rather sophisticated manner by scrutinizing and comparing their deeds, beliefs, and practices to others. The sojourns in this study were sent to the US as cultural ambassadors (Goodman Research Group, Inc. [GRG], 2016) with the assumption of possessing cultural knowledge of Turkish Culture. According to studies on cultural value dimensions (House et al., 2004; Hofstede et al., 2010), Turkey and the US are regarded as the least common in these categories by means of their cultural values, beliefs, and practices. It is worth taking a closer look at the experiences of the individuals who bring Turkish culture to the US setting and at their stories along the way. The interaction between two distinct cultures might shed light on the individuals' acculturation strategies. Since culture is not taken as one simple definition and has a multilayered nature, it is widely introduced with an onion metaphor, shown in Figure 1, across the literature.

The core, the first main layer of the onion, represents *values* that have been rooted historically in one's culture and are quite difficult to change. Although they might be dated and not be superficial enough to be overtly seen in their practices, they are regarded as playing a role in the development of the modern world (Hofstede et al., 2010). The core values are given as understanding of independence and freedom, work ethics, family, and religion. The next layer is introduced as *rituals,* where celebrations, recreational activities, daily expressions, and sanitary practices show themselves. The next layer of the cultural onion is *heroes,* which consists of real or fictional figures that society attains importance such as artists, founders, or iconic individuals. The outer layer is the *symbols* that have national attachments, such as cuisine, landmarks, colors, icons, and flags.

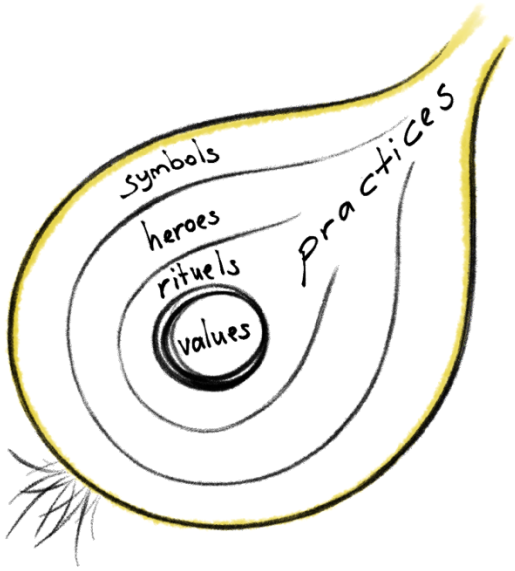


Figure 1
The Cultural Onion Model Illustration (Hofstede et al., 2010).

With globalization, individuals of different cultures have started to acknowledge each other's practices on the outer layers, which promotes mutual understanding. At the individual level, values are shaped and descended by the needs of one's immediate contact circle starting from an early age, in the same way as the acquisition of proper or improper behavior by the actions of parents or teachers (Hofstede et al., 2010). Since the value-based tendencies of both societies have an influence on the individuals, the

following cultural value dimensions were visited widely in the literature to help understand the acculturation challenges of the individuals in the host societies (Kagitcibasi, 1978; Mocan-Aydin, 2000; Yu & Wang, 2011; Wang 2014; Suwarno, 2019; Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021; 2022). The core values are the tangible sources of deeper differences (Hofstede et al., 2010) that were classified under six cultural value dimensions as Power Distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Masculinity versus Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long versus Short Term Orientation, and Indulgence versus Restraint.

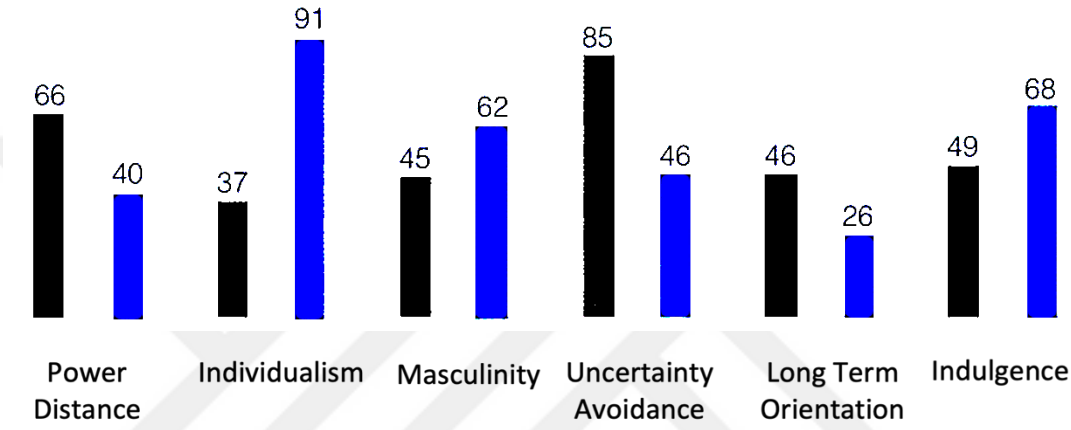


Figure 2
The value dimensions of Turkey and the US (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

Most commonly studied cultural value dimension is given as Individualism versus Collectivism in the literature of acculturation to explain the acculturation strategies of foreigners in the host cultures. The index in Figure 2 visualizes the comparison of Turkey's and the US' scores by retaining the highest difference where the reflection of daily life and practices correspondingly stemmed from this specific dimension. The bars on the left (black) belong to Turkey and the ones on the right (blue) represent the US cultural value dimension indexes. In collectivist cultures, "the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 90). Turkey (91) has a quite high level of collectivism index score, while the US (37) is one of the most individualistic countries in the world. Collectivism starts with the family, the smallest group that one possesses, and it is regarded as "the major source of one's identity and the only secure protection one has against the hardships of life" (p. 91). Individuals

seek help, especially when they experience challenges during their acculturation to a foreign culture. The literature confirms that most Turkish and Asian individuals tend to consult with their family members and close circles instead of authorized specialists or mentors when they need support (Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021). Requesting help from experts or specialists is not widely observed. Individualist cultures, on the other hand, are "societies in which the ties between individuals are loose and, therefore, the physical and social personal distances are fortified; everyone is expected to look after him or herself and his or her immediate family" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 92), which influences people's preferences for being involved in others' lives by questioning their marital status, religiousness, or other personal issues. Individuals in society invest their best efforts and work hard to maintain their own lives at a very early age, whereas, in collectivist cultures, family members are invested in supporting the family financially in return.

The next highest difference is between the Power Distance Indexes of Turkey and the US. Turkey (66) is a relatively high-power distance country where hierarchy is expected in ruler–citizen, older–younger, employer–employee, senior–minor, teacher–student, as well as doctor–patient relations. Therefore, the US (40), a low power distance country, shows a flatter hierarchy among the higher ranks and lower ranks in different aspects of life. The studies confirm that academic staff at US universities are reachable and have a friendly attitude, although some might have quite successful academic careers. In Turkey or other high power distance societies such as China, the academic staff have a certain distance maintaining the hierarchy with the learners and are not friendly.

Another difference can be seen in the Uncertainty Avoidance of Turkey (85) and the US (46), which corresponds to a value dimension where society can be concerned about the future and regards it as unpredictable. However, catastrophic events such as 9/11 have affected US society's attitude towards possible occurrences threatening their freedom in the unknown future. Apart from that, American culture tends to value innovation and technological advancements, while countries with higher uncertainty avoidance, such as Turkey, try to have control over the future by securing the systems with many rules and comprehensive laws. Belief systems are linked to these value dimensions, and many expressions, such as expressions with religious references, were

regarded as mitigators of anxiety for an unknown future and to maintain resilience rather than holding conservative religious meaning in Turkish culture.

Turkey and the US have a discrepancy in their index scores, placing them into two different categories for Masculinity versus Femininity value dimensions. The US (62) is a masculine society since it promotes success and idealizes the better while disregarding the unsuccessful as "the fate of the poor is their fault; that if they would work harder, they would not be poor; and that the rich certainly should not pay to support them" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 172). The unresolved homeless issue, which has deeply disturbed the Turkish participants in this study, is a good reflection of the descriptions of these two cultures. On the contrary, Turkey (45) is a feminine society where the ones in need are heard and actions such as being humble, caring for others, and being in cooperation with other members of the society are regarded as a virtuous act.

As in another value dimension, the appreciation of a leisure time activity is at the heart of the Restraint versus Indulgent societies. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), restraint societies tend to have "strictly prescribed gender role differences" (p. 292), which explains the daily life behaviors of people in the US and Turkish cultures in social and professional life. Indulgence requires investment in the individual "by [being] actively involved in sports" (p. 292). Sparing time to have fun is regarded as a right and a basic human need. In restraint cultures, enjoying life is seen as an extra effort and something to be socially prescribed. Therefore, practices such as "lower approval of foreign music and films, less use[age] of e-mail and the internet for private contacts, [regarding] smiling as a suspect, and freedom of speech is not a primary concern" (p. 297) could be observed in restrained cultures like Turkey (49). However, indulgent cultures such as the US (68) have the opposite profile, where people show active participation in sports activities, smiling at others is regarded as a custom, and they have personal interests that they are encouraged by society to pursue, especially free time activities according to their hobbies or preferences.

Since both Turkey (46) and the US (26) have a short-term orientation tendency with a rather small difference in the index scores, the Short versus Long Term Orientation

value dimension is not elaborated on in detail in this review. The reflections of those were visited in detail within the discussion sections.

2.5. Studies on the Specific Group

As being a separate category from the international students among sojourns, the subject of this thesis, Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants, were selected among competitive candidates who were active English language teachers and instructors in their home country as well as had the roles of both Turkish language educators and registered or auditor students in the US universities. Through the instruction of a foreign language, educators equip their students with the fundamental ability to maintain an understanding of other cultures other than their own (Cohen et al., 2005). Since the impact of the teachers is not limited to the curricula, learning about their own stories through their acculturation could help us to understand their personal, social, and professional journeys.

Those individuals have cultural ambassador roles as well as teach their native language and study at US universities. Kagitcibasi (1978) expressed that "the sojourner, perceiving himself as a representative of his country abroad, identifies with his country and may become quite emotional about the prestige of his country" (p. 142). When faced with misconceptions or disinformation, the sojourns also take the initiative, as in İlhan and Oruc's study (2020), "With these wrong impressions on Americans, participants take on the responsibility to defend and advertise their country" (p. 218).

The Fulbright programs of the United States are regarded as one of the world's prestigious programs maintaining an influential scholarship tradition where 400.000 Fulbrighters from 160 countries have had cultural and professional experience overseas for over 75 years. There are many individuals across those countries with strategic roles and positions such as heads of governments or states, as well as Nobel Prize laureates and Pulitzer Prize winners after their experiences ("75th Anniversary of Fulbright", 2021). The impact of Fulbright in Turkey is also acknowledged since there are many respected individuals, academics, and artists who are alumni of Fulbright. Former and current Fulbrighters reflect that they have improved themselves socially, personally, and professionally through their experience in the program as given in the Fulbright Turkey's Newsletter:

> A frameshift to my core values and understanding, improving my critical thinking to the academic issues I work on…
>
> My Fulbright grant put me in a position to think of questions that would never have occurred to me otherwise while my host country allowed me to see my own country more clearly…
>
> It helped me learn, unlearn, and relearn about the world around me such that I may engage as a more responsible global citizen and serve the global community… (*"75th Anniversary of Fulbright",* 2021, p. 9)

Although the impact of a sojourn is regarded as rather limited, the subjects of this study, sojourning Turkish educators during their Fulbright experiences, might have a further impact on both cultures beyond the individuals' acculturation experiences through their teaching roles, which makes the core focus of this research meaningful by examining those promising instructors' acculturation experiences.

Through the studies with similar sojourner groups with Fulbright FLTAs, the individuals' transformative learning (Kirkgoz, 2017), native and non-native teaching experiences and teacher identity (Mutlu & Ortaçtepe, 2016), intercultural competencies (Andawi et al., 2019) as well as the impact of those programs (Demir et al., 2000) have been studied so far. The present study aimed at introducing another research perspective for the sojourning English language instructors from Turkey observing their acculturation experiences closely in the United States through their narratives.

As one of the comprehensive studies, a research project was conducted in Turkey with 277 former Fulbrighters to observe the effectiveness of the Fulbright scholarships on professional, social, and personal levels (Demir et al., 2000). It revealed that the majority of the grantees were at higher positions in their home countries following their Fulbright experiences in the US and had an active role in building a better future in various areas through the broadened world views that they acquired during their Fulbright experiences. The participants reported the changes in their teaching methods, their efforts to improve their home institutions and their curriculum. Furthermore, some alumni initiated new programs in their institutions in Turkey and some of those were joint programs with other institutions around the world. There were also positive changes in their interpersonal relationships in-home social and academic settings. Open-ended questions enhanced the details of the findings as in the three foci of the

study. Professionally, Turkish sojourners were gratified by the opportunities for limitless resources, an intercultural working environment, and the chance to be in the US by learning about its professional atmosphere and educational richness. Being parallel to the literature (Kagitcibasi, 1978) for the social aspect, the individuals were glad to represent their country in the US as cultural ambassadors (Akli, 2013) as well as bring the US good practices into Turkey, having a contribution to the development of Turkey in scientific and scholarly aspects. The personal benefits were given by the sojourns as experiencing the international atmosphere, enriching their knowledge of the US culture, improving their world views, gaining prestige, building consolidated friendships overseas, and developing their communication and study skills in addition to language abilities.

Kirkgoz, (2017) explored the impact of eight Turkish Foreign Language Teaching Assistants' (FLTAs) sojourn experiences and studied transformative learning of their Fulbright experience with Mezirow's framework (2000). The participants were sojourning English language instructors/teachers in Turkey, and they had taught Turkish at US universities with a Fulbright FLTA scholarship. A questionnaire was implemented to gather their demographics, reflections on their experience of teaching their mother tongue, and reflections on their perceptions of culture, education, and democracy. Kirkgoz also observed any changes in any perspective after their sojourn experience. Interviews were built upon the previously given answers in the questionnaires to elaborate on the sojourns' experiences and reminiscent instances.

While most sojourners found the locals friendly, which might be contrary to the literature since the previous studies emphasized that Turkish sojourners cannot easily make friends with locals, a few of the participants indicated that "people appear to be friendly, but they found it to be in a superficial way so that, ultimately, it struck the participants that the Americans they met were in fact not so friendly" (Kirkgoz, 2017, p. 145). On the other hand, they emphasized that they are relieved by the presence of other internationals. The close relation with other internationals is observed in the literature as "having host national friends was integral to the sojourner's adjustment process, and friendships with multinationals gave the sojourner a certain sense of commonality, a feeling of "we're all in this together" (Garza, 2015, p. 28). Besides, the older host nationals were found to be more knowledgeable when compared to the

younger locals. The lack of knowledge about Turkey caused some misunderstandings, as being parallel to the former studies, the Turkish sojourns received questions related to Arabic culture, language, and lifestyle as in rather contemporary studies (İlhan & Oruc, 2020; Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021). The sojourning educators also commented that the US students, in general, were autonomous learners, and they even lead the teachers to rearrange the classes according to their needs.

As for the transformative outcomes of the sojourning FLTA experiences of Turkish instructors in Kirkgoz's study (2017), the teachers expressed that they acquired continuing connections with internationals across the world, and thus they have expanded their cultural knowledge beyond the US culture. Gaining knowledge about other world views and their perspective toward Turkey has become a meaningful opportunity for them. As one of the main objectives of the current study on a deeper level, one of the participants' reflections on his sojourn experience showed that although initially adopting a separation strategy due to his prejudices, the participant started to assimilate and integrate into the host culture by questioning Turkish culture. He discovered that his home culture possesses a collectivistic culture when compared to the individualistic US culture; thus, concepts such as diversity, tolerance, and respect are not properly observed in Turkey while the US people are more welcoming to difference and acceptance among people.

In addition to those, the challenges they faced while teaching Turkish as native speakers largely stemmed from the absence of an established program with essential support or the dearth of materials for the Turkish language. It was concluded that their experience in the US allowed Turkish FLTAs to be more conscious and critical regarding their own culture, democracy, and pedagogy as well as develop a better understanding of other cultures and eliminate their biases.

It contributed to building up knowledge and skills, it taught them something new about the teaching practice and students' attitudes, and it led to changes in their established viewpoints about a particular educational issue or opened up new opportunities professionally (Kirkgoz, 2017, p. 141).

Furthermore, in line with the literature (Akli, 2013), individuals' mobilities overseas have the power to critique home cultural values and may result in a change in attitudes.

These mobilities serve as successful means that cause transformations in the attitudes retained by other people by being immersed with unfamiliar customs, belief systems, and political systems (Dudden, Dynes & Fulbright, 1988). Therefore, the present study studies FLTAs as a sojourning educator group that has a larger impact than individuals who might have a rather limited reach to spread, utilize, and share the outcomes of their acculturative experiences such as an international student or an immigrant.

A narrative study of an Indonesian Foreign Language Teaching Assistant's experiences on her sojourn journey in the US (Andawi et al., 2019) for two years after the grant period, aimed at exploring the attitudinal transformations with the intercultural competence of the sojourn. After an initial questionnaire on the elements of intercultural competence, the data were collected retrospectively through the participant's answers and retold by the researcher into a narration. The study allowed the former sojourner to reflect upon her own lived experience and increased her awareness of the change in her understanding of herself and others. Through the experience, the sojourn had the ability to develop her empathy toward others and their cultures and she was suspending her own cultural norms and views when she was interacting with them. Although the objectives of the study were not directly linked to the present study, it was among the limited studies on the specific group of people who are aimed at in the present study. In the present study, the lived experiences were collected simultaneously as the sojourners experience them by establishing a frequent communication network with the researcher.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to use a magnifying glass hovering over what seven English language educators granted as Turkish Fulbright foreign language assistants in the United States go through and how they experience acculturation in the US. The sole aim is to present the individual's narratives on Turkish and the US culture during their acculturation journey along with their strategies without reaching generalizations. Nevertheless, the results might be helpful for potential Turkish candidates of sojourn mobilities to envisage possible scenarios of the acculturation journey in the US. Moreover, the facilitators of the program could observe the detailed stories of the grantees to provide a better experience of US culture in the future.

With this aim, qualitative research methodology is applied in the present study to grasp the unique and real-time experiences of Turkish sojourns. The present chapter presents the design of the study, participants, setting, data collection instruments, and data analysis utilized for the study.

3.1. Study Design

In this research, Narrative Inquiry is chosen as the qualitative design of the study to have an understanding of the small number of individuals' lived experiences through their narrations (Creswell, 2013). The majority of the studies on acculturation have been conducted with quantitative approaches without exploring deep into the stories of individuals. As Pinnegar and Dasynes (2007) express, the qualitative aspect of narrative inquiry reveals the individual's own interpretation whereas in numerical data it could be easy to miss the nuances. Riessman expresses that narrative inquiry is suitable when the focus is on a very limited number of individuals unlike "nameless and faceless subjects" on a rather large focus (2005, p. 6).

Moreover, narratives are the ways individuals disclose their identities while narrating their experiences (Creswell, 2013). Narratives act as ways to communicate the inquirer to the narrators' inner and social worlds while the individuals make meaning of their lives by relating and integrating "the chaos of internal and momentary experience" (Josselson, 2011, p. 224) through their whole or partial life stories, bringing out the traces of their society, culture, or family. The narratives, which are seen as the "mirror of social realities" (Andrews et al., 2008, p. 9), might shed light on the sojourners' journey of acculturation through their unique lived experiences in the United States.

Although the narrative inquiry is newly integrated into the social sciences after a long tradition of statistical data, it has its roots in the oral tradition of humans as storytelling (Gergen, 2005) as "a vital human activity" (Kramp, 2004, p. 104) that allows them to build meaning. Therefore, a narrative inquiry has been largely adopted across the social sciences (Josselson, 2011), among other qualitative research methods.

Narratives offer researchers a structure allowing them to observe the narrator closely. The narrator builds a plot by giving the reader a sequence of the story fragments to form a complete story from their own subjective point of view (Kramp, 2004) sustaining the close relationship between context and time. Therefore, narrations encompass "beginnings, middles, and ends", which renders "as continuous streams of happenings" (Elliott, 2005, p. 11). Through those happenings, individuals unfold beyond words and sentences. In other words, they present "how they themselves construct their stories and, therefore, themselves" (Kapan, 2004, p. 111). The narrators are the core of the method by attaining the role of "authority to the storyteller, whom you acknowledge as the one who knows and tells". What narrative reveals epistemologically as truth is relative and multiple in nature, which is constructed by the subjective understanding and experience of the narrator (Josselson, 2011, p. 225). Through narratives, individuals reveal "unconscious cultural, societal, and individual pre-suppositions and processes" (Wengraf, 2001, p. 70). Narratives of individuals store "our memories, prompt our reflections, connect us with our past and present", which then "envision our future" (Kramp, 2004, p. 107). To this end, the adopted research design allowed the researcher to refine the experiences of each individual through their narratives along with multiple sources and re-storying their acculturation

of being sojourners in the United States during their once-in-a-lifetime Fulbright FLTA experiences.

The theoretical framework was chosen as Berry's Acculturation Strategies (2003). According to Berry, when individuals go to a foreign country, they utilize strategies to maintain successful acculturation in the host culture. The four main strategies of acculturation are linked to the intensity of the individuals' maintenance of the home culture and their interaction with the host culture as in Figure 3. Assimilation is observed when the individuals completely adopted the host culture. Separation, on the other hand, is regarded as the opposite strategy where the individuals strongly preserved their home culture by rejecting the host culture. The most favorable strategy is the integration strategy since the individuals both accept their own culture and welcome the host culture through an effective fusion whereas the least observed and welcomed strategy to achieve successful acculturation is marginalization when the individuals reject both their own and the host culture.

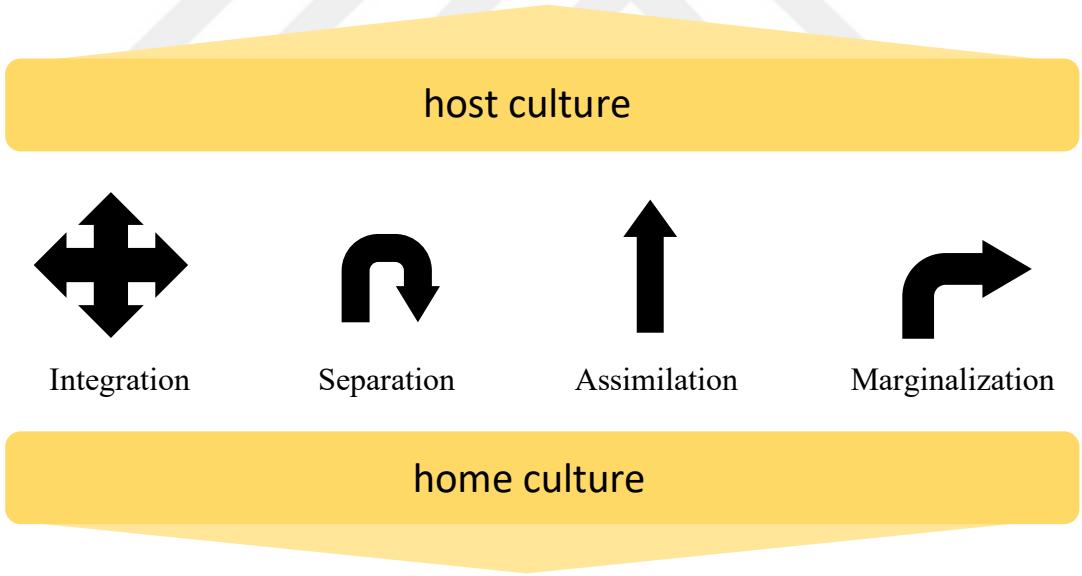


Figure 3
Berry's acculturation strategies (2003)

3.2. Participants

Criterion sampling (Creswell, 2013) was implemented to address the exact individuals experiencing acculturation in the US. Before finalizing the design of the study, the

researcher contacted one of the sojourners through personal connections to reach the sojourners to envisage the voluntariness of the individuals for the study (Appendix A). Initially, eight individuals aged between 25 to 31 responded to be voluntary among the total of 14 Turkish grantees of the Fulbright FLTA Scholarship for the grant period. After the official Informed Consent Forms (Appendix B) were sent to the group of grantees, all 8 of them responded to join the study and only 7 of them continued. One of the participants did not continue to provide data for the biweekly voice memos after the first interview; therefore, left the study. The remaining seven participants were living in different parts of the United States as Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (referred to as FLTA from here on) by contributing to the Turkish Language programs at US universities. The participants were among the graduates of the following departments as English Language Teaching, English Language and Literature, and Translation and Interpreting from different universities in Turkey. For confidentiality and freedom of representation in this study, each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym for themselves as they wish to be seen in the study. Some participants shared common backgrounds and demographic features while some had different features and backgrounds as in Table 1.

Table 1
Participants' demographics and background (cont'd)

Pseudo names	Age	US residence	US accommodation	Shared living place with	Perceived US Income
Beren	29	mid-south	rent flat	3 others	low
Denise	31	SW coast	rent room	1 other	mid low
Elise	25	SE coast	dorm	3 others	low
Maive	28	southeast	rent room	1 other	low
Maria	27	northwest	rent flat	3 others	low
Olsen	26	northeast	rent room	2 others	low
Pam	25	mid-west	dorm	by herself	low

Pseudo names	Teach. exp.	TR occupation	TR residence	Most years - in childhood	Perceived TR income
Beren	1-5	research assistant	Central Anatolia	C. Anatolia - 18	mid low
Denise	5-10	instructor	C. Anatolia	Aegean - 18	mid high
Elise	1-5	teacher	Black sea	Marmara - 23	mid low
Maive	5-10	instructor	Marmara	C. Anatolia - 17	mid low
Maria	5-10	teacher	Marmara	Marmara - 18	mid high
Olsen	1-5	localization	C. Anatolia	C. Anatolia - 17	high
Pam	1-5	teacher	Marmara	Marmara - 25	mid low

3.3. Context of The Study

The context of the study was the United States, especially the cities and the universities where the participants were living during their Fulbright FLTA experiences. To sustain the anonymity of the participants in such a small group of people, no universities, or cities in which they were working and living, were listed with their names given explicitly, but rather a general overview of the university, state profiles, and the regions of their close contact area was provided within the narratives of each participant.

3.3.1. The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Scholarship

Since 1946, the Fulbright FLTA program has continued to be regarded as the most prestigious scholarship in the US. In the FLTA program, English teachers in around 50 countries are sent to host universities in the US as teaching assistants to teach their mother tongues and contribute to the cultural exchange between their own and the US culture. To maintain the effectiveness of the latter, the participants are given another role as "cultural ambassadors" (GRG, 2016). During the application phase, they are expected to write a specific letter to state their aims and intentions regarding the cultural exchange (Fulbright Turkey, n.d.). The acceptance rate for the program is not high, making it a competitive scholarship. Therefore, there were exactly 14 participants who met the criteria for the scholarship from Turkey. In this study, the participants were among the 14 Turkish FLTAs of the grant period. The roles of the grantees are to conduct Turkish language programs in the host universities and contribute to the familiarity of Turkish culture in the US community.

One of the major responsibilities of the FLTAs was to build a bridge to ease the flow of exchange between Turkish and US cultures (Fulbright Turkey, n.d.; GRG, 2016). They were expected to become involved in the host culture by participating in community events, taking courses, and interacting with others.

According to the program, the participants must take courses each semester. Those courses could be undergraduate or graduate level courses with a wide variety of options if their program allowed them. At least for two academic terms, the participants needed to take courses related to American Culture or History (Fulbright

Turkey, n.d.). In this way, the FLTAs became more closely interested in the host culture and its history.

3.3.2. The Neighborhoods and Communities

The participants were expected to reflect on their observations by giving more information about their close-contact neighborhood and the community around their US residences. The specific question about the profile in the host country was briefly asked as an optional question to be added to the questionnaire and discussed in the first interview. The majority of the participants had daily contact with other internationals and Americans. Detailed descriptions of the participants in their close neighborhoods were provided within their narratives.

3.4. Data Collection

The observations, audios, photos, and various qualitative data collection means were utilized along with the interviews, which were regarded as the main data collection tool for Narrative Inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013). Multiple sources such as "archival data from contemporary and even popular media and historical records, as well as journal excerpts, personal possessions, photographs, audiovisual media, and creative works" can be included in the qualitative data collection (Wertz et al., 2011, p. 90). In this study, two interviews, voice memos/texts, and the participants' social media posts were used, as well as focus group sessions and outsider comments for each participant to ensure the data was triangulated and saturated (Creswell, 2013; VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). Some parts of the initial memos and social media posts were collected retrospectively according to the initiation date of the research. After the re-storying of the interviews, the data was sent to the participants to ensure validity by member checking. Due to the large volume of data, member checking was done in time intervals to maintain the workload and time of both participants and the researcher. Below table was given to show data collection schedule and the additional explanations.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

The following subheadings illustrate the details of the data collection instruments, which were derived from multiple sources to reach saturation as demographics and background questionnaires, interviews, voice memos/notes, social media posts, a focus group interview, and outsider comments as in Figure 4.

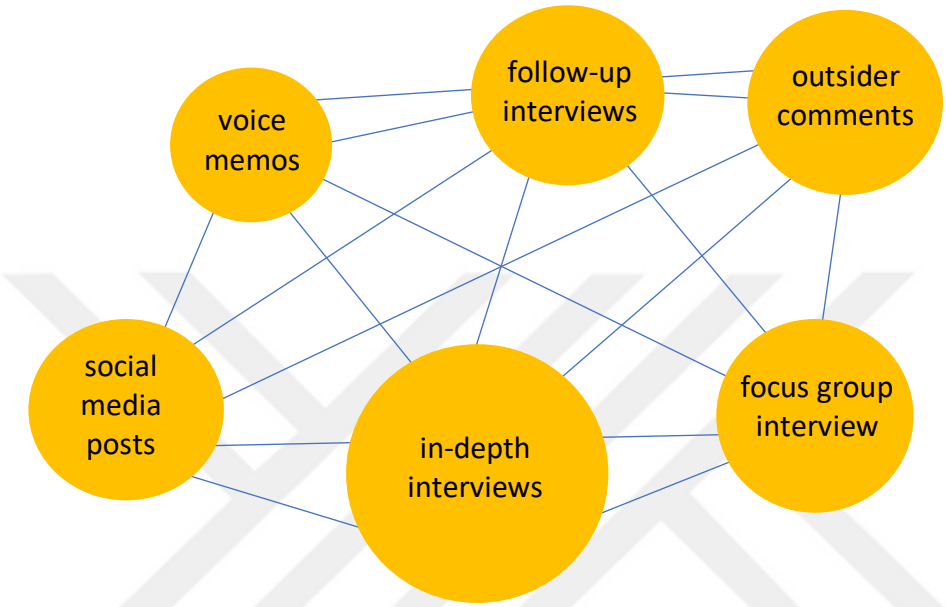


Figure 4
Data collection instruments web

3.5.1. Demographics and Background Questionnaire

The participants were asked to fill out an online consent form followed by a questionnaire about their demographics and background (Appendix C). At the very beginning, the researcher wanted participants to choose pseudonyms in either language as well as with their pronouns to anonymize themselves in the study (Ciambrone, 2004). Researchers need "to disguise and safeguard material" to prevent the identification of the participant (Josselson, 2007, p. 542).

Starting with the basic information, questions regarding their professional life were also asked such as their latest occupation in Turkey and year of teaching experience if any. The rest of the questions included specific questions about their life in Turkey and the US. Additional open-ended questions were added at the end of both parts if

they liked to add any comments or share any further information. The information gathered in this questionnaire was crucial for the researcher to have an insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the participants, allowing the researcher to get a clearer perspective of their experience with multiple aspects of life in consideration.

3.5.2. Interviews

Initially planned as one to one and a half hour semi-structured online interviews were designed as two main in-depth interviews supported by follow-up interviews which were taken at unspecified and need-based time intervals during the participant's stay at their host universities in the US. The first interviews were scheduled during the participants' first half of their stays and the second ones were scheduled through the last month of their stay in the US. The interviews were conducted in Turkish, the participants' native language, via the video conference tool Zoom, and the sessions were recorded after the participants' verbal consent was taken.

Although the interviews were designed as semi-structured, the Biographic Narrative Interview Method, shortly as BNIM (Wengraf, 2001), was partially utilized in this study to get most of the narration from the participant. The method has been widely applied in the literature for social, cultural, and psychological studies where the narrative interview was required.

The interviews were initiated with a small chat to build rapport and followed by a brief introduction of the general outline of the study to freshen the participants' knowledge about the study. There was a need to have "trust and rapport" between the researcher and the participant, promoting "the degree of openness" and "self-disclosure" of the participant. They both contribute to a respected and compassionate possession of the data (Josselson, 2007, p. 539). As informed at the beginning of the interview, the researcher asked a single question also known as SQUIN, a single question aimed at inducing narrative (Wengraf, 2001). In this phase, the participant started talking about their story around the SQUIN which was a general but comprehensive question. The participants lead the narration in a form that resembled a stream of consciousness until the narration ended in its natural course, allowing them to narrate their experience and how the narration flowed in their minds. They were free to move from one fragment of narrative to another.

The researcher paid special attention to minimizing the interruptions during the participants' initial narration phase at around the first half of the session by only showing bodily responses and short expressions to show that she was following the participant. This was clarified to the participants at the very beginning to eliminate an expectation of a dialog with the researcher at the first step. While they were uttering their monologues, the researcher took detailed notes by following the storyline as it was. When the participants naturally ended their stories, the researcher initiated the second phase and asked permission to take them back to the points that she noted during listening. Wengraf (2001) emphasizes that the order of the notes should be strictly aligned with the storyline and should be activated in the exact order that they appeared in the narration without any additions by the researcher.

The previously touched topics were also enlarged and communicated for the saturation of the narration. When the researcher revised the notes and the participant clarified or elaborated on the previous fragments, the researcher moved to the third part of the interview where she asks about the foreseen themes designed ahead of the interview using simultaneous questions in accordance with the attitude of the participants and the content of the interview. Those themes were chosen as life quality, education, wealth, food, freedom, language, justice, and religion. Additional notes were taken under such themes by the researcher.

The timing of the second interviews was planned around the end of their grant period in the US and the participants were informed about the tentative dates that would be arranged according to their local time zone and availability at the end of the first interviews. The participants were expected to be more aware of the differences and similarities in the host and the home countries with a longer exposure when compared to the first interview by that time (Berry et al., 1987). This makes a suitable timing for the second interview since the participants would already have managed to face the hardships and might be ready to share those in the interview as well as the retrospective comments, contributions, and evaluations of the content of their first interviews.

3.5.3. Focus Group Interview

It was planned as a semi-structured 50-minute focus group interview to utilize its "potential for revealing socially constructed meaning and underlying attitudes"

(Kleiber, 2004, p. 89). Although it was demanding to assign all participants living in different time zones to an interview, it was invaluable to observe multiple voices of issues about their life in the US and/or in Turkey (Appendix D). Once the researcher informed them about the rules of the focus group interview as the moderator, they had an interview in the atmosphere of a chat by evaluating two cultures and lifestyles supported with their first-hand experiences and observations along with short conversation initiator interview questions at times which were prepared upon the initial evaluation of the previous interviews. The researcher was not supposed to contribute to the content of the interview but monitor the interview by having "the chance to 'listen in' on people's conversations" (Kleiber, 2004, p. 97) as well as promoting interaction and ensuring a balanced contribution.

3.5.4. Social Media Posts

The process of collecting social media posts of the participants was designed to meet the visual aspect of the data collection to contribute the best description of the individuals' narration (Wertz et al., 2011). During their stay, the researcher followed them on social media platforms, mainly on Instagram, where they were sharing visuals and comments about their life in the US. To secure the privacy of the participants' personal data, personal posts or those including private information were not counted as data without the additional permission of the participant (Appendix E). Instagram was agreed to be the source for the main collection of data, while Facebook was the second source in case any problems happened with the former platform.

3.5.5. Voice or Text Memos

The participants were asked to share memoirs or experiences via WhatsApp voice recordings or instant messages with the researcher whenever they felt a need to talk or reflect upon a recent event or experience (Appendix F). There was also a given period for those voice memos or notes not to be later than every two weeks. They can be as short as a couple of minutes or a few lines of text and as long as they would like to share. The participants were informed that the researcher might write a sincere question like "How is life going?" followed by a small chat if the period between the last two memos was more than two weeks. The researcher kept up with the participants' current life and recently lived experiences as well as the retrospective

ones that they evaluated when they were by themselves. They also contributed to establishing rapport between the researcher and participants (Josselson, 2007). By maintaining the ongoing communication between the researcher and the participants, no inactive time gaps before and between two interviews were given. The narrative allows the narrators to "shift connections" across time as past, present, and future (Riessman, 2005, p. 6). By sending voice memos or notes to the researcher, the participants kept being aware of their experience in the US by reflecting on their own behavior or reactions to the changes and real-life issues. Moreover, there happened to be times when they discovered something newly acknowledged by themselves after some time or in the time of their recordings or messages.

The content of the voice/text memos was unstructured. They were formed according to their way of delivery of memoirs or story fragments in another form of narrative on their experiences and as they felt worth expressing during their daily life. Although visuals were planned to be gathered via their social media posts, some of the participants included photos and videos along with their voice or text memos.

Table 2
Data collection schedule and notes

Data Collection	Time	Additional notes
First contact with participants	August 2021	to inform them about the study and to observe voluntariness
Demographics and background questionnaire	January 18-21, 2022	prior to the first interview
Interview 1	January 18-21	+follow up interviews; January – April-need based
Voice/text memos	January-April	periods of no more than two weeks
Interview 2	April 15-22	+follow up interviews; till late April-need based
Outsider comments	April-May	according to the outsiders' schedules
Social media posts	late April	retrospectively collected from each participant
Focus group interview	May 6, 2022	last remarks finalizing the study

3.5.6. Outsider Comments

Outsider comments enabled the researcher to observe the individuals' experiences from two other perspectives (Appendix G). The outsiders were chosen among family members, friends, colleagues from Turkey or in the US, current roommates, or their US supervisors. They were designed as a comment section in the form of a brief online interview. Each participant was asked to inform two outside commentators with the given Outsider Comment Consent Form (Appendix H) bearing their close relationship with the person in mind. The commentators received a link to a Google Form where they were able to give their consent and continue to the next steps to provide insights and observations about the participants' experience in the US.

3.6. Data Analysis

As the nature of the data requires being gathered from multiple sources, the analysis was made holistic to conduct a comprehensive analysis for each individual since "rather than just identifying and describing themes, narrative analysis endeavors to understand the themes in relation to one another as a dynamic whole" (Josselson, 2011, p. 227). Therefore, each element was evaluated in a harmony to have the most comprehensive analysis after their experience to build a detailed picture of the Turkish FLTAs' acculturation into the American culture.

The data were analyzed according to the three dimensions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) time, place, and social context to place and organize the data. Riessman formulates narratives as "events are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience" (2005, p. 1). Therefore, the data was analyzed thematically as in codes and themes. The coding was made by "condensing the bulk of our data sets into analyzable units" for this study (Coffey & Atkinson, 2013, p. 26). The codes then were evaluated to form and "identify themes" (p. 32) to contribute to the interpretation of the data.

Four acculturation strategies (Berry, 2003) were regarded as a guide for the interpretation of the experiences. Therefore, "key concepts and theoretical ideas" were also used in the thematic analysis to observe the acculturation strategies of the participants (Coffey & Atkinson, 2013, p. 32). Through the analysis, the researcher

recreated the personal narratives of each participant, connecting "different phases or aspects of a story" (Creswell, 2013, p. 259), as well as eliciting themes that emerged from the individuals' narratives, which were also simplified and visualized in summary cards forms as in Appendix I.

To manage the large volume of the data, the researcher obtained assistance from the available artificial intelligence (AI). The software provided assistance for a "substitute rapid and comprehensive searching" to overcome "the uncertain and slow process of manual searching and filing" (Coffey & Atkinson, 2013, p. 52). The transcriptions of all interviews and the voice recording were made with the help of Microsoft Words' built-in online dictation tool where the AI detects the speakers and their voices and transcribes them with the timestamps. Although the AI successfully transcribed most of the recordings after the interviews, there were quite a lot of instances where the AI failed to perfectly capture exact words, language switches as well as nuances. Therefore, the researcher went over the transcriptions and corrected the problematic parts by comparing the audio recording and the written form of the data. After the transcriptions were prepared, the files were transferred to MAXQDA to form initial codes and themes (Riessman, 2005). A sample from the focus group interview could be found in (Appendix D). The visuals were also included in the individual folders created in MAXQDA allowing the researcher to organize the multiple sources of data in a single space for each participant.

A partial visual content analysis was utilized for the photos obtained from the participants' Instagram accounts as well as the ones sent along with voice or text memos (Appendix E). The date, place, people, and highlights of the photos along with the written elements on or under the post were collected and included in the holistic analysis.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Although narrative studies are designed to reflect the very story of an individual among other research designs. It is also crucial to ensure the confidentiality of the shared stories of the participants along with their anonymity. Therefore, the researcher drew certain lines of the limits of the data that would be shared before the study. Participation was voluntary, and a digital consent form was gathered from the

participants. All the records and materials gathered were coded neatly to prevent revealing the participants' identities. The names were changed into pseudonyms (Ciambrone, 2004) and the anonymity of the participants was secured throughout the study (Josselson, 2007). The interviews and voice memos were only available to the researcher and terminated after the transcription by the researcher. Neither the questions nor the other type of data collection was intended to harm the participant and they were acknowledged that they were free to exit from the study or stop providing data in case of any disturbance. The study passed the Ethical Committee of Middle East Technical University on 14 January 2022 with the 0024-ODTUIAEK-2022 protocol number (Appendix J).

3.8. Quality Criteria

For the quality assurance of the present qualitative study, the elements such as validity and reliability were evaluated in more suitable forms in accordance with the qualitative nature of the study. Creswell introduces "rigor" as an immersive term to address "the accuracy of the account using one or more of the procedures for validation, such as member checking, triangulating sources of data, or using a peer or external auditor of the account" (2013, p. 54). The researcher's role was well-defined prior to the study and personal comments or experience of her was not included in any part of the study. To sustain the richness and trustworthiness of the study, the data were gathered from multiple data sources such as individual and focus group interviews, memos, photos, and outsider comments through written, visual, and spoken mediums, which ensures data triangulation. The data was sent to the participants, and they were asked to confirm the data when they were retold to apply member checking. Those were analyzed utilizing different types of analysis to reach a comprehensive and holistic analysis. The analysis was also sent to be checked by a peer on the same area of interest.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the individual stories were retold upon the holistic analysis of each participant. It should be noted that each narrative was unique; therefore, the issues that each sojourn echoed through their narrations might differ from the others. An aligning order was followed for the narratives of each participant as a reminiscent illustration, a notable quotation, social, personal, and academic aftermaths, and a discussion of the narrative as the final part. Although the objective of this study was not to reach generalizable judgments but rather to have a closer inspection of individual's acculturation experiences in the US, a final group consensus section was included at the end of the present chapter to highlight the common remarks of the individuals on issues repeatedly brought about across their narratives.

Each narrative began with a reminiscent illustration and a magnified quotation as opening a subjective window at their journeys. The illustrations were drawn by the researcher upon the question to the participants at the end of the whole data collection; *Can you visualize your sojourn experience, what items or scenes come to your mind when you think back on your experience in the US?* They took their time to decide on their experience's visual representations. Among the participants, Beren and Pam wanted to choose the visuals of daily items that they use as their host institutions' merchandise which they attained to their life in the US by feeling like a member of the local supporters of those teams. Maive, Denise, and Elise imagined the visuals of their accompanying items through their sojourns such as sneakers that they traveled to many cities and countries, a musical instrument they brought from their dream destinations, and a traditional beverage of the local culture that became a must in their daily life in the US. Finally, Maria and Olsen summarized their experience via metaphorical visuals such as feeling like a fish in the sunset on the shore of a vast ocean or an avocado which could be the worst food if opened unripe but would have the creamiest

flavor when its time comes as they felt with their experiences. In addition, quotations from participants' voices were given under the illustrations. They were selected from the personal interviews as being the most remarkable and comprehensive reflections of their experiences. The emphasized aspects within the following narratives could be envisaged through these quotes since they could provide insight for the reader.

For the inner organization of the narratives, each participant's narrative was given under the three main subheadings as social, personal, and academic aftermaths of their sojourn experiences in the US. In-depth narratives were supported with direct quotations as examples of the emphasized issues such as acculturative stressors, implemented strategies, or areas they challenged, which were aligned with the research questions.

Among those subheadings, Social Aftermaths section included acculturative stressors that they faced in US daily life along with their comparisons to their home culture. This section covers most of the acculturation strategies that the Turkish sojourners applied. The second section; Personal Aftermaths, deals with the participants' uptakes and reflections regarding their personal feelings and ideas, consequently including more reflection about their own culture and pre-existing behaviors while giving a limited number of acculturation strategies and acculturative stressors. The last element of the individual's narratives as Academic Aftermaths comprises their evaluations of Turkish and US cultures' academic and professional aspects where they tend to be critical of their own cultures. Acculturative stressors and acculturation strategies were once again limited in this section when compared to the first section as social aftermaths. The overlapping themes among these three main areas were given under the most relatable heading by considering the flow of the narration.

The Discussion of each narrative was added at the end of each narrative since it would be difficult to recall and follow to associate them with the findings upon the thick descriptions and dense narrations of all participants. The discussions of the individuals' narratives presented the integration of the findings into the theoretical framework by addressing the research questions and including the literature comparisons.

The final part was given as the General Discussion to answer the research questions by bringing mostly emerging acculturative stressors and the most preferred strategies of the participants together as well as by elaborating on the mostly questioned and criticizes areas of their own countries.

4.1. Beren's Story



I've started to see myself
literally "seeing" when I look at the mirror.
Curtains off…
I've begun to forgive everybody, love everybody.
No place for negative feelings, cannot hate anyone from now on.
I think I've gained all those here.

4.1.1. Social Aftermaths

The acculturative stressors for Beren's sojourn in the US social setting resulted from *the restaurant culture, daily interactions, directness, friendship and loneliness, religiousness, slow pace of life, obedience to rules and the customs,* which she tried to utilize mainly *separation* and *assimilation* strategies in response. There were points where Beren was critical of Turkey and Turkish culture, such as *interpersonal communication, intervention in people's lives, the concept of religiousness,* and *disobeying the rules.*

As one of the first acculturative stressors in Beren's new social setting, restaurant culture seemed "completely interesting", and it took time for her to get used to it. There were two aspects that she was challenged on. Firstly, restaurants were places Beren regularly visited by herself and enjoyed her meal for long hours watching TV series with her headphones without waiting for other people to join her or any need for a plan with friends shaped around the meal. However, people in the US were either eating at home with take-out and drive-thru options or having "scheduled gatherings with a clear purpose..." in restaurants without spending long hours enjoying their meals by

themselves. Although Beren wanted to implement separation by rejecting the US way and continuing with the way she was accustomed to in her home country, she could not continue since she thought spending time alone in a restaurant would look "strange" in the US setting as everyone was with somebody. Even in very popular places, she could not see people by themselves. Therefore, she had to utilize assimilation into the dominant culture's behavior.

The second aspect that she felt challenged related to the restaurant culture was the attention of the waiters. She was not comfortable with the waiters as they "look after" the customers beginning from when people first stepped in and until they left. Beren speculated that "too much attention" was due to the "compulsory" tipping culture, which was not common in Turkey.

Whether she was at a restaurant, at a grocery store, or at a bar, acculturative stressors in the daily interactions of locals, such as small talk and compliments, found Beren while she was in such public places. Initially, the locals' self-confidence seemed quite "odd and unexpected" as they initiated sudden small talks and followed by joining her to eat together from next table. While the interaction with strangers reminded her of the relatively conservative small city she had lived in the Central Anatolian Region of Turkey, there were unwritten rules for the interaction of different age and gender groups there, unlike in the US. Keeping that in mind, when a random person talked or complimented her in the US, she either approached it with suspicion or found it inappropriate. After several times, she ended her search for a meaning in such interactions by limiting and shortening her replies to blend in her new social setting. It was even visible in her friendship with locals, which could not continue beyond small talk. While she initially applied the separation strategy, she began to like the idea of such interactions with strangers as she accepted that they were just part of their culture by utilizing the integration strategy. "In the end, we are all human. It shouldn't be so hard to interact."

Likewise, she implemented integration strategy for compliments. While finding it interesting, she gradually enjoyed it when they complimented her outfit. She recognized it as a part of daily communication, which she even got accustomed to. "Receiving or giving compliments is simple; there is no need to think of them as

something." Nonetheless, Beren admitted that people in Turkey had a hard time complimenting each other in daily life, even if they liked something about somebody. Having lived in the US, she thought whether she would miss and try to initiate small talks and compliments in Turkey and wondered if people would find it "outlandish".

Another facet of daily interaction in the US as an acculturative stressor for Beren was directness, which was not a negative one unlike the former ones since she easily chose assimilation. While being direct was totally acceptable for her personality, it was not possible for Beren to apply it in her home setting, and it was especially hard when she needed to express excuses for social and communal events. In such instances, Beren received encouraging comments in the US focusing on her body image acceptance and supporting her mental health, unlike people's criticizing tendencies in her home country:

> You cannot say *I need to go*, you have to generate valid excuses. Or you cannot say *I am not eating this.* [They ask] *Why?* and insist on it. For example, in Turkey, when you say *I have a decision, I am in a period where I watch what I eat.* People, as if out of spite, try to find a way to challenge you or dissuade you... or look down on your actions by demoralizing… [for example], going to the gym; they don't say *Do not go!* but instead, they say: *Will you be an athlete?*

In addition to being direct and supportive, Beren's sincere and helpful circle were predominantly internationals, and to a limited extent, locals and co-nationals. Loneliness hit as an acculturative stressor since they could not alleviate her longing for friendship, and she missed the friends who would always be there to listen in happiness or sadness. Nevertheless, she needed to manage all her feelings by herself since she could not "go and weep" as another option. The length of her sojourn was not enough to build close relationships with both international and co-nationals, which affected the degree of closeness for her. Even in rather close friendships, she could not get the pleasure she had in Turkey. She refrained from suggesting activities to do together, which she would normally insist on with her close friends. She preferred separation for her need for friendship because "something appears to be missing."

Standing as an acculturative stressor within her friend's circles, Beren's understanding of social gatherings was not parallel to the US way of eating or meeting with a purpose or around an activity. Therefore, while Beren was with her rather crowded friend group, their concept of socializing appeared "bizarre" to her as it required an activity

as an inseparable element of the gatherings. For this reason, Beren's preference was toward separation strategy as a way to seek her home culture's understanding of friendship by trying to impose it on her friend group.

> Not like us, just sitting together and chatting? No, I had to convince them. After two hours of playing some games, I say *I'm really exhausted and tired. Let's chat.* They say they can stop playing *after one more hand,* but they continue adding more hands. Games and games and games. All is around games.

In her second term, with the change of her friend circles, the large friend gatherings turned into invites to friend meetings that had a religious purpose as "*Let's get together and talk about God*." Although she loved her new friends and knew that they had no intention of affecting her beliefs or ideas, she wanted to be clear about boundaries for socializing: "That was too much. I asked the other day. *Is it just lunch or will you again talk about God?*" Her friends and Beren negotiated not to get into deep religious conversations and just to spend time together, which was relatively close to her expectations of friendship. Such a reaction reflected Beren's resilient intention to utilize separation strategy even after the changing balances of her friend circle.

Outside of her friend circles, the concept of religiousness was also a source of acculturative stress for her. Seeing people plan various social events around religious activities such as prayers, masses, bible readings, or regular Sunday visits, she discovered that, contrary to her expectations, religion existed at the heart of American culture. Subsequently, it urged her to question the attitude toward religiousness in Turkey and her prejudices against religious people in her home country. She previously thought the interference and visibility of religion in people's daily lives could be only in Turkey, but it was beyond that in the US. Therefore, it allowed her to think she would be more welcoming to religious people in Turkey "without judging or labeling them by how they talk or be". Her existing attitude transformed into a more tolerant one, allowing her to have the intention of understanding and knowing more about those people. By doing so, Beren implemented the integration strategy for religiousness by showing efforts toward building an understanding:

> If you understand or try to understand everybody, you are very peaceful. I used to have more precise judgments. Regardless of how much I claim to be open-minded in my social interactions, I had my own truths in my head. I was living according to these truths. But now, I don't have my truths. I'm trying to

> understand the truth of others. That's why my perspective on all social relations has changed.

Having been relieved by the welcoming society, Beren faced the slow pace and tranquility of her host city as another acculturative stressor. In an unfamiliar atmosphere for Beren, across the city, there was no breaching of traffic rules, no traffic jams, noisy and crowded places, or a fast pace of life like in big cities like New York. In her home country, she regularly revolted against it after a day outside or in traffic, while she appreciated people following the rules and not living in chaos in her host city. Since she did not feel connected to the rush of her home culture, Beren was able to encounter the missing part of herself in the US. Consequently, she showed absolute assimilation strategy after being appalled by a couple of instances where she had difficulty with how to act. In such an incidence:

> When I am on the zebra cross, all cars stop. That's OK. But even after I cross the next side of the road, walk away, and almost arrive home, I look at the cars. They are still waiting there. I was so panicked when I first came here that I was thinking whether I had done something wrong. *Why are they waiting for?* They are in no hurry at all. They do not ride as soon as you step off the sidewalk.

The established rules and obedience to them in the US culture resulted in improvements and a working system without giving any place for fraud, which reflected on the lives of individuals. An American friend told her that if something was said to be controlled, it meant controlled. "Safety is a top priority in the US and there is no chance to miss it in systematic control." However, in her home country, the "rules" were regarded as "things to break" in many aspects of life, resulting in inconveniences and challenges to the functioning of the systems. She was away from it in the US, but worried that "eventually the system will absorb" her back while Beren enjoyed living in the US with rules and order in social life by utilizing assimilation.

As the last acculturative stressor for her social life, the sizes in the US were a bit problematic for her to normalize. Beren could not relate to the space allocated for a person with big houses, huge portions, giant cars, or long distances between dwellings. The vastness of life felt restricted to her since she did not have a car. "Sometimes I just want to sit and cry over this problem; it is a really big problem." She anticipated that living with US sizes would alter her perception of life in Turkey.

Furthermore, Americans were using customary units, which made her use the internet to convert them to metrics. However, with the help of her frequent gym visits, she was able to grasp to some extent: "It is a pound for me anymore, no kilos." Therefore, she mainly used the separation strategy by finding the metrics instead of following the host country's way.

4.1.2. Personal Aftermaths

First Beren had acculturative stress on her personal journey in the US on *language preferences, representing her culture, prejudices, positivity, self-confidence, limited budget, home country issues, diet,* and *hygiene.* She implemented mainly *assimilation* as well as *integration* and *separation* strategies to an extent to find herself a place in the host setting. She criticized *upbringing, nationalism, prejudices, life expenses, restrictions,* and *welfare* in her home country, which resonated across her narrative.

Beren's acculturative stressors began with immersion in English and a growing interest in her own language and culture. When Beren finally landed in the US, she enjoyed being surrounded by the new atmosphere of people speaking English. She took notes about it since everything she heard sounded like textbook material... or a listening track played in an English classroom. Likewise, the dialogues were not like in the TV series, but they sounded more natural. She was delighted to catch every detail. Furthermore, when she re-watched her favorite American TV series, which she had already seen 3 times in Turkey, she was astonished that "there's a world of difference" since everything made more sense, mainly in humor and cultural references. Without living in the US, it would not be easy for Beren to reach the level:

> The things I understand are so different. The jokes seem funnier right now. Their conversations, relationships. They are constantly making jokes that point to racism since three of the actors are black. I mean, I wasn't able to understand them when I was in Turkey. I couldn't relate to the events that much.

While Beren's interest in English during her sojourn in the US was "fluctuating", it revived again since she learned more than one way of expressing things. Interestingly, that caused her to be skeptical about her pre-existing knowledge. Therefore, she found herself googling for even the simplest utterances. For the last few months, she felt in a serious language camp, and her confidence was boosted by being much more advanced in English.

On the other hand, Beren showed separation strategy for her native language preferences during her sojourn. Although she was speaking in English in daily life except for her classes, in her free time, she had the need to "hear things in Turkish". To suffice her needs, she began listening to music in Turkish and she learned many Turkish songs that she had not given a chance before when she was solely listening to music in English for the need to hear English.

Beren's emerging interest in her own language was also valid for her culture. "I don't think I would ever get to know Turkey so well if I stayed in Turkey. I know my country because I am here." Subsequently, acculturation stressors such as the responsibility of delivering the right representation of one's country and culture were accurately observed in Beren's experience. With those instincts, Beren initially visited separation strategy by being "automatically" hospitable to guests. However, she later regretted when she realized others' reaction in response to all her efforts to treat the guests in the Turkish way by not letting the guests do anything, taking all the responsibilities and errands, which were not expected or normalized as in Turkey. Getting excessive compliments, she felt "like a maid". All efforts were regarded as extra or futile as they could be handled by a distributed workload. She later appreciated being in cooperation with the voluntary guests while hosting them. Beren recalled that opening fridges or cabinets in other people's or even other family members' kitchens was told to be acting "unmannerly" in her childhood. The upbringing of her home culture was causing hesitations for her even as an adult in the US setting, allowing her to show integration into the US culture's hospitality mode and her own culture's way by not being completely assimilated into it.

Additionally, assuring that others know the right things about her home culture, she attained her role in the US setting as a cultural ambassador. By doing so, she also questioned the actions which had previously been attributed as nationalistic in Turkey.

> Normally, such things in Turkey might be entitled to nationalism when talked about. But here I am eating things that I never thought I would eat in Turkey. *There is also this in Turkey; we also have that in Turkey; we are also like this in Turkey...* I found myself in a constant effort to defend my country... not defending, but I was concerned by how they acknowledge and learn [the Turkish culture].

Her instincts to serve her home country by paying back after her overseas sojourn continued throughout her sojourn. It was always present, even when she had heavy criticisms or complaints about her home country. Even though she was delighted to be in the host setting and wanted to continue her post-graduate education there, she carried a sense of responsibility for her home to return and transfer what this experience had equipped her with: "We made something of ourselves somehow, but I think young people are waiting to be inspired."

In addition to the aforementioned personal outcomes, she developed empathy and tolerance toward other people as well. She gave up judging people but started to see the underside of those behaviors, allowing her to better understand herself. She observed the change in her approach to others while being more forgiving and loveable away from negativity. She was thinking that she was more of a Westerner in Turkey. "I know myself and my country better, recognizing points here [in the US] that I would not have normally discovered about our own culture [in Turkey]."

Beren unearthed her prejudices toward the East, which she was not aware of because of not having had a chance to meet an Iranian or an Egyptian or not having had any friendship opportunity with them before. However, in the US, she had built a friendship with Eastern people and felt relatively close. Therefore, she began to feel "more like an Eastern than a Western. I broke my prejudices against the East."

Battling with her negative thoughts, Beren adopted the US positive thinking mindset that she saw in the host culture by having a tendency for assimilation. While she was previously concerned about other people's comments by thinking about what they would say, her interpretation became more important thanks to her sojourn in the US. She was thinking she had not been getting enough appreciation in her home country to develop self-confidence, but the US example taught her not to prioritize others' opinions. "I'm confident. I'm at the level of saying I didn't like it for a thing that I didn't like." She tried to implement positive thinking in many aspects of life.

> You had to be your own remedy; it changes people a lot. Before that, I was thinking negatively and was really into dragging myself toward negativity. But here, I can't since I have no other choice. Instead, I focus on standing up against the challenges because, on the one hand, there is nobody to help…

Staying positive had a limit since real life was awaiting her as monetary acculturative stressors. She needed to use her Turkish paid leave to support her life and travel expenses in the US. It was saddening for her to see her salary in Turkish liras was getting lower month after month when converted to US dollars. There were times she lost her sleep thinking about what would happen upon her return, while everyone was telling her to prepare herself to come to Turkey so that she would find everything so different. Thus, she compromised on her US experience by suspending her travel plans to save money to use later. Ironically, approving her friend Maria in the focus group interview, she positively thought the limited budget in the US might help her adapt to living in the worsening economy of Turkey.

Accepting the economic conditions back home, when other internationals invited her to their countries, she directly told them it was not possible for her without a scholarship anymore. Instead, she invited them while it was even expensive for her to travel to Turkey as a local citizen, which she was not pleased with. "*Definitely come and see Cappadocia. It is both a must-see and a very cheap place for you. It is nothing for you. Save a couple of dollars or euros and have a perfect holiday.* This is how I try to convince people now; those are very upsetting."

The acculturative stressor of returning home caused her to feel unrest during her sojourn Due to the injustice of people's efforts, hierarchy, corrupted sides of life, and the worsening economy. Hence, Beren was not ready for her return and even developed a phobia of "what if this was the return flight?":

> Nine months of sojourn was the perfect amount, but on the one hand, all those unnecessary people who are creating hindrances or difficulties, I don't want to return to them. Or destroying our efforts and endeavors, seeing such good people not at the levels that they deserve, the question of merit. All are so exhausting when this needs to be the time to leave all behind and look ahead from now on.

She questioned her experience; "I asked myself, *What have I done? Was it enough?* In any case, there is nothing to do anymore" while her time in the US was running scarce.

As well as the monetary and future worries, her personal journey challenged her physical aspects, such as her dietary and sanitary habits. One of those acculturative stressors showed itself in Beren's dietary habits, such as food choices, drinks, and

restaurant routines. Beren applied assimilation since she had no other choice but to continue her Turkish way and separation at times when she could not be satisfied with the US ways. For instance, although she was truly amazed by the variety of products in the US, she searched for her regular plain bread, yogurt, and snacks while people in the US were enjoying their sweeteners and honey additives. Sadly, she stopped searching after some time and tried the US alternatives. When she truly craved snacks such as ice cream, she forced herself to try them by knowing "it's horribly sugary and impossible to eat", and still regretted doing it as she "did not like it here".

In addition, her efforts for the Turkish diet, especially for breakfast, had to be replaced by the US way that is quick and nutritious since "the elements of her customary breakfast were not the same taste and felt less nutritious." She searched for organic, local, and plain or did not buy them. Furthermore, she refused to drink water with ice and was discontented when she forgot to specify it to the waiters.

Similarly, her hygiene obsession, resonating more than once in her interviews, became an acculturative stressor. She was sensitive about many issues, such as questioning other people's understanding of cleanliness. However, a milestone was reached with the steps toward integration strategy:

> I had some concerns that I have overcome, like: *If it touched there, I cannot touch there. Should I put it there?* I realized this while I was tidying up my mattress cover the other day. I really pay attention to the head and foot of the sheets when changing them. While doing it, I was confused about which part was the foot or the head. I told myself, *Amaaan never mind, for God's sake, just let it go!* Then, I said, *Wow, look at those transformations! Am I the person to do this?* Well, I still think they [people in the US] are still very careless. It definitely shouldn't be that much.

4.1.3. Academic Aftermaths

Beren encountered acculturative stressors during her academic journey in the US on *formal attire, supportive and caring atmosphere, formal communication*, and *efficiency*. She implemented chiefly an *assimilation* strategy to find herself a place in the host setting. She criticized questions *of merit, learner autonomy, time management, feedback quality, lack of support, efficiency issues, work discipline,* and *hierarchy* in her home country, echoing across her narrative.

Before her sojourn to the US, Beren was “out of the route”, not motivated, and desperate about the worsening conditions in her home country to pursue life and academy. She was pessimistic about how far she could go in her field since she thought no one would read her works. *“Even the best researchers are not heard. No rights are given to them to speak. Who am I to change the system here?”* When her friends persuaded her to apply for the Fulbright scholarship, nine months seemed enough for her to get back on the route since going abroad was something that she had been looking forward to it a long time.

Beren’s acculturative stressors showed themselves in clothing in the professional setting. On a hot day, when she first showed up for her day one in the office to meet her supervisor, she decided on a rather formal attire with a short-sleeved shirt and jeans that could be an appropriate look in Turkey. However, when she arrived at the campus, she felt "so strange that as if everyone on the campus was looking at" her. Since everyone was in a relaxed attire with shorts, backpacks, t-shirts, and sneakers, after she visited the office, she immediately went back home to change her outfit to blend in with her new environment. Since the small city was formed around the university, the locals also adopted the university culture, supporting the college teams with great enthusiasm and using everyday items and clothing with its logo. It was surprising to see even bank agents wearing the university’s t-shirt during operation hours since Beren was used to seeing workers fully dressed up in suits in Turkish banks. In a short time, Beren normalized and felt comfortable by using the assimilation strategy in the new code of academic setting.

As an insider and outsider of the academic culture in the US, she was able to observe both staff and students by comparing them to her home country’s academic and professional sides. The students plan their days neatly in the US, whereas Turkish students "lack such an organizational need in daily life". Starting the day quite early, planning their day, and prioritizing sports, which were observed in their outfit on the campus, were common. They tend not to have meals for extended hours like in the Turkish way. They study regularly, are aware of their responsibilities, and use the library daily from the first day, unlike in Turkey, where students mostly visit when the exam dates are approaching. Even Beren was not taking the assignments that seriously, and no one was building their projects following planned progress and collaborating

with the instructors, but they were waiting until the due date, negatively affecting the quality of the submissions.

When autonomous learners with good time management received constructive feedback, success was inevitable. However, getting supportive feedback was another acculturative stressor for Beren since it was not like in her home institution. Providing constructive, elaborate, and timely feedback even after the day of the submission was the point, she was highly admired by the US academics. On the other hand, she remembered that when she submitted an assignment or a task at the end of the term in Turkey, what she learned was the points or grades without being informed about her weaknesses and strengths. Most of the time, she was never assured about what was wrong and what was correct about her work. In addition to providing timely and effective feedback, US instructors were coming to the classes a bit earlier to set up their equipment and materials. She noted them as good practices to adopt in her home country.

Experiencing the unconditional support and appreciation for the effort in the US, she wished to forget the slow-paced, hierarchical, and unsupportive system in Turkey. She had always felt alone "on every path" she walked in her home country. However, she even felt cared for when the dean posted a monthly message advising and reminding them of some strategies for success and wellbeing.

The availability of opportunities became an acculturative stressor for Beren. "If there is a demand, the rights and opportunities that were available in the US, take them and use them, unlike in her home country's institutions. She was "petrified" when she found a resource in seconds in the US while she had barely accessed it before. Internalizing the US way, Beren discovered a shift in her perspective on work. Before witnessing the US example, she did not know how to work effectively in the Turkish system, which challenges her by adding hindrances and burdens on the way instead of supporting and giving her opportunities. In a hypothetical scene at her home institution, Beren imagined:

> You want a printout in color. They say *No*. Or just a regular one, and they ask, *Why?... Why would I want it? I work here.* Having to explain everything is tiresome. Or there are computers that are not in use and rotten in those rooms.

> But here, if there is a facility, it is there and available for students and academics, with no excuses or need for further monitoring.

Moreover, as a research assistant back in Turkey, there were times she spent all day dialing a number and waiting for a reply to set a meeting. At the end of the day, Beren was asking herself, "*What have I done today? I tried to reach a person by making countless unanswered phone calls."* She was complaining about the low work discipline in her home country, which directly affected her efficiency.

On the other hand, in the US, academic communication, although initially seen as an acculturative stressor, a distressing "email frenzy" commenced before their arrival, which felt time-consuming and tiring to complete in a short time. Her main concern was that due to the nature of writing in another language, the need for careful wording and registration, not to cause misunderstandings. "When you even write at 7.00 AM, you get a reply. Or five minutes before the end of the working hours, well, you say that *they will reply tomorrow*. No! You get an immediate reply." Above all, the pace of communication in the US allowed her to see benefits and ease her responsibilities in time; therefore, she utilized the assimilation strategy.

She saw how to use the time efficiently and how to be solution-oriented with a given problem or task instead of postponing it or extending the breaks to socialize with friends, echoing her college professor's words, "*You cannot socialize every day*."

It sometimes caused her to lose her sleep at night since thinking about hierarchy, which caused people to show compulsory respect and even flatter for higher ranks, tolerate their attitudes, and have difficulty of self-expression as juniors, frustrated her. Beren's uptake from the sojourn experience motivated her to pursue building a better future for her home country:

> You might not change the whole system, but you can have an impact on a person or yourself. One thing that you say to a student might be enough for a change. I remembered those and thought Turkey needs people like us who have managed some things to some extent. Therefore, I am trying to get out of that bottom-level mood without knowing if it would reach out to some places.

4.1.4. Discussion

Beren's overall acculturation strategy initially ranged from *separation* to *integration* and *assimilation* as the co-occurrence of strategies is expected according to Berry (1992; 2017). In the course of her stay, she replaced the *separation* strategy, which she wanted to utilize for some aspects, with *integration* or *assimilation* according to her needs and preferences (Kirkgoz, 2017), and when she had no other choices, she had to utilize assimilation as in Yagmur and van de Vijver (2011).

For personal and social aspects, she developed empathy and tolerance for other people, confirming Kagitcibasi (1978), Burkholder (2014), and Andawi et al. (2019), and freed herself from her prejudices by using the integration strategy to expose herself more to diversity by adopting the American ways of norms as well as picturing a better representation of her home country, resonating with Kagitcibasi's study with Turkish sojourners (1978). She did, however, struggle with her diet, as reported by Guvendir (2016) and lhan and Oruc (2020). Additionally, she had difficulties in life practices such as measurement units and rejected the host culture's ways by insisting on her own way of using metric units. When she had no choice but to reject the host conditions or when she was excessively exposed to them, she utilized the assimilation strategy to be able to survive in the host culture (Yagmur & van de Vijver, 2011). In line with the literature (Bektaş et al., 2009; Wang, 2014; İlhan & Oruc, 2020) as individuals challenged for building friendships was another issue, she applied separation strategy after refraining from integrating the Turkish way. By leaving her home mindset behind and merging into the host culture's ways, Beren chose assimilation for power relations and self-confidence in interpersonal relations.

For academic aspects, Beren utilized the assimilation strategy with her appreciation of study habits and work discipline in the US workplace and by showing efforts to abandon the prior behavior that she was not pleased with. It allowed her to gain confidence and acknowledgement of her academic past by setting goals to improve herself. The encouragement and the support in the host country alleviated her successful acculturation in accordance with the findings of Bektaş et al. (2009) and Erturk and Nguyen Luu (2021) on the positive outcomes of support from the host community and the institution over the individual's successful acculturation.

Parallel with the literature, acculturative stressors for Beren's unique experience of sojourn in the US were *food, oral communication, loneliness, friendship, social gatherings, the pace of life, rules and orders, returning home, economic concerns, self-confidence, work-study balance, language, representing her culture, self-awareness, attitude towards formal attire, formal communication, and religiousness. Hygiene* and *units of measurement* could be given as new acculturative stressors, which are not common in the literature.

Through her experience, Beren mainly questioned Turkey on several core aspects by making comparisons with the US, which are *people's limits in interpersonal relations, degree of conservativeness, upbringing, prejudices, economy, social hindrances, obedience to rules, learner autonomy, time management, availability of services, hierarchy in all aspects of life,* and *injustice for rights.*

4.2. Maive's Story



a break for my life
just wandering around
I see that… I eat that… I study that… I meet that… It has an end.
I'm not in this life. I am the observer.
I observe and pass by…

4.2.1. Social Aftermaths

Maive experienced *loneliness, friendship, lack of co-national support, café culture, daily interactions, positivity, prejudices, religiousness,* and *social inequities* as acculturative stressors during her sojourn. These let her implement strategies such as *marginalization* to a great extent as well as *separation* and *assimilation.* Since she had a chance to observe her own country and culture from both an insider and an outsider's

perspective, she reconsidered *prejudices, understood religiousness,* and *intervention in youth life in Turkey.*

Maive's city was rather isolated and too peaceful when she compared it to any city in Turkey. There were even no people outside in the mornings or the evenings. She shared a home with an elderly American woman, her dog, and a cat. "Perfect, the sweetest woman I've ever seen in my life. I feel incredibly lucky." Her beloved landlady made Maive feel like she was her adopted daughter, not her tenant. Maive was assimilated into her home life, with the pets living the American dream. However, outside of home, her circle was rather limited with her landlady's friends, internationals, and a local friend. She also attended a foreign language speaking club to socialize while improving her skills.

Her greatest acculturative stressor was loneliness during her first term of sojourning. In the second term, Maive's lonely sojourn experience became exciting with the end of online education. There were more events to attend and real people to meet. However, Maive's efforts toward integration by building a friendship with the people did not get a response. Through the end, there were times when Maive developed the mindset, "I will be going anyway. Why would I be friends?" Therefore, Maive has a tendency toward integration to marginalization since she purposefully did not want to become friends with co-nationals either for her friendship preferences.

Although Maive had not met many co-nationals, she observed them as being a little bit less sociable due to the economic gap between their lifestyles. While every chat with her Turkish friends eventually came to the life problems that hurt them, the Turkish people living in her host city had no such economic or life-related issues to talk about since life was easy for them, which made Maive feel "odd". With another co-national group, she also realized that she was making an extra effort to talk with them in response to their less friendly attitude, which resulted in her questioning her own interaction with other people and her role in a friendship. She chose not to devote herself to building friendships with people from that point on.

Moreover, an elderly local with her previous six-year stay in Turkey told Maive "Turkish people resembled the US Southerners in many ways", which created less challenge for their lives in the US. Also, "unlike other Asians or Easterners, Turks stay

away from each other without the instinct to form groups with their co-nationals in their sojourns." They preferred to spend time with the locals and internationals to actively exchange language and culture in the US. Her observation was parallel to Maive's own experience as she intentionally stayed away from Turkish and Muslim communities while people were suggesting she join those groups to have friends in the US. "I knew enough of the Turkish people. There is no need. If I had come here to stay longer, I would want it. But it is for a year. The more different people I meet, the better."

On the other hand, not finding the actual friendship she was searching for was an acculturative stressor for Maive since she was rather alone in her sojourn. She missed the friendships she had back home and getting together with her friends, sitting, chatting for hours, talking until the morning, eating, and drinking. For Maive, the boundaries of Turkish friendship were on the level that "you even know about the zits of your friend". To her attention, locals, being individualists, tended not to show their sadness or even talk about it to their friends. "We just share our pain or grief to talk about it, not to spread them to others… Okay, this happened to me. It is just this. There is nothing to do." What people were sharing in Turkey was not a search for a remedy from the others, while it was what Americans thought in response to being told such imminent matters about one's own life. She showed separation by using her expectations of friendship.

There was another need that Maive suffered from as an acculturative stressor, that is, the café culture, which was not advanced in the US since there were even places closing at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Maria observed that the locals did not go there just to sit and chat for hours. Once, she found such a place and was surprised to see people chatting as in Turkish cafés. Nevertheless, the café was filled with internationals talking in their own languages. In another café, when she intended to stay for a long hour, she felt peculiar sitting on her own and "all alone" while other people were quickly buying coffees and going away. Therefore, she had to utilize assimilation strategy so as not to feel abnormal among others.

Although she had a rather limited circle in the US regarding the locals, she had a chance to observe them in their social life. As an acculturation stressor for Maive, it

was hard to understand the small talk and compliments. Initially, she regarded them as an interest in her appearance when random strangers greet her or an acquaintance comment on her look regardless of what she wears. As she realized, they did not intend to dive into deep conversations, all seemed "superficial" because whenever she attempted to start a conversation with a small talk or compliment, they felt she was oversharing and stepped back. It was also Maive's attention that locals tried not to talk about the negative sides of anything. They shared that they were *sorry,* and they tried to find some positive experiential outcomes from the event. Subsequently, Maive showed separation in interpersonal communication in the US.

As an acculturative stressor for Maive, while locals who had met a Turk before did not have prejudices, the ones with no previous knowledge regarded Turkish people as "second class" due to their prejudices and misrepresentations. This was not overtly said in their sentences, but they made her feel that by their actions and interaction. In such a case, although she did not witness any direct racism herself, once in a bank line with her passport in her hand, "an extremely lovely and attentive lady" asked her where she was from, pointing at her passport. When Maive said Turkey, she said "*hmm"* and turned her back. Furthermore, on crucial issues in Turkey, they were emphasizing friendship and family bonds as consolation in their comments.

> Like it is a remote place with no technology, but it has warm happy family relations… The exact attitude… Turkey is regarded as an inexpensive place with small happy families from the outside… It is so strange that I cannot persuade them to learn that it is the opposite.

Maive also experienced acculturative stressors when many people approached her with misrepresentations via utterances such as "*You are from the Middle East. So, the weather must be so hot, a lot of sand, right? Do you know Arabic? Learning languages must be hard for you because your alphabet is different?"* When people mistook her for Arab, she was uncomfortable, whereas she did not feel so when called French. Being from the Middle East was a big issue for Maive to admit until she had to share a place name that she had a connection to, which had the Middle East in its name when asked in the class. Moreover, her resistance turned into confusion with her first-hand contact with the Arabic internationals. "We are so alike, but not totally. It is the same as Europeans." Her final decision was parallel to what they reached a consensus with her Arabic and European friends: "We are definitely the Mediterranean." Attaining

features to continents and geography caused confusion for Maive, since they were the prejudices, she brought with her. Before her sojourn, Maive thought the Americans were similar to Europeans. However, in time, she found out that they were not European. The first thing that drew her attention was religiousness, which was unlike her expectations.

Religiousness in the US was an acculturative stressor for Maive. Growing up in a conservative city in Central Anatolia, her life was challenged in many aspects, and arguments followed with religious people, which led her to develop prejudice. Therefore, she paid attention not to interact with them for the rest of her life. Moreover, her expectation for the US was that "elders and uneducated must be religious while educated and young people might not be religious" inferring from what she observed in Turkey. Furthermore, she was not expecting to see the close interaction of social life with religion in the US.

Maive inferred that their understanding of religion was "not like ours; they live their life. No one enforces religion, religion, religion constantly. " This created an internal reflection for Maive that she might be unfair to religious people in her home country. She assumed there might be a little decrease in her negative feelings for them, which stemmed from her being raised in a religious family. These created confusion for Maive's judgments "from a distance" about whether being religious was a problem or not, which changed quite frequently during the first term. Since she attended the events of the Christian and Jewish communities and saw the kids and young people there while they were singing religious songs. Those modern and religious young people were also pleased with the presence of other religious communities or organizing them in the university. However, in Turkey, she could not picture the same joy and understanding in the young in the religious communities where their lives were either restricted or interfered with by the norms, which made it hard to adapt to modern life. Therefore, Maive could not orientate her stance toward religiousness and applied marginalization strategy.

While life in the US seemed in harmony and equity, it was an acculturative stressor for Maive to be able to see the disparity since the low socioeconomic group was never white:

> There are no other whites on the bus except me. I don't feel there is discrimination among highly educated people who are not racist, prejudiced, or do not discriminate against anyone for anything. But you get on the bus and... it is saddening. It is not in the words or actions, but it is obvious in the levels of the workplace and the public.

4.2.2. Personal Aftermaths

The acculturative stressors Maive experienced were *feeling in a routine, worsening economic positivity, spending time alone, transport, asking for a favor, ease of life in the host country, limited sojourn, host country economy, explaining her condition, health, refugees, customary units,* and *food*. In response to those, she tended to choose *separation* strategies and *assimilation* to a limited extent. Besides, Maive revisited *bad news, life expenses, the difficulty of a worthwhile life,* and *expenses* related to her home during her personal journey in the US.

Maive applied to Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship since it was time for her to invest in herself after postponing her wishes to be in an English-speaking country due to workload, debts, and family issues throughout her college years and more than five years of teaching career. While Maive felt well adapted to life in the US, she worried about losing herself in the course of life as an acculturative stressor. Therefore, she needed to remind herself during the day that she was in the US; "*look around, you are in a different country."* She reminded herself of the importance of her experience since she could not afford to live in the US on her own otherwise. "Leave me here for ten years. I can live. I did not feel like a stranger here. I don't think it as a very foreign culture to us."

The ongoing worsening conditions in her home country created an acculturative stressor for Maive by negatively affecting her experience. Though Maive was not happy with it, she was watching and listening to negative news all the time, and she got very depressed. These were what she was used to in Turkey. Meanwhile, Maive was determined to leave life behind, and she gave herself a promise, with positive thinking by utilizing assimilation.

> When I came here, I promised myself that *You will stay for a year, no Turkish news, just enjoy it here. Never deal with it, take a break for a year, that is, be happy once, do something else. You are really young*, *experience it once…* But

> every day for an hour, I get up and I listen to the news on YouTube. That's how I start the day, I cannot stop it. I'm still into the news all the time.

Nonetheless, throughout her stay, she managed to control her instincts to an extent, and once in a few days she watched the news from Turkey. Instead of her effort to assimilation, she utilized integration strategy.

She tried to have fun to keep her promise; however, while she expected to have a more sociable year in the US, her sojourn became "a lonelier year" which led to self-awareness for her that she could spend time alone as well. She even started to like her time alone, thinking she might even exaggerate it in Turkey since she got used to being on her own. She even imagined a hypothetical day when she gets off the underground and tells herself, "I am so tired I do not want to see anybody" thinking about her crowded city in Turkey.

Moreover, Maive took up a new habit since there was not much to do as an activity, as she started to shop for longer hours in supermarkets by discovering limitless products and food in the US. However, in Turkey, she preferred online shopping and hated spending time in supermarkets by assimilating to the consumerism behavior she observed in the US.

Another acculturative stressor in her peaceful city was transportation. In the "exceptionally car-addicted city", she was the only person walking on the streets. Not having a car, even in a small town in the US, was difficult. Before she learned about the rather poor public bus schedule, she also tried to bike everywhere, which was not a common mode of transport for her in Turkey. "Whenever I go somewhere, I go in such a sweat. I was thinking, *I guess I won't be socializing anymore from now on.* I was biking… sweating like this… dying."

Even though she learned the bus schedules, Maive's experience was limited. To her efforts, when she checked events to socialize "it is 45 minutes drive" while with the bus it was a two-and-a-half-hour ride with the fact that she might find a bus for return. Therefore, she could not go out in the evenings as well, unlike she was used to in Turkey, where she could go out at night with her friends to have a drink and dance. Maive believed she could have met more people if she was able to attend those events.

Accepting and asking for rides was an acculturative stressor for Maive since she was not comfortable showing the Turkish politeness for offers since being direct for needs was rude according to her home culture. “People always tell me; *I can drop you off there. Just tell me.* How long could I tell them? Every time I come from the airport; I feel embarrassed as my landlady is picking me up. But I don’t tell her to do so. She insists, and I accept.”

Maive held that acculturative stressors stemmed from the wealth of the host country. For her, the quality of social atmosphere was easily achieved in Turkey with a wise choice of friends and circles, but her real worries stemmed from her wealth. She saw the ease and quality of life, the stable economy, and purchasing power as the only things that she would miss in the US. Her budget was limited during her stay; therefore, she was not experiencing it in person. Nonetheless, witnessing the welfare of local people was challenging for her since, although she knew it, witnessing it firsthand was a completely different experience for Maive.

> I don't know what to say. I mean, it's driving me crazy that my only fault is being born in my home country. Sometimes I see an unskilled person... born here and I look at the life they live. It makes me sad. Even if I come here, I will still be an unqualified person and never be able to find an equal job for my status in Turkey right away. Such things hurt so much as if there wasn't enough injustice. But because I saw it like this here, I feel very depressed, sad, and angry. My friends tell me all the time that I have "a rich grudge". It disturbs me when I see people achieve things effortlessly.

The affordability of normal prices was an interesting and acculturative stressor for Maive since she did not feel happy about it by criticizing life in her home country. "It drives me crazy to see how things are easy and affordable here; food, shops, cars, houses... I feel triggered (by her home country's condition)." For this reason, Maive never felt like she was living with ease and cheap prices for a year and had fun. She got mad every day, knowing everything was going to be over in nine months.

It was always in Maive’s mind that her sojourn had a limit that affected her experience as an acculturative stressor, reminding her of "the countdown" that this would end sometime soon. She was not worried that the US was the perfect place, nor was she in love with the experience. It was hard for her to come that far, and she "could not come here again" since it was just for a year. Therefore, she needed to have the utmost

experience. "I should fill the bucket list in my mind... but thinking about all these... there is always stress in the background. It disturbs me."

Similarly, the economy of her home country negatively affected her experience as an acculturative stressor related to wealth and affordability. One of her local friends exchanged Turkish liras years ago for a vacation in Turkey and wanted to give them to Maive in exchange for dollars as she could not go. When the friend brought Turkish Liras, there were many banknotes, whereas the calculated amount was less than 20 dollars. They were stunned by the amount of dollars: "I looked at it, all the notes were not even worth 20 dollars. My friend said *I am sorry for you.* I replied, *I am sorry for us too."*

Her efforts to explain her country's conditions also contributed to her acculturative stressors related to the economy. She felt like she was not speaking the same language since it bothered Maive to be having to tell the expensiveness of the products, food, or services (that they reach easily) in her home country when people suggest her activities and travels for the future. Maria was reminding people when they suggested activities to do in Turkey. She felt the need to tell them she could not do, perform, go, or eat as she did in the US when the topic came to the economy in every conversation. Constantly saying "it is expensive" was similar, in Maria's opinion, to saying, "*we are poor"* which truly hurts Maive. The locals thought that the price of basic products should be equal to the US ones in Turkey. "Not exactly. Even buying eggs is bothering."

While she had the chance to experience those activities, trying to experience as much as possible was exhausting. Maive showed efforts to improve her stay professionally and socially by finding extra courses, events, networking, having friends, and traveling. "I am pushing myself hard. It is not good for me. Well, there is no use in forcing it that much, but I cannot get rid of it." Nevertheless, Maive was glad to have a chance to do various activities in the US, especially during her travels. Before one of her vacations, she was not interested in living in the US. As she expressed, she focused on the "good aspects" of her home country. But after catching a glimpse of life in Turkey and considering her return, she began to seriously consider life in the

US in the future. Prior to her vacation, where she recalled her home metropolitan city, she was even thinking about how she "might have a longing for chaos."

During her travels, she was faced with health-related acculturative stressors and an unexpected interaction with a co-national. Her high expectations from the vacation in a North American country were not completely met since she had an injury to the head and was hospitalized. There were people who tried to deceive her to get extra payment on the way to the hospital since they assumed that she was a foreigner and did not know her rights. She saw the crowded atmosphere of the new country, resembling her large Turkish city. While she was amazed by the historical parts and coastline, she heard a large group of people talking in Turkish and Kurdish. She thought they might be tourists like them. However, they turned out to be asylum seekers who did not even know a word of English or the language of the country from which they were trying to get to the US. Their life choices left Maive and her friends puzzled:

> I started to get scared for a while. I said, *What's going on? What did we get into?* When they explained the situation as "*unfortunately… like this*". Of course, it was very saddening and demoralizing... Seeing my country's people in that situation... I can say that I tried very hard not to cry and whimper.

Witnessing what economic reasons could make people do so far from her country, Maive revived her economic worries. However, to her surprise, having spent time in the US, her understanding of money had shifted through regular lira and dollar conversions. While shopping, she even stopped calculating the price or amount. She only took as much as she needed for herself.

As an acculturative stressor, Maive purposefully refused to learn the US customary units. She utilized separation and only converted them when she needed. She did not need to adopt them since it was a system no one used already.

> I look at the amount that I need and the price of groceries, not the kilo nor the pound... I never tried to learn it not to play with my settings... I don't drive but mostly walk. When someone tells me the mile, I use converters or simply think of it as 30 minutes' walk.

As for the last personal issue, during her sojourn in the US and her travels, Maive enjoyed the food as a non-picky eater. She found the variety of food rich and available even in her small town. It was very nice to be able to eat world cuisine, whereas in

Turkey, it was only possible to eat a good meal from world cuisine once a month due to the prices. She only missed simit and a proper Turkish breakfast.

4.2.3. Academic Aftermaths

Through her academic journey, Maive faced *formal attire, lack of networking, supportive and competitive atmosphere,* and *appreciation of success* as acculturative stressors. To continue her existence in the host academic and professional circles, she chiefly addressed *assimilation* strategy. She also critically approached issues of *lack of support and care, work-discipline, non-autonomous* and *misbehaving learners* that she critically approached in her home academic context.

Maive's first acculturative stressor was in formal attire. While in Turkey she wore make-up and neat clothes due to her higher social status in work and social life, she was delighted to "live with zero, zero belongings, zero make-up, zero everything" in the US. As if there was an invisible pressure to make people feel they needed to cover the pimple, to look beautiful since there were students outside, as an instructor has their recognition to protect in Turkey. Maive adopted a relaxed code and became anybody "in her sneakers and hoodie" in the US. She only wore make-up and fashionable clothes while travelling among her co-national friends. She mainly showed assimilation strategy in her clothing preferences in the US.

While she enjoyed being invisible in public, Maive found it unfair to be invisible in the academic circle at her host university as an acculturative stressor since the other host universities made efforts to organize various events and held orientations for other FLTA's. Therefore, being a Fulbright grantee there was a disappointment for her. She tried to reach out to the international house to ask for help many times to get to know more about the other internationals or grantees. However, they did not provide her with the assistance she needed to be a part of the university community. Although she tried to build an "emotional bond" she could not have the network she wished for at her host university. While all her teaching and learning was online in the first term due to the COVID-19 and the limited social support, she managed to meet a limited number of academics, mainly through social media. "I am an FLTA here. They have no idea about my presence. I tell people who I am. *I am a Fulbrighter. I need to audit classes.*

There were instructors rejecting me because my program does not let me take registered classes without the fee.”

Maive loved the host university and wished to be a student there as they "worship" the undergraduate students, which she faced as an acculturative stressor. It drew her attention to the university’s actions and care for its members when the college sent emails and warnings for the security and health of university members due to the heavy snow. Maive was out that day since she had already walked to school. When the school was cancelled, she had to walk back home under the blizzard for an hour. Since it did not last long, Maive thought they were incredibly precautious, cancelling everything and placing warning signs everywhere. She could only say, "Wow!"

People were valued and opportunities were limitlessly provided for them. However, when she talked about her travels in the US, she understood that the majority of the students who "have cars and prospects" had not travelled outside their cities or attended events, but mainly lived on campus. Maive was not sure about how they socialized since they were studying "unbelievably hard". As an auditor among students, she thought the workload was heavy, which made them "ultra *über*hardworking".

The competitive atmosphere as an acculturative stressor for Maive made her feel she was actually not quite hardworking. She was known as a hardworking person in Turkey, and people told her to have a rest regularly. Moreover, after living with her American landlady who worked long hours, Maive saw herself as "a bit lazy". Although Maive thought having a rest was very important for Turkish people regardless of the intensity of the work, she gained another self-awareness from her experience.

The general conduct of lessons was student-led, unlike the way she used to experience it in Turkey. Nevertheless, they tend to act like Turkish students in their Turkish classes, with unacceptable behaviors in other courses such as skipping homework, asking for points, not practicing at home, missing deadlines, and eating in the class. She felt that the rather less disciplined culture of the Turkish system could even find itself a limited place in the rigid US academic system.

Similarly, the importance of achievements in American culture became an acculturative stressor for Maive, so she tried to have a critical look at her own study and work habits. She had heard about it in a lecture before, but she could not believe the degree of it before witnessing it. In one morning, in a dialog with a local, when she was asked about her position, she explained her title as "the basic level of academia in Turkey." He misunderstood her and researched the previous prominent Fulbrighters online to show her she could achieve what the others had already done:

> I did not mean to be negative about my position, but just wanted to make the distinction between instructor and scholar... Staying in one's own place and showing no improvement distresses Americans, while being positive and encouraging achievements is the ideal for them.

Among all things, the only thing she was delighted about was teaching Turkish, thanks to her supportive supervisor. In addition to her classes, she arranged weekly online meetings with her students to watch and discuss Turkish series. They also held a face-to-face session once a month. She also made a presentation about Turkey and Turkish culture in the International House at her host institution. For the event, she created quizzes on general knowledge and brought prizes for the winners as traditional Turkish items such as *yazma* (traditional head scarf) and *patik* (handwoven socks). She also served *kısır* (bulghur snack), Turkish delight, and Turkish coffee. She enjoyed organizing the activities and sharing symbolic items of Turkish culture.

Moreover, Maive truly enjoyed how the Muslim community in the host university got together in Ramadan with a daily iftar dinner and sahur meal every day for a large group of university members. Since those times were also Easter, she had made plans with her landlady to help them with Eastern preparations and celebrations. Maive was voluntary to join in both religious festivities of either culture, utilizing the integration strategy for special days.

4.2.4. Discussion

Maive's acculturation strategies were mainly assimilation, whereas there were aspects that she utilized marginalization and, to a lesser extent, separation, as confirmed by Berry that more than one strategy could be observed during the individual's acculturation journey (1992; 2017).

For her social and personal aspects, Maive suffered from loneliness and could not find the closeness for friendship in her relations with people during her sojourn, which caused her to long for friend meetings. Therefore, this confirms the studies of Bektaş et al. (2009), Wang (2014), and İlhan and Oruc (2020) that Turkish sojourners experience challenges for loneliness and friendship in the US. However, whilst she was showing efforts towards communicating with locals and internationals as in Kagitcibasi's study (1978), Maive kept staying away from religious groups and was frustrated when such groups were suggested to her during her sojourn. Although Maive was distressed by the religiousness, in return, she started to understand religious people in her home country by mitigating her prejudices, resonating with Burkholder (2014) and Andawi et al. (2019) that sojourn experience helped the individual discover prejudices and observe the change in her attitudes towards them. Conversely, while Bektaş et al. (2009) and Erturk and Nguyen Luu's studies (2022) showed the individuals' need for support from their co-nationals, Maive intentionally did not want to build friendship with her co-nationals, since she did not need them in the host setting, although she was lonely. There were times when she interacted with co-nationals, but there was not a common point that could allow them to build bonds or feel the co-national support that she needed in the first place. Nevertheless, in time, she started to enjoy loneliness and wanted to maintain it in Turkey as the rather contemporary study of İlhan and Oruc (2020) that through their experiences in the US, individuals began to feel comfortable with less people as a continuing assimilation strategy, although they were not pleased with it at the beginning. Another major acculturative stressor for Maive was the economic conditions of her home country, which disturbed even when she was on welfare in the US, which resonates with the findings of Erturk and Nguyen Luu's study (2021) regarding the economic aspects emphasized to be one of the sources of acculturative stress for Turkish sojourners in the US. Additionally, having to explain her economic issues to the locals and co-nationals with high socioeconomic levels in the affordable US life made Maive feel inferior, as in Berry et al. (2006) that economic imbalances when two cultures meet made the economically advanced one superior while the other felt inferior via comparisons. Besides, not having a car and poor transportation, which draw upon Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) as being the major challenges for sojourners, restricted Maive's social life further. Furthermore, her isolation was also present in her academic

circles since she could not get the required support from her host institution. This was in parallel to the literature (Bektaş et al., 2009; Jackson, 2011; Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021) that suggested that support from host institutions improved the quality of the experiences in the host setting.

The acculturative stressors that Maive experienced were: *loneliness, friendship, lack of co-national support, café culture, daily interactions, positivity, prejudices, religiousness, social inequities, feeling in a routine, worsening economy, positivity, spending time alone, transport, asking for a favor, US welfare, home country issues, limited sojourn, US economy, explaining her condition, health, refugees, customary units, food, formal attire, lack of networking, supportive, competitive atmosphere,* and *success.*

Through her experience, Maive scrutinized the following aspects regarding her own country; *prejudices, understanding of religion, religious enforcements on young people, news, life expenses, difficulty of a worthwhile life, academic support and care, prioritizing relaxation, teacher-led system, non-autonomous students,* and *discipline.*

4.3. Olsen's Story



Then you say,
I'm fine with my society's social code.
And you question;
what if some things
that we naturally take for granted
are wrong?

4.3.1. Social Aftermaths

Olsen had acculturative stressors on issues regarding *interaction with locals, co-nationals, social norms, religiousness, racism, homelessness, city life,* and *the US sizes.* Mostly, *assimilation* and *integration* strategies were utilized by Olsen to blend

into the new environment. He was skeptical about the issues of *distrust, social norms for sharing and owing, intervention in people's lives, young people's worries, interpersonal relations, chaos and noise,* and *freedom of thought* that he questioned about his home country.

Olsen previously had a chance to visit the USA for six months around 10 years ago. He attended a high school exchange program and stayed with an American family while taking classes at an American high school. He had different insights and lived experiences and mentioned them retrospectively during the interviews. His previous location was in a remote part of the US when compared to his residence during the FLTA experience. His current observations were quite different than the previous thoughts, observations, and reactions regarding the Turkish and American cultures since the participant was there as his younger self. When he had a chance to visit his former host family, he realized the city used to seem better when he first came to the US. However, this time Olsen's expectations were different, such as ease of transport and an active social life. He also realized the city was quite conservative and anti-progressive since people were opposing the COVID-19 measures, including the vaccinations, while the virus was at its peak.

On the one hand, in his highly educated host city profile, the locals were so busy and had no time to spare for other people, which caused an acculturative stressor for Olsen since he was intended to interact with them actively. While it was quite easy to meet locals in other countries and cities he visited, it was difficult for him in his home city. In comparison to internationals and people from other countries, his contact with Americans in the neighborhood remained limited.

Although it was limited, he really enjoyed having easy interactions with the humble but unbelievably important academics in his neighborhood. Once, while he was biking from home to visit a friend early in the day, a car soaked him by splashing the rainwater all over Olsen. It annoyed him since his day was ruined and he was completely wet in the cold. The other day, he made fun of his experience and mentioned it to his roommate and his neighbor. He was surprised when the neighbor, who was a professor, told him he could use his spare car. However, due to the need to repair mechanical issues with the car, he could not accept it. But his Turkish friends showed distrust of

this humble act. *What if this neighbor tried to scam you somehow?* which would never happen in Turkey. When Olsen searched for him and learned he was an award-winning scholar and had no need for any money to scam.

In various instances, Olsen realized that the locals had their own social norms for sharing and owing, which sometimes caused him to experience acculturative stress. It was surprising to Olsen to see a guest take a leftover drink with him after the party since he brought a dozen to offer to other people. In his Turkish view, a bottle would not matter and might even be regarded as unkind to take home any leftovers if brought for sharing in the first place. On the other hand, he also acknowledged he had already offered the drinks without any expectations and only took the amount that was not consumed, and it was totally fine.

Furthermore, in Turkish culture, owing someone a small amount of money was not much of an issue, and the giver did not expect a return, while the receiver could suggest paying back. Nevertheless, in the US, Olsen was uncomfortable when people expected a payment for lending 15 cents or 5 dollars. Olsen had acknowledged both perspectives by thinking, "It is actually their money" and thought both systems were right in their own worldviews. Showing mutual understanding, Olsen utilized integration: "Then you say, I'm fine with my society's social code. And you question; What if some things that we naturally take for granted are wrong?"

Through those interactions, he criticized Turkish society. For instance, Olsen had a pastor friend who never disturbed him with his religious identity, which made Olsen think about what would have been if he had had an imam friend in Turkey. He assumed that his imam friend would curse him since he was a nonbeliever and try to make him convert to Islam. This was an issue that he questioned about Turkey, the people's direct intervention in others' lives, especially on religiousness. Due to the judgements and interventions of others in people's lives in Turkey, Olsen was uncomfortable not being a hundred percent of his personality, even within his family. Whereas in the US, everyone was free to express themselves without being judged by society. Olsen showed assimilation towards his interpersonal relations, abandoning the norms of his own culture.

On the other hand, Olsen's communication with young locals was poor, which was a source of acculturative stress since he could not interact with his peers. In Turkey, he realized that most of the young people, especially the young women, were more acknowledged on many intellectual topics to discuss and exchanged ideas, whereas in the US, he saw the "knife-cut" gap between two types of young people. Some parts were intellectual, and he could discuss various topics. On the other hand, the majority's interest in superficial subjects such as social media, which made it hard for Olsen to find a common point to have a conversation. Especially on the topics of the economy or politics, where in Turkey, any random person on the street can make a comment regarding their own country. However, Olsen was surprised when a young American could not name their president. Then, Olsen associated it with the absence of economic and political worries that created a threat in those young people's lives, unlike in Turkey, which might stem from the circumstances. His attitude was towards separation exceptionally for the young locals while he used integration across his interactions.

Furthermore, Olsen tried to be friends with co-nationals in the US. He remembered in their departure program that a Turkish executive told them to connect with Turkish people to have the co-national support that they might need. This let Olsen interact with Turkish people when he saw Turkish people in the US and had lifelong bonds with some of them, utilizing integration for his friendship orientation. He also continued his familial relations with co-national family members back in Turkey. While he was able to see his parents rarely in person for years, during his sojourn they started to interact frequently via video calls, which strengthened their communications and bonds. However, he realized that he had started to get more in touch with his parents when his departure was approaching. Olsen showed integration towards familial and close relations.

In addition to this circle in the neighborhood, his cheerful personality opened many doors to opportunities that a regular tourist would not experience. On his travels, he met many interesting people, including internationals and Americans, and had a chance to befriend people with a variety of backgrounds, from disadvantaged people to high-level executives.

> I got to know different people with whom I might get into trouble if I met, and I was not likely to meet much in Turkey. I had a chance to make friends. It

> broadened my already open point of view even more. Much has changed in my life by merely meeting one person: a bit like the butterfly effect.

On his sojourn, he was lucky to meet loveable people and had few negative experiences. However, he indirectly experienced the acculturative stressor of racism when one of his friends was the victim of racism. Olsen's Fulbrighter African friend was arrested without charge by the armed police during his vacation due to being mistaken for a local African American suspect. Since in his country there was no racism, Olsen was sorry for what his friend went through.

There was another negative side of big cities, such as homelessness. Like his other FLTA friends, Olsen also thought homelessness was an issue that could be solved quite easily by the US authorities with therapies and counseling, followed by economic advancements and employment opportunities.

> Allowing humans for their basic human rights after years later of isolating them from the golden eras with developments for hundreds of years, made some part of the populations underdeveloped for education and socioeconomical conditions. It is natural to be homeless here if you come from those groups. If one receives support, why would one end up in the streets? Otherwise, they should be mad at wanting to live in these inhumane conditions. Why is this person mad? You made him mad as a society. Who knows what troubles they have suffered?

Because of such issues, Olsen was glad to be in his neighborhood demonstrating assimilation strategy to his US life in the neighborhood community. He even thought that he would miss his roommate and the neighborhood since he enjoyed waking up to the sound of chirping birds, but it became a problem while he was in Turkey to wake up in peace due to living close to a mosque speaker and being exposed to the prayer call at a quite early hour in the morning. He was sure to miss the silence, the order, and the freedom of the people in his sojourn in the US. "I got used to this calmness. I look outside right now and calm birds are singing on one side. The postman is passing by. There are one or two people on the street. If only in Turkey, if I look out of any street at this time, you will see tons of people."

The acculturative stressors, the chaos in the traffic and unexpected charges during his vacations to New York and in a developing country, made him recall his life in his home country. He was shocked when he received an unexpected fine for using a bridge on his vacation. Since Olsen utilized assimilation as he voluntarily adopted the host

culture's way of life and rejected his own country's ways, facing a similar experience during his sojourn, he took a critical look at it and questioned his home country.

Olsen also got used to the sizes in the US, which might be evaluated as an acculturative stressor. On one of his visits to a rather smaller country in America, Olsen had a chance to observe that everything was smaller in the city and recalled his home country. When Olsen rented a vehicle, he was amazed by the vehicle provided by the agency since it was huge, like "driving a panzer." Olsen then felt the feeling of confidence and power that came from having a huge car, as he saw across the US by implementing the assimilation strategy.

4.3.2. Personal Aftermaths

In the course of his acculturation journey in the US, Olsen dealt with *arrival, housing, circle integration, desperation, positivity, health,* and *national identity* as acculturative stressors. His reaction to those was by addressing mainly *assimilation,* except for his national identity as utilizing *marginalization* in return. *Travel expenses, limits of activities, affordability, low life standards, and politics and economy* were the aspects he reconsidered about his home culture via his comparisons with the ones in the US.

When Olsen first arrived in the US, he was unaware of the series of unfortunate events that would follow him that would last for a certain amount of time. Problems started with the plane, which gave Olsen acculturative stressors upon arrival. It all started with a broken luggage that caused him to feel desperate after seeing the damaged pomegranate sauce that he brought for cultural events was all over his clothes in the luggage. Worse damage was to the broken frame and glass of an artwork that he brought as a gift to his former host parents, who stayed together around ten years ago.

Upon arrival, Olsen found out that the house that he rented was in a terrible situation. There were rats everywhere, flies, bugs, and trash on the floor. He tried to live there for a couple of days by cleaning everywhere, but then he could not stand it and called the landlord to spray the house. To his surprise, the landlord also brought a lot of traps as a solution. Olsen had never seen a rat trap or dealt with rats until that age, and it was horrible. "I did not have a luxury life in Turkey with my mid-low income, but I had no firsthand contact with rats like this either."

Due to his unfortunate housing options, Olsen experienced acculturative stressors. His troubles did not end with the dirty house either. Soon, his roommates started to act to spite each other, and it created a mess in the house. When Olsen returned from his vacation, he realized that the house was like a "battlefield" and that he was the only one cleaning it at all times. He immediately took photos and sent them to the landlord, explaining that it was not possible for him to live under the circumstances. He got out of his first dwelling as "the rat-catcher of Hamelin".

There he went for his second and final stay. It was not as smooth as he expected since he could only stay for a night after he signed the lease. They rented the house to two people at the same time, which automatically made Olsen "homeless" for twenty-four hours. Recalling a letter, they received from about 80 presidents and 60 Fulbrighters who won Nobel Prizes, he made fun of his case: "Add one homeless to the list; it's me, writing the history." When he finally found a way to get his rental place, he had gone through a lot in the background. A broken phone, a bicycle with flat tires, and their financial burden on him.

Olsen tried to settle down in his new place where he had highly educated neighbors and utilized his integration strategy to befriend them. He also had a chance to find international markets for his needs. He cooked when he wanted to eat from the home cuisine, with the availability of the essential ingredients for him to buy. He showed integration of his dietary habits in the US by equally enjoying the available food options that he could possibly find hard in his home country.

While his life was finally on track after the housing problems, he faced his next acculturative stressor as desperation because of not having the teaching role that he had initially applied for and prepared for, which brought psychological harm to Olsen for the first time in his life. It had affected him in personal aspects since, initially, he started to question himself, thinking ironically that he had "unrealistic" expectations, such as teaching in the class, which he saw as his fault. However, he was finally hospitalized and started using medication along with the therapy after his desperate series of events.

When he completed his treatment, Olsen continued meditating, which made him much more aware of his mistakes and his personality. He was both practicing and reading

about the philosophy of it, which guided him to be more peaceful and happier. He felt more loving, more prudent, and more patient as he approached everything positively. "When one thing happens to me, I don't say God damn this world!" or something. I'm taking steps towards a solution. I appreciate myself for it." Transforming into a "Yes man", he stopped planning his life, and welcomed what the time brought. "I might not have time to think until then. When it hit me like a wall, I stood up against it. I have no expectations from life now. I decided not to put in any effort because I had great disappointment."

Olsen became more positive and freer. He believed that whatever happened to him, although obstructed, could find its way to him. "Fulbright taught me that even in the most negative moments, you can think positively," allowing him to utilize assimilation to the dominant culture in promoting positive feelings and ideas.

Since Olsen was truly open to new experiences, he lived limitlessly by taking every chance that came his way in and outside of the US. He also experienced health-related acculturative stressors while he was learning new skills and pushing his limits to "even break a rib" and elbow, making him lean towards softer hobbies. As a rather harmless activity, Olsen traveled a lot during his sojourn. He compared the affordability of travel in the US to Turkey since, as a sojourn, he was able to travel across the US and neighboring countries with his savings out of a limited budget, whereas in his host country it is expensive to travel even if one has a decent salary.

During his travels, he visited his local family, who loved Olsen and wanted him to live in the US. While in his high school years in the US, Olsen was happy to go back to his home country and determined to contribute to Turkey for the better, whereas now he lost his hopes due to questions of merit and worsening living standards.

> I was saying frankly that I wanted to return to my country to share what I had learned here, but it was a different Turkey... There are mountains of differences between Turkey then and now. I do want to contribute to my home country now, but... I have no hope that I will get accepted when I apply for a position at a university or for a master's degree.

Olsen wished to be proud of his country by holding instincts towards a separation strategy, while with the facts and challenges, he was not even eager to tell people he was from Turkey when asked to show marginalization strategy. Since he had ancestral

bonds with Eastern Europe, he started to introduce himself as "I am from Balkans" where he felt belonged being uncomfortable with his home country.

On the other hand, whilst Olsen had regarded Turkey as a European country, during his stay in the US, he changed his mind. In the past, he disagreed with the view when people introduced Turkey as a Middle Eastern country. However, now he was comfortably saying it. For Olsen, Turkey needed to be criticized for its political conditions, human rights, lack of freedom of the press, economic factors, and people's point of view.

4.3.3. Academic Aftermaths

The acculturative stressors in the US academic setting for Olsen were not having a teaching role, restrictions on travel and course selections, and a lack of support. Olsen mainly followed *assimilation* strategy in academic life in the US. The point where Olsen was critical could be given as *hierarchy, which causes students to experience negative instances by building a barrier in the academy*.

Before his sojourn, Olsen was working at the language branch of a non-teaching-based company. He had a teaching certificate and qualified as a teacher with his college background. They allowed him to apply for his Fulbright grant, which he had heard about during his high school exchange program with an American family. "Then, I said I would apply for Fulbright Scholarships." Having quit his high-paying job and leaving the well-established life in Turkey to be able to teach at one of the best colleges in the US, he regretted the sacrifices he made to be chosen for the scholarship, since his role was not explicitly given before his acceptance.

Olsen was aware of his novice teaching abilities and paid close attention to developing his skills before his experience in the US. Nevertheless, he was not given any scheduled teaching Turkish roles in his host institution, which was the heaviest acculturative stressor that affected all of the other facets of his sojourn. His role consisted of offline and inactive tasks, which made him question his expectations. Olsen came there like he was going to "the Champions League" and equipped himself accordingly, whereas he was not even in an amateur league.

> Think about a footballer. Can he learn anything on the bench? The time a footballer learns a thing is when he goes out on the field. Even if he enters as a reserve player, if you are going to play the whole match by yourself and you put the reserve player into the match in the last 3 minutes, what can he do? He can't do anything after that. You also cannot say *What are you here? Why did you come here? You are a bad player! You did not even contribute!* Because you didn't pass him the ball or assist him. Let's play together for 90 minutes. Or let's just take him to the game in the second half of the game... *Let me play* and see how we play.

Not being able to contribute was another acculturative stressor. He felt that he had no contribution, although he was willing to act by teaching and lessening the workload on his supervisor's shoulders. He could have learned or taught something. "I didn't come here to earn money; I was here to teach [my language]." However, the students did not even know his name since he was invisible while attending the classes for the whole semester. His task was merely to take notes of what was covered in the class. "They were almost regarding me *Who is this in the class?* So, I was going to classes. I didn't open my mouth at all." He ironically accepted that keeping notes of what was on the board was also a contribution and designed the course website. He expected "a rather active contribution... Sharing the motto, that is, the culture, telling what you have learned, sharing what you have known."

He experienced lack of support as an acculturative stressor. His co-national supervisor was not welcoming to him or as moderate as he expected, which made his experience hindered and challenged for no apparent reason. The hindrances were not limited to non-teaching roles and were still present even when he could be freely allowed to take courses with credit at the prestigious host university or plan his travels. He stopped fighting for those since there would be hindrances for him to take and he continued on his way with what was available. When his FLTA cohort talked about their quality time and interactions, Olsen got happy since his friends had good communication with their supervisors, but on the one hand, he felt sad for himself. His friends could experience what they deserved while Olsen was literally counting his days.

Undesirably, Olsen's acculturative stressor had psychological outcomes. His disappointment totally distressed him. Therefore, he ended up getting hospitalized, followed by a diagnosis, therapy, and medication. Consequently, in the middle of the first term, Olsen came to the decision to terminate his program after all these

difficulties put in his way, although he could have had a better experience at the host university. "I cannot teach, I cannot take the courses I want, I can't travel there. *Why am I here? A sideshow? Fine, I had better drop everything. Let me go then."* In the end, despite the program coordinators' efforts, he was hardly persuaded to continue his program. "*Is it solved? Of course not. But what do we do? We shut our eyes!"* It caused him to limit his presence at school even more. Lowering his expectations made him feel freer. "Water flew and found its way."

Finally, they solved the problems with his supervisor, and their communication got better. He was allowed to teach from time to time as a substitute teacher. Olsen took the initiative and started a speaking club. Although there were not many participants, one of the students with a higher proficiency regularly came to the speaking sessions, which allowed Olsen to build a rapport with his student as a teacher, at last, exchanging cultural knowledge and talking about life in both countries. "It is so enjoyable. I also feel that I am learning from him."

For the students who could not take Turkish language courses, the host institution arranged face-to-face sessions with Olsen as a language facilitator. He enjoyed having the chance of teaching in a one-to-one system more than the classroom version. Olsen loved his students and enjoyed interacting with them since they were interested in Turkish and willing to learn. However, exchange of the Turkish culture was limited within the duration of their meetings.

While initially he was not pleased with his experience and thought it set him back academically since he did not learn much in terms of education and felt regret, he was able to turn it into chances of cultural exposure by having an active social life and travelling. He had the opportunity to enroll in joint programs and upgraded himself for his teaching skills by acquiring renowned certificates. He also gained a great deal of academic and professional knowledge through the courses he took at his host institution.

In a short time, he built strong relationships and attended many events and activities with the academic community in his neighborhood. The local academics were so humble, although they were one of the best professors in their field, in their relations

with him and their students did not have the hierarchy like he saw in the Turkish academics.

Olsen experienced acculturative stress and future worries. Before he lowered his expectations and became open to what life brought to him, Olsen was desperately thinking about spending his last savings in another country and trying to survive on his own upon the end of his grant period. "As far as the money goes, if you ask, *what do you do when you run out of money?* I have no plan. I had something in my mind. Who knows...? I am not that hopeful." The idea of living together with his family was not acceptable to him since he had been away from home for over nine years. Through the end of his stay, while he was peacefully meditating while the rising at the shore, he received a message that he was awarded with another prestigious scholarship. This was a spark that made Olsen find the enthusiasm to pursue his life.

4.3.4. Discussion

Olsen showed the *assimilation* strategy to a large extent, and it was followed by *integration* as the second common acculturative strategy for him. He only showed *marginalization* of his national identity since he felt uncomfortable when he thought about the mainstream profile in his home country.

Confirming Mori (2000) that higher expectation might cause disappointments and consequently to the increased acculturative stress, since Olsen's expectations were not met, he faced a great disappointment, causing him to experience greater acculturative stress. Besides, as Olsen was ready to test the limits of his opportunity, it increased his chances of having more acculturative stress due to physical injuries and unexpected results, which corresponds to Duru and Poyrazlı's study (2007) that individuals motivation and engagements provides them more instances of cultural clashes by increasing the chance of having acculturative stress more than the ones who refrain from interacting with the host nationals and experience less stress by keeping them away from the unfamiliar circumstances. On top of Olsen's initial issues was with housing, in line with Erturk and Nguyen Luu's study (2022) that housing might be a source of acculturative stress.

However, parallel to Wilson et al. (2013), he was pleased with the outcomes of those hinderances which caused him to experience many physical and psychological disturbances that they caused Olsen to have more spiritual point of view as in Demir et al. (2000), Kirkgoz (2017) and Andawi et al. (2019). Although Olsen mainly utilized assimilation, there were the core cultural issues such as sharing and, owing to his collectivistic home culture (Hofstede et al., 2010), he intended to implement separation strategy, but when he thought from the host point of view and went for integration by appreciating both cultures on their own end. This was parallel to Kirkgoz's study (2017) on the Turkish FLTAs' uptake from their experience that they gain awareness of both cultures.

In the academic aspect, Olsen suffered from hierarchy and hardships caused by co-nationals limiting his experience, which was seen as a common trait of collectivist cultures such as Turkey as in Hofstede et al. (2010). Nevertheless, he was able to build his network with welcoming and supportive academics by confirming Bektaş et al. (2009) as well as Erturk and Nguyen Luu (2021) on the acculturative benefits of having a supportive and welcoming host institution.

The acculturative stressors of Olsen were *busy locals, young locals, family, sharing and owing, religiousness, friends, racism, homelessness, peace in the city, order in life, sizes, arrival, housing, circle integration, desperation, positivity, health, nationality, FLTA role, restrictions for travel, course selection, lack of support,* and *future worries.*

Olsen was critical of the following issues related to the social, personal, and academic aspects of life in Turkey; *distrust, sharing and owing, intervention in people's lives, young people's worries, ease of interpersonal relations, chaos and noise, freedom of thought, travel expenses, limit of activities, affordability, low life standards, politics and economy,* and *hierarchy.*

4.4. Pam's Story



Now I see clearly that
I am in a period of my life
that I will never forget.
I consciously try not to stick on thoughts,
which I am normally used to

4.4.1. Social Aftermaths

Pam's sojourn experience brought *socializing, small talk, individualism***,** *independence, representing home culture, being punctual,* and *diet* as acculturative stressors. Her acculturative strategies were mainly *assimilation* and *separation,* as well as *integration*. She was also critical for her home country's social life on *upbringing, supporting young people, breaching traffic rules,* and *passive smoking*.

Pam showed integration for socializing in the host setting during her stay in the dormitory with a large group of FLTAs and other international and local students. Pam felt happy since they did not experience loneliness as they spent time together by providing support for each other. In time, their large group turned into smaller but closer groups of friendship. As Pam gradually realized that she had more common world views with her new friends than many of her friends in Turkey had. It was also easy to make friends with other internationals through the communities at the host institution. Pam found it interesting and enjoyed being surrounded by internationals and locals without the need to interact with her co-nationals. Meeting with people with diverse backgrounds made her curious since they were giving her an opportunity to interact and learn from them. However, through the end, Pam thought about having more time in the US to spend time with her co-nationals in her Turkish FLTA cohort by utilizing the separation strategy.

The local students were out of the international communities since they preferred to be together with their co-nationals. Pam acknowledged that it was not about rejecting friendship with internationals, but that they were just not taking the initiative and moving beyond small talk with foreigners, allowing Pam to choose an integration strategy in her interaction with locals. Pam knew some locals, but they were not in the friend category for her since they just interacted when they ran into each other without doing activities or spending time together. On the other hand, while Pam had expected locals to be distant when invited to their places, they were welcoming, showing their way of hospitality, which she could not see in Turkish warmness.

Small talks created an acculturative stressor for Pam since they are "too small" for Turks. Turkish people tend to extend it into a dialog, possibly to build friendship, to get to know more and spend time together. However, this was not what Pam experienced in the US. She initially thought Americans were too sincere and warm-hearted since strangers smiled and greeted her on the street and asked about her. This was a challenge for Pam since she was not used to it while living in her large home city, where such an interaction might be misunderstood and garner a reaction. When people said phrases such as "see you around", Pam surprised since she thought there was an expectation of another meeting with the person who she could possibly never come across again. Pam received reactions as they did not mean an actual meeting when she told people that she was busy. “They ask, *How are you?* and pass by. I tried to answer a few times that I was fine. They stared at me as if to tell me, *Why would you give an answer?* They say, *How are you?* just as saying *Hi!* and they do not seem to care about the answer.”

It was not too long before Pam acknowledged that the locals were not actually interested in her but only following their routines, which made Pam see those interactions initially as superficial. Those interactions did not evolve into friendship in time, and she showed separation for small talk. However, she began to like it as it made her feel happy and thought about what she was advised when she was a child in a large city: "*Do not talk to or smile at strangers."* Spending her years refraining from having eye contact with strangers, Pam found it nice when a stranger could make her feel safe and happy while she was walking down the street in a low mood. Although utilizing assimilation, Pam believed that she would turn back to her previous stance

for the interaction with strangers in her hometown and her "nasty" personality would have to come back. “In a nutshell, I'm on the street. If I smile at strangers, they will understand other things and might think, *Are you giving me a message? Nope, I don't give you a message, brother*. Well, how can I say *I want to approach you humanely?”*

The individualism across the US was another acculturative stressor for Pam since it caused her to re-identify herself. In Pam’s observations of locals, self-sufficiency and individualism were at the highest degree across the country for all people, which she utilized for integration by acknowledging both ways are right on their end. Yet, it was still quite strange for Pam not to help disabled individuals. When she learned that offering help was regarded as "rude", Pam compared it to the Turkish understanding, which promotes help if there is a hinderance for somebody. From her home culture’s perspective, Pam also recognized the local’s point that the help might make the disabled feel insufficient. Disabled people were visible in the city, and they were living by themselves in the city. It was a realization for Pam that it started not to make her feel bad that while in Turkey she would focus all her attention on the disabled or the ones who needed help in case of any help that she could offer.

> It was so interesting because in my culture, helping someone is not considered rude at all. If you do help, it is decent behavior. But here, they are individualists, and being self-sufficient is valued. I cannot be critical. I thought myself a bit of an individualist while living in Turkey, but here, I acknowledged that I was extremely Turkish.

On the other hand, in Pam’s family, all members had close relations with each other, as in most families. Helping or supporting one another, especially the younger members of the group, was quite common in Turkish culture. However, Pam criticized the attitude, saying it might have damaged the youth since they could not develop their life skills. The boys, in particular, were cared for initially by their mothers by lacking basic life skills, and then their wives followed the same behavior.

Therefore, the idea of young people leaving home at around 16 in the US seemed strange to Pam, as she thought it was quite a young age. Nevertheless, they became self-sufficient individuals. This also had reflections on their interpersonal relations.

> The attitude *I am capable of doing everything* disallows young people to receive support. Yes, they can [be capable of anything], but sometimes getting

> support or help could make people happy. It is not something that should be regarded negatively. They are not open to helping with good intentions.

Pam considered the locals in two different groups with and without overseas experience, since it changed how they interacted with her and others. There was a local profile with no experience outside their own states and no curiosity towards other cultures or their people. They tend to stay within their social circles. Nevertheless, those who traveled outside the United States were more critical of their own cultures and more open to different cultures from around the world.

Americans who had overseas experience were asking Pam about her experience and whether she had friends or felt alone. Such an American student that she met in one of the courses even e-mailed Pam with her sincere considerations about her own days in a different country and suggested her to be friends. She was the only local to approach Pam in a way that she would normally expect in the Turkish setting. While Pam found people not rude by not initiating a friendship with her as an international, she definitely felt a wall between the locals and herself since the relationships could not go beyond small talks with the locals causing her to choose separation strategy in her interaction with locals.

In her interaction with the other group, when people asked where she was from, she faced situations where people just said "cool" and showed no signs of curiosity or question marks about the language or culture in their mind. Pam accepted that the US was so large, but some locals were assuming the world was made of America and the rest did not mean anything to them. They were not interested in what was going on outside the US or other countries.

On the other hand, being the sole representative of Turkish culture was an acculturative stressor for Pam. In a presentation about Turkish culture to ten elderly locals with great academic backgrounds, Pam wanted to test their general knowledge of Turkey and Turkish culture and designed a game with two truths and a lie. For the lies, she purposefully included stereotypical or incorrect information about Turkey that was easily found outside of Turkey, such as that Turkey was made up of deserts. Pam also provided an introduction, such as its place on the map, followed by the other basics. Pam also wanted to renew the old Turkish concept in their minds and introduced the

Turkish Republic as a young country after the Ottoman Empire. She also introduced the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as a respected leader by the whole world.

> Yes, Turkey is 90 percent Muslim, but I attempted to separate it from Arabic culture... Because you know, we really don't have any relevance. I mean that outside of religion, which is also quite different in practice, the cultures are very different. I always say that Turkey is a diverse country, like the US, and it is difficult to describe it in one way.

When people asked Pam about Turkey, she gave the diversity of the US. Starting from her hometown, as one of the largest cities in Turkey, she described it as a place where people with diverse ethnic roots lived together. She was also giving the Turkish FLTAs as an example, since all of them had different values, physical features, family background, and ideologies. Especially for the academic circle, she gave the former years' FLTA and herself as a glimpse of the diversity of Turkey, since the former FLTA was wearing a headscarf and had a different world view than Pam, while both could still truly portray their country and its culture in their own subjective ways in the US.

Through her communication with the locals, she wanted to learn about the homelessness issue in the US. It was an acculturative stressor in Pam's travels since it caused security worries. In one of the instances, she was crossing a street when the man who was coming towards her started to yell at her. Pam was terrified. Nevertheless, Pam felt bad about the inequality and asked local friends for an explanation. One said if people were bothered by the homelessness issue, they would have taken action, "but everyone is okay with it". Then, Pam thought that homelessness might be a choice since it was easy to find unqualified work in the US. "I don't say all homeless people are bad, but the ones on drugs on the streets make me feel unsafe. Especially when they want to talk to you or ask some questions."

Other than that, there were many differences that drew Pam's attention in social life. For example, drivers or pedestrians do not breach traffic rules and strictly obey the regulations, whereas in Turkey, crossing a street might be a cause of stress even with the presence of zebra crossings. Another aspect was the limited public smoking. At Pam's host institution, smoking was not allowed in the campus territories. Moreover,

the number of smokers was low across the US. However, in her hometown, everyone was a passive smoker due to the high number of smokers in her home city.

Another aspect that she observed in American culture was valuing time. They were punctual and any violation of time might cause a problem, whereas in her home country, being late is sometimes even regarded positively, even in educational contexts. Pam showed assimilation, although it took her some time to abandon her Turkish time perception and adopt the punctual US one.

On the other hand, while she had no initial assumption of having difficulties with her diet in the US, it became an acculturative stressor. Although the options were unlimited, American cuisine did not appeal to Pam. Her dietary requirements were for fresh or stewed vegetables; however, deep-fried or meat-based food was widely available. There was always a problem with the taste of whatever she ate as being too spicy, sweet, salty, or greasy. It happened a lot for her, getting a sip of the soup or drink and leaving it unfinished. In general, she had to choose integration to survive while wanting to utilize separation in fact. For instance, when she learned a soup called "cheeseburger chowder" was the Americans' favorite on the campus, although she wanted to be "adventurous" breaking her prejudices and giving it a try, she looked at it again and walked away. "No, I can't. The US cuisine is over for me."

> That was shocking for me... the bottom of culture shock. The cheeseburger chowder... since I don't know it at all. I thought it must be named so to make it look funny or something... But whatever I could find in a cheeseburger menu was in this soup. They basically ran everything on the menu through a blender and made it liquid.

4.4.2. Personal Aftermaths

The acculturative stressors for Pam's sojourn could be given as *lack of experience, freedom, religiousness, weather, measurements, geography,* and *US purchasing power.* The acculturation strategies that she implemented were mainly *assimilation* as well as *separation* and *marginalization,* to a limited extent. The topics where Pam was skeptical about her home were *controlling parents, being an independent individual, personal boundaries, young people's lives, religion, socioeconomic gap, prestige products consumption,* and *the economy.*

In her first few days, Pam was hesitant because she had never been abroad before. She could easily see its comfort in other people with experience abroad. Pam's experience was different than her peers who normally traveled or had come to the US before. It was a much bigger experience for Pam.

Before having her own tiny space in the dorm room, Pam stayed with her family since she was born. While being together for years and even using the same bus for high school and university for eight years, as an acculturative stressor, Pam was separated from her family for the first time in her life. Her connection with her family dropped from every day to once every couple of days. While in Turkey, she was informing her parents if she met with her friends and received many messages from her mom about whom she met or when she came home. However, in the US, although she knew her parents stressed about it, Pam had no questions from them about her actions, which was surprising and pleasing for Pam. Besides, she was free of her familial duties such as being involved in cooking or cleaning as well as the plans of the family compromising her own plans, which were highly demanding due to her being a working person.

Despite having an open-minded and non-oppressive religious parent, Pam realized the borders in her family life were sometimes overwhelming because there were rules of life under the same roof with parents. Since she stayed in the safe circle for more than twenty years, she barely had an idea of herself. Therefore, Pam was satisfied by her sojourn experience in the US as a young individual being on her own and out of her comfort zone. She went from assimilation to integration after having individualist tendencies in Turkey and a collectivist mindset in the US.

> This was the biggest turnout from my sojourn that I had a chance to get to know myself better and see my limits. I thought of myself as an independent person, though I did not possess much proof. I proved to myself that I could literally love being on my own and I loved making decisions by myself. And I testify that I actually can.

Pam wanted to continue it in Turkey, but she had hesitations about the feasibility of it in the Turkish context. She felt freer in the US but turning back to her rather limited life distressed her. To maintain her independence, she needed to move out of her parents' place; however, minding the recent economic crisis and Turkish family bonds,

it seemed impossible without a valid excuse for her to live by herself while her parents had a house in the same city, which created an inner unrest for Pam.

Pam's acculturation stressor as meeting with a person with specific ideologies affected her experience and she had to set certain boundaries for her interaction with the person. Pam, although not being a bad person, saw him as a symbol of patriarchy who was neglecting the powerful and self-sufficient woman's image and was even disturbed by it. Pam was raised in her rather conservative family, but her ideas were always cared for and included in decisions regarding the family from a young age, regardless of her age or gender. As being such a young woman, his breaching of personal boundaries by asking strange questions, being insistent attitude towards a friendship, and advocating traditional gender roles disturbed Pam to a great extent by alleviating her prejudices towards a specific group of people whom she already discontented with in her home country. The person was unforgettable, with his words and actions affecting her experience more than her close friends did. She literally built a "wall" between them, minimizing her interaction with them.

> My self-expression and stepping forward challenged his masculinity and the point of view that 'I am a man; I know the best'. I think he was blindfolded. He talks about his travels to many countries and cultures. It does not mean anything unless you question your point of view. What have you learned at the end of the day? That matters.

In addition to this, the religiousness became an acculturative stressor for Pam since she saw herself quite distant from being the mainstream religion that was Islam in her home country. She had been skeptical since her childhood about the issues regarding morals, values, gender issues, and human rights. There was even a period when she blamed herself for being Islamophobic until she realized she was not alone when she started college. She questioned her actions and religious practices, realizing that she was actually only following instinctively due to being raised in a rather reserved family. "I got rid of the fear of being the misfit piece in the puzzle. The troublesome or broken one... No one around me had such an idea, but I had. I felt relieved to be meeting with people with open minds. I am happy to leave them all behind."

Without being judged by anyone in the US, she felt freedom and contentment since she could easily say she had no religious orientation while in the US. She felt the need

to hide her actual feelings and ideas and tried to be within the safe boundaries so as not to make her parents feel sad when she returned. Within the family or the larger units of society, people had a right to interfere in people's lives as a norm. She preferred to marginalize during her stay in the US but was thinking that she would most probably continue to imitate being a religious person in her host country. Young people such as Pam sometimes had to develop, protect, and hide their own characters in the shadow of their parents' or society's presence in their lives in Turkey, which was one of the core issues that she questioned and criticized about her own country.

However, in the US, she realized that her feelings or reactions were not solely about Islam since she was frustrated by the Christian community's insistent attitudes. Finally, all her experience in Turkish and US social life made her realize that what she hated the most was not the religions or religious people but the people who did not have open minds, regardless of their religious or political views, trying to impose their rights or wrongs over other people's lives.

Furthermore, she reacted as she did in Turkey by trying to reach a point to make them confess that all efforts for interaction had an additional religious benefit. In such a case, Pam met a local woman with a baby in an event. She let Pam and others hold the baby and invited them over to her house. Pam said that they had just met and talked about how she invited strangers since she had a little baby. Since her reply started as "*We accept everyone...*", Pam understood the religious connection and stayed away by refusing to share her number at the end of their chat, even though being judged by other international friends.

Additionally, when Pam asked what else they did, to reveal religious activities in a student club's advantages and aids for international students on campus. Since they were making Bible readings as a club, which was not compulsory but advised, she said that she was quite interested in the aids for international students and had no interest in the religious activities straightforwardly. Her friend found her reaction funny, but she had no intention of joking.

Since she saw the host country's way of extreme and the Turkish one of distance, by being marginalized, she adopted a more universal approach for both religions, as long as they are away from enforcement and interference in individuals' own lives. She

agreed that "meditation is the same as praying namaz" (the daily prayer of Muslims), and she realized that people who practice religious practices do so for cultural rather than religious reasons. Religion was something cultural or habitual other than being with the sole aim of worship, especially for her own country.

Apart from those issues, there were minor acculturative stressors, such as the long winter, which took her a couple of months to adapt to. The cold weather stretched until her departure. She experienced Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), which affected her mood negatively and created health problems during the most intense time of the winter around February. Besides, Pam was unhappy about it because she missed the warm weather, which would have allowed her to discover the city. When Pam was given the option to continue her position at the host institution for the summer term, she planned to rent a bike and enjoy the summer in her city. While having a long winter could give her a chance to learn the weather temperatures in Fahrenheit, she "did not care" and checked the internet for the Celsius equivalent by showing separation for all customary units.

Changing geography was another acculturative stressor for Pam. Having come from one of the largest cities in her home country, Pam started to live on the campus in a small town shaped around the university. She adopted assimilation to her changing living environment. There were no skyscrapers or city life. Instead, there were more green areas and easy living that made Pam comfortable and enjoy life. When she had the chance to stay in large cities for a week, she could not tolerate it and got bored of the crowd and the chaos. “It is flat. There's no slope here. But to get to my home in Turkey, I go up a steep hill quite like this. How could I walk there if there were no buses? It feels like a dystopia to me right now. The world is flat right now. Here, it seems like an endless.”

She faced the acculturative stressor "purchasing power" which she defined as "a traumatic moment" to see the customer profile in a well-known technology brand store when she went to buy herself a new phone with her savings from her couple of years of work. The customers seemed to be middle-to-lower socioeconomic families buying some devices in the store. Pam immediately thought of the image of the same store in Turkey and recalled high-socioeconomic people or middle-class families by getting

into a huge debt and paying the instalments. There was a shopping mall that was within walking distance of Pam's place in Turkey, and she had not stepped in, or she could not imagine visiting, which was quite accessible in the US. Hence, it caused her to question the prestige of products and the perception of people across countries.

Within the first months of Pam's sojourn, the Turkish lira lost its value around three times against US dollars. Her economic acculturative stressors increased while it seemed unrealistic and far away to her, although she heard about the effects of it on other people's lives.

> People say, *We can't buy this and that anymore,* or *there is really no traffic since people cannot go out on the weekend.* I can't believe it. I know when I arrive, this reality will hit me again, but right now, I just can't perceive it. It seems unreal to me why things have changed and deteriorated so fast. I don't know.

Pam decided to postpone her home country-related worries by "choosing not to think about" through the middle of her sojourn and focused on ways to use her time wisely in the US. She even created a bucket list so as not to waste time worrying about life by keeping her mind busy with futile thoughts. At the end, she postponed her worries with the extension of her grant period. It was a relief from stress since Pam had started to look for flight tickets and was distressed.

> I try to stay in the moment. Try to enjoy the moment because it will not come back. I am very aware of it, especially through the end. I see clearly now that I am in a period of my life that I will never forget. So, I consciously try not to stick to thoughts, which I am normally used to.

Academic Aftermaths

Self-awareness, self-confidence, special days, future career, being a native speaker, language exposure, and *special days* were observed as acculturative stressors in Pam's sojourn in the US. She implemented *assimilation* strategies in general. *The hierarchy, respect for seniors,* and *intensity of K-12 teaching* became the aspects that she questioned regarding her home country.

Pam could not go abroad as a graduate of English Language Teaching due to monetary and family issues, which made her felt discomfort. Moreover, she had started working at around 16 and had been working since then in various sectors. Therefore, she

decided to have a gap year after her graduation to have a rest and save money for her future journeys abroad. She even returned to a teaching position at her own university's schools. Nevertheless, when she received an irresistible administrative job offer from there, she put her dreams of studying abroad on the shelf. Furthermore, Pam even had a chance to teach part-time in her second year there.

Passing the bridge in one of the largest cities, she stopped the time and went through all of her deeds in the chaos of the underground train "*What kind of life do I live? What am I doing? I am doing something right now, but I do not even realize what I was doing."* Therefore, she decided to take her chance with the FLTA scholarship. Pam always believed that if she did not dream, she would not be disappointed. Her cautious habit of not being hopeful about anything in life, after experiencing many disappointments, held her joy until she landed in the US. She even told people that her acceptance to the program was not finalized till the last day.

Having started working after college, she was dedicated to her job as a workaholic, and the rush made her experience high levels of anxiety. Nonetheless, the slow pace of the US taught her it was not a healthy trait since it also caused physical and mental breakdowns. "Right now, work is never a top priority." Trying to perfect everything was not working. Therefore, Pam adopted assimilation strategy for her toxic workaholism and learned to prioritize her wellbeing.

Showing assimilation strategy, Pam was able to attain the American norms of self-confidence as she had a chance to observe herself in the US. In the past, people always commented on her potential and exceptional abilities. However, she kept being humble and could not even imagine herself being better than her experienced colleagues due to the respect she felt towards them, which was parallel to Turkish culture. During her journey, she recognized her own strengths when there was a need for action to be taken but no one took the initiative. In Turkey, unconditional respect for seniors was making young people refrain from realizing their own potential.

> I was a person who did not mention her own work. Now, it has changed a lot. This is probably thanks to my increased self-awareness. I see myself in a different position now. I won't have any moral obligation to people in the workplace, such as "don't mention it" when I return.

Her career worries were creating an acculturative stressor for her with a negative impact on her experience. However, her worries about her return to an uncertain situation in Turkey were mitigated since she had a job offer from her American manager back in Turkey. Pam was the most hardworking and overachieving employee in her school. Besides, K-12 teaching was not a career that she would like to pursue. She was working with adult learners in the US when she realized that she was not getting along with the children as their teacher.

Pam's academic acculturative stressors included teaching Turkish as a native speaker as a native speaker. When Pam learned that she was going to be the primary instructor and she would not have a Turkish-speaking supervisor, she was stunned as a teacher with no experience of teaching Turkish, along with the huge responsibilities of a curriculum. Her worries left its place to confidence in time as she gradually found her teaching style and had no problems. Moreover, Pam enjoyed teaching Turkish and thought her worries were in vain.

On the other hand, upon her arrival, she had the acculturative stressor of being in an English-speaking environment. Although being a teacher, it frustrated her that everyone would talk to her in English and everything would be in a foreign language, which she had never experienced living in such an environment before. However, her worries ended when she felt comfortable with English and did not have any trouble.

Along with the teaching role, she also had the cultural ambassador role at her host institution. She attended cultural events with the international center in a traditional costume that she brought from Turkey, along with a Turkish table that she designed with a couple of artefacts she brought with her about her home culture. She was glad to have a chance to wear the costume since she brought it with her from overseas. She also brought the Turkish flag and traditional hand-knitted socks and headscarves to give people as gifts.

In the meantime, there were also special days to exchange culture. However, she saw the easter egg painting activity as not meaningful and thought it could be fun for other people, but she did not even keep the egg with her at the end of the activity. She did not have any active contribution to Ramadan either, by showing marginalization on special religious days.

Lastly, Pam knew that a Fulbright scholarship meant a lot in academic circles. Furthermore, she realized that coming from a distant culture was regarded as an exotic fruit that they wondered about by the locals, who love diversity regardless of the reason for being in the US. Similarly, from her country's perspective, the scholarship had no extra advantage for her in public life other than the academic circles that could open new paths for Pam.

4.4.3. Discussion

During her US experience, Pam primarily used *assimilation* and *separation* strategies according to her priorities and started to feel close at that time. Besides, she tended to use *marginalization* for religious-related subjects as a person raised in a conservative environment while feeling out of it for a long time.

When the social and personal considerations were discussed, Pam's acculturation strategies were mainly *assimilation* and *separation, with* sporadically *integration* strategies for socialization and independence, and there were also instances she chose *marginalization* on topics related to religiousness as in Kagitcibasi (1978) that the sojourns attitude towards religion was affected through the contact of cultures. While she felt more individualistic within her conservative circle in her home country, she reevaluated herself after being in an actual individualistic culture and acquired her genuine orientation, which was quite collectivist. Although individuals widen their worldviews through their overseas experiences as in Akli (2013), they also tend to seek for their mainstream culture's presence which they felt comfortable with confirming Mocan-Aydin (2000). Furthermore, she had serious issues with an individual due to their interaction and contradictory views on gender and religion. Pam emphasized that Turkish society limits its young by being too supportive, making them lack the survival skills through adulthood as well as not letting them be individuals but elements of the community in accordance with Hofstede et al. (2010)'s individualism versus collectivism cultural value dimensions. However, youth had strategies to pursue their life under the supervision of parents as in Kagitcibasi (1978) and society by hiding their inclinations from them.

In addition, US cuisine was not parallel to her expectations which is in line with the studies of Guvendir (2016) as well as İlhan and Oruc (2020) that Turkish individuals

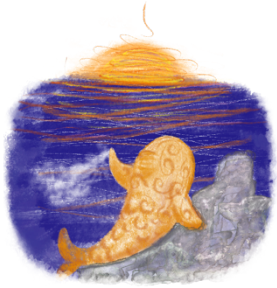
had difficulty with their dietary habits in the US. Therefore, forced Pam to choose *integration* while she was inclined towards *separation*, which might be parallel to what Yagmur and van de Vijver (2011) argues that although Turkish people had the tendency to protect their values, they can use assimilation or integration for the specific circumstances in their host country.

She utilized assimilation to a great extent in her academic journey in the US. Pam became aware of her potential and gained self-confidence confirming Demir et al. (2000), Kirkgoz (2017), and Andawi et al. (2019)'s studies on the development of the Fulbrighters' self-awareness thanks to their sojourn experiences. She also had a chance to observe her tendency to be humble while she was with seniors or with successful colleagues, which she overcame during her sojourn.

The acculturative stressors were on the following aspects of Pam's sojourn experience in the US; *socializing, small talk, individualism, independence, representing home culture, being punctual, diet, lack of experience, freedom, religiousness, weather, measurements, geography, US purchasing power, self-awareness, self-confidence, special days, future career, being a native speaker, language exposure,* and *special days.*

These were Pam's points that she reconsidered about her own country; *upbringing, supporting young people, breaching traffic rules, passive smokers, controlling parents, being an independent individual, personal boundaries, young people's lives, religion, socioeconomic gap, prestige products, the economy, the hierarchy, respect for seniors,* and *intensity of K-12 teaching.*

4.5. Maria's Story



Enlightening is up to the individuals
Should travel if possible and be a little venturesome
Should not stay in their boxes

4.5.1. Social Aftermaths

Maria's acculturative stressors were *expectations from strangers, problematic roommate, family bonds, homelessness and poverty, forced positivity, compliments, small talk, directness, loneliness, friendship, socializing,* and *transport*. She mainly chose *separation* and, to some extent, *integration,* and *assimilation* strategies, when felt enforced to blend into the norms of the host society. *Conservativeness, good looking and attire,* and *women's visibility in various professions* were the areas she thought should be re-examined regarding her home country and culture.

Her first memory of the US was an indicator of what awaited her there. She experienced acculturative stress due to her expectations of strangers. Maria's first connected flight in the US was hours later; therefore, she found a seat by the gate to wait with the other passengers on the plane and started waiting. When she accidentally fell asleep and woke up, she was all alone in the gate. It was due to the fact that she expected people to behave like in Turkey, where if a person went to a place, they would interact with others and feel responsible, although they had no communication. Maria's tendency to care for others was in separation.

> While I was looking at other passengers and thinking they would fly with me, I fell asleep and missed the flight. No one woke me up. How can it be even possible not to wake up a person? While I was waiting there in front of the gate with my eyes closed, one could have nudged me. You know, if it happened in Turkey. At least the doorkeeper, or something, could have nudged. So, no one did so. I have got a bag in my hand, waiting. Isn't it obvious?

Maria was sharing a flat with two other internationals initially, which caused her to experience an unforeseeable acculturative stressor due to one of her roommates. Her substance abuse resulted in behavioral changes in their common living space. Maria spent over three months with this distressing issue while her roommate was finally hospitalized at last after three unsuccessful tries. Maria was directly involved in the case by handling the order in the house and letting the landowners know about the issue since she was sharing the same house with the individual. She even took the initiative to help the mother and her little kids. The woman was crying, unsure about what to do and afraid of a backlash from her daughter. For a couple of days, she miserably tried to clean up her daughter's room, which was piled high with clothes and trash. Maria chatted with her kids for two to three hours, feeling empathy and thinking the woman needed help. "I took care of them while she was upstairs, since the woman was in a terrible condition." Maria, utilizing her home country's ways of interaction with people in need by showing separation, even advised the mother to get psychological support too.

Maria had utilized separation strategies for family bonds and friendship behavior. She had a chance to scrutinize the family bonds in the US, which were not collectivist as in Turkey. Here, young people were forced to be independent individuals by society. They are expected to educate themselves and meet their own living expenses at a certain age, which is challenging for the Turkish culture's norms. If they were not successful at being independent and they suffered from monetary issues, as the system in the US was "merciless" when they got into debt, it became a matter of time for them to end up on the streets as homeless people. Unlike in Turkey, instalments or delaying the debts were not given to the people, and they lost what they had in a short time if they could not manage, especially in large cities.

Besides, Maria tended to utilize separation on the homelessness and poverty issues by strongly maintaining her Turkish traditions of sharing and caring for others while rejecting the mainstream attitude, which was ignoring the existence of those people. People were ignorant and used to homelessness, which was out of the question for her. She also believed that it was interesting to witness homelessness as a problem without an absolute solution while the US had a strong economy. In Turkish culture, it was impossible for those people to be there since the government and many other

organizations were ready to help. Maria's encounter with a homeless man created an unforgettable moment for her in a fast-food restaurant. There was a person outside with a sign in his hand: "I am hungry. I just want to eat. How could I eat seeing the man's miserable condition?" Maria wondered. After she was able to get a couple of bites, she cut half of her burger and spared the fries to give him. When Maria saw the man "digging into the fries", she was surprised at how people could eat by ignoring him. "No one gives anything. But he already does not want money, he wants food."

As Maria observed the people, their friendship bonds seemed "unbelievably" superficial as being quite different than in Turkey because of the individualist nature of US culture. While in Turkey, the issues that one could not handle were shared with close friends, and after that, if there was no solution, people tended to share their personal worries with their families. By receiving comments from the close circles, Turkish people were apt to find their own comping mechanism with the social support. However, in the US, people live through everything by themselves, which might be a linkage to the alarming rate of psychological disorders, especially in the US youth.

Due to those tendencies, being positive at all times created an acculturative stressor for Maria since she had never needed to filter her sentences while living in Turkey when interacting with people. She had to utilize assimilation strategy in her interactions with other people and had to abandon the Turkish way. Interestingly, she was even warned by her supervisor not to tell any negative fortunes about their future while doing a traditional fortune-telling activity on the coffee grounds.

> My student told me that she should be careful about any negative comments since people have serious mental problems, even if they might seem fine from the outside... After what I have experienced recently [the issues with her roommate], I would never intervene with anyone or say anything on their life.

On the one hand, Maria was comfortable with being positive towards other people and tried to use integration strategy in daily interactions in an effort to make compliments like a local, while she continued to be selective about what to compliment according to her likes. On the other hand, since she got used to thanking the drivers in the US public transportation, as a variety of the tradition of wishing ease *Kolay gelsin* to anyone busy with something in Turkey. However, she assumed she might not be able to completely continue doing it in the Turkish setting since the drivers generally had

their own area, which was generally isolated from the passengers. However, she intended to try it on the rather small buses in Turkey as a continuation of her integration.

Adversely, another common US social behavior known as small talk also caused an acculturative stressor for Maria as a person trying to understand the different behavior patterns in the US. Since she did not know how to appropriately respond to a question such as "How are you?", she initially responded by talking about her day, assuming that was what they wanted to hear as a reply. "Locals say hi just to say hi as a routine, not because they want to greet you." Even when they replied, *not okay*, Maria saw that they were shocked since they did not expect to get an answer since they really did not want to listen and were not interested. When she explained why she was unhappy, they regarded it as oversharing since it was personal, which caused Maria to show separation for small talk since she could not internalize the idea of saying something to other people as a part of a daily routine without expecting an answer in return.

Since this was the case, Maria had the need to maintain her Turkish instincts to have an actual dialog at least with her immediate circle, continuing to apply the separation strategy for politeness. She made it clear that their cultures were different by explaining herself to her American roommate that if there was a question, Turks would give or expect an answer in return. "*If you ask something, I take it seriously. So, do not say something just to be nice."* Besides, when Maria asked about her and her friend was not feeling well but said *I'm fine*, she was insisting and telling her to "*just say I'm not fine and tell me whatever happened, and you will relax by sharing."*

However, this was not enough when she needed support from a friend. Therefore, she had to manage her acculturation stressor for friendship. From time to time during her sojourn, as a talkative person, she felt the need to open up to a friend since it was not welcome to share personal issues with other people in the US. Hence, she inclined towards separation by seeking a co-national to just tell her what she lived and make a critique of the issue with her co-national friend. Maria explained the reason behind those intimate information exchanges as there was no expectation of a comment or advice, but she just needed to receive questions to re-evaluate her experience without judgements. Besides, having a Turkish community in the host city made her feel

happy. "In the US, you want to talk to Turkish people from time to time." They did not continue meeting with the Turkish community and her need to be around the co-nationals diminished with time. She intentionally spared her last months to spend time with her local friends. Therefore, her tendencies towards integration to assimilation for interacting with people through the end of her sojourn are based on her needs.

The locals she met made Maria think that the Americans could be warm-hearted like the Turkish people and show hospitality in their ways. To get the most out of her experience, she made an effort to get to know locals, and she received an invitation to an American friend's family house for Thanksgiving. While they were distant at the beginning, realizing the sincerity and joy of their Turkish guests, they enjoyed their company by spending around six hours together. They learned a lot about Turkey and the Turkish people and gained perspective with Maria and her friend's presence on their special day.

There were instances when Maria realized that US people did not acknowledge Turkish people. As a humanistic person who believed "every human needed to be equally regarded as human", for the first time in her life, Maria experienced "hate" from a specific group of people. Such people, who had equivalences in Turkey as well, had a stable mindset and a fierce attitude towards "the others" as being racist, extremely conservative, and non-progressive. Maria's observation was that those people found no point in traveling since they had their own reasons, such as that "there was nothing to see" and no point of learning about other cultures. Having the largely used world language English taken for granted, they did not require to be challenged by the other languages and cultures hold them from travelling even in their own states. "Because they have everything, they see themselves as incredibly superior, and we are nothing to them. We are "trash". Well, they did not treat me like that, but I have seen them treat others like that, or you understand from their conversations."

In such an instance, Maria was on her return from a trip when a rather young man who was wearing a T-shirt with a nationalist slogan on it sat next to her. Since he seemed to be in a bad mood, with all her pure intentions, Maria initiated a small talk to see if she could help him. When he asked her country and she replied as Turkey, his second question was, "Are you trying to stay here?" Maria was shocked by the question as an

owner of a very prestigious grant. She told him that she had no intention of staying but was here for professional development and that she was funded to be there by Fulbright. He had no comment on her answer. When they continued their small chat, he started to give her life advice. "I did not pay much attention to what he said after that. He advised me to watch a couple of movies that would change my life and so on." Their behavior, the ideologic symbols that they wear, or patronizing comments gave them in as for Maria's observation.

This made Maria reconsider her image of her liberal host city. Though people who lived around the university seemed quite progressive, to her attention as an insider, her liberal city might not be so liberal if there were not a university in it. "Outside of the university, you see the narrow-minded, racist, and non-progressive face of the US in rather small towns." Maria's other assumption was that since her city had almost all white people, it might be easier for them to be acquired as a non-racist city. "There is not much that stimulates them. Maybe they don't show their faces."

Nevertheless, it helped her reflect upon her own country and on people with similar profiles. It was a different way of being non-progressive when compared to Turkey, where she had looks when she was in conservative districts with her short summer clothes. Maria was first shocked in Europe when she realized that people did not stare at people. This was also valid for being good-looking and fancy, about which no one cared, unlike in Turkey. In the US, however, Maria also got very comfortable when she realized that she could wear any clothes that she liked or did not have to be good looking all the time and the other people did not stare at her as if it was inappropriate. "They do not care what you wear."

Although clothing was not a problem across the US, walking outside after dark was not common in her host US city. "The problem of walking home in the evenings in the dark that we experience all over the world, especially as a woman, existed here as well." She even felt unsafe while traveling by bus in the dark and tried to use the university's transportation services around the campus when needed.

Interestingly, Maria experienced the sound of shooting from time to time as an acculturative stressor. It was unsettling for her in her initial term since she also received warning emails from her host institution about a shooter seen on the campus.

Yet, she was a bit accustomed to hearing the sound while she was living in her parents' village before. In time, while people were running around in panic when there was a shooting sound in the city, hearing the police sirens frequently became the norm for Maria, who had an integration strategy, which she confessed was not a thing to normalize but quite common due to the ease of gun ownership in the US.

Poor transportation was an acculturative stressor for sojourners, while it did not seem like a problem for the locals. Maria always enjoyed biking and showed integration strategy to develop a solution for the problem. Maria could not have imagined the transportation needs and the actual vastness of the US before she actually experienced it. Furthermore, on her vacations, Maria preferred rental cars and felt freer as a driver in the traffic since there were many female drivers. Therefore, she criticized men's attitudes towards female drivers, as men tend to honk and are less careful about the rules in her home country. Furthermore, women were more visible in the workplace in the United States than in Turkey. Although not being completely equal, women were in many professions, such as truck drivers, almost all bus drivers, and Uber drivers, which were unlike in her home country.

Another acculturative stressor related to the systems in the US was the paper-based systems for many segments of life. In banking and official documents, sending them via mail, filling forms with pen, and appointments by phone calls were dated methods that Maria was accustomed to in her home country, where she could either find online or mobile alternatives. For Maria, everything was in slow motion as they kept using the old infrastructure. When she asked the locals, they explained the use of old systems due to the US being a large country, which affects the time and cost of upgrading systems. While it was hard for Maria to resist the system, she had to use assimilation strategy by following the mainstream way for documents.

4.5.2. Personal Aftermaths

Maria experienced acculturative stressors during her sojourn in the US that were related to *the US economy, worries about her home country, weather, individualism, travel, family and friendship support, diet,* and *unit of measurements*. Her frequently used acculturation strategy was *separation* as well as *integration* to a limited extent.

During her experience, she had a chance to examine her own country's *opportunities for educated young people*.

Maria believed that the famous saying "geography is fate" was valid for one's city or country. Coming from a middle-class family, she earned her place in society after years of studying without living her life as a young individual. She regarded herself as "one of the lucky ones" since she had a supportive family and a small amount of scholarship, unlike many others. She was able to travel and enjoy life after she gained her place and socio-economic level. While it was hard for the majority, it was never a problem for her peers who had "parents' money" and they easily reached the standards that Maria was striving for in her large city. Maria was criticizing Turkey's education system by emphasizing support should be given to improvement of the quality of universities across Turkey to make high-quality education available outside the top-tier institutions.

As a different acculturative stressor, Maria was not comfortable with the prices in the US as a sojourn when she compared them with Turkey's. She was thinking about how the prices would be difficult for her to re-adjust since she would not have a job and a salary. "The grocery store prices will be like a slap in my face, for sure." Not being able to buy a car or a house in her home country, but seeing it was quite possible in the US, she found herself in a constant comparison of the wealth of these two countries, affecting her sojourn experience, future worries, and opinions about life.

> You compare because you have to. I mean, you do not live here. You are living in Turkey. Turkey's situation psychologically affects you. For example, my American roommates told me that they had been using their own car for 3–4 years. The girls were only 21 years old. How come that they saved money and bought a car at the age of 17? Well, because it is affordable here, almost all young people here at around 16 receive their first car as a gift from their parents.

With an effort to abandon her home country-related worries, which caused her acculturative stress, she prioritized spending her time in the US by trying her best to experience the things that she could not do or see in Turkey. Therefore, she planned her spare time wisely to attend activities such as bird conservatory visits, various outdoor activities and sports, hiking, and mountain climbing. In addition, she tried new or local products in the grocery stores and went to meet new people to accumulate

memories and gain experience. With an effort to try not to focus on her worries about the return and future, Maria tried to make her time there worthwhile "to the last drop."

> I planned my stay in the US as a period for my mental and physical health and to get to know new things and relax. I will never be able to live this life again. I got up at half past six in the morning and went home at 9 or something like that for around five years, and I ate dinner and went to bed. I tried to think of this as a pay back.

The weather as an acculturative stressor affected Maria's sojourn since the gray weather made her feel depressed and she did not even want to get out of her bed at times. She tried her best effort to not wait for the sunny, warm weather that made her feel energized and fine to explore life in the US.

Since she was open to new experiences, she broadened her perspective of herself by acknowledging her limits, strengths, and weaknesses. Maria defined herself as an independent person and started to find herself around seven years ago when she started to travel, which was the most enlightening experience in Maria's life. Meeting new cultures and world views allowed her to gain awareness. However, this was mainly related to the person as long as they wanted to interact and ask questions beyond small talk, which made them learn from the experiences of others as well. By doing so, Maria showed integration strategy in her interaction tendencies.

To her surprise, while she was a person who loved to live in different places and experience new cultures, Maria felt not suited to the individualist US culture, which she found quite distinct. In addition to the individualistic nature, its problems, health system, and gun ownership made the US seemed as if not a first world country, but a fifth world country to Maria.

> Well, I can't live here. I was thinking to myself that wherever I went, I could live. It wasn't like that. I also had things that I couldn't do... at least that's why I started to think I couldn't. I was not able to do some things, either. This experience made me say that.

On the other hand, her US travels made her compare the vastness of the US to Turkey since traveling in the same state was like a trip across Turkey. Having travelled in the US, Maria felt that the distances in Turkey were not that long when compared to the distances in the US. While she had been feeling exhausted after an hour-long trip, she was still energetic in the US even after two-hour long trips and ten thousand steps a

day without thinking about the return as well. Maria was following the assimilation strategy in her travel habits in the US. In addition to the long distances and the vastness of the US, especially the greatness of the trees in natural parks, made her realize her norms and standards in life. Consequently, her perception of size changed. "When I saw those waterfalls in the national parks or when I went to Yosemite national park, I said, *are we alive?* We are this much. We're so small and they were so big."

She also developed her ideas about her home country. "All the things I have shared and talked about so far were not the things I could have learned if I had stayed in Turkey. I learned them all by living in the US." While she was normally interested in traveling abroad, she also developed a desire to explore her own country. Besides, since she had never seen such colorful birds in her previous travels, she started to learn about them by enjoying their presence. When she started to follow "Bird Detective", who shows the diversity of birds across Turkey and gives information about their habitats, he fascinated Maria to learn about such a variety, which she had never imagined seeing in Turkey. Consequently, with her host country's lead, she became interested in her home country's nature and had an instinct to discover, like she did in the US. "In fact, what a rich and beautiful country Turkey is."

She had an interest in her home country, but she also thought about her family. She also realized that she needed her family's presence in dire situations, such as her infection with COVID-19. Although it was decreased with her recovery, loneliness was present as an acculturative stressor for Maria. She was afraid to be alone when she was infected with COVID-19, a deadly novel virus, because she did not know what would happen to her body. Being alone in a faraway country made her feel the acculturative stressor of loneliness for the first time since her mind was always with her parents, as she was unsure about what could happen to them if something severe happened to her, which made her even burst into tears. Luckily, she was cared for with great attention by her host institutions as well as federal and state officials. She was phoned and asked if she needed any help for accommodation and food. Although missing out was not a major acculturative stressor for Maria, she only missed her family and friends, as well as her partner. She, on the other hand, had a longing, in the first term, for the sophisticated culture and the chaotic atmosphere of the Turkish metropole where she had lived for the last nine years.

Additionally, she enjoyed trying the variety of cuisines available across the US and on her vacations. Furthermore, she also did not prefer to visit Turkish restaurants as she could easily find the food in Turkey. She also found it strange to go to a Turkish restaurant in the US. Therefore, Maria's attitude was toward integration rather than assimilation after spending time in the US. Although she did not miss her home country's food, there were times she could cook some of her comfort food as well as some traditional dishes for cultural events. While preparing food or doing errands, Maria followed mainly separation and integration for different customary units in the US according to her daily exposure. She got help from tools to make daily calculations from customary to metric units, some of which, such as miles, she was also able to acquire thanks to her hiking and trips.

4.5.3. Academic Aftermaths

The academic acculturative stressors were *teaching adult learners, being a native speaker, teaching methodologies, representing home culture, special days, limited budget,* and *unemployment* for Maria whilst she tended to use *integration* strategies. On the other hand, *tight curriculums, welfare, poor life standards, the economy, unrewarded handwork,* and misleading *reputation* were the areas that she questioned about Turkey and its culture.

To be a grantee of a prestigious scholarship, to have lived experience in an English-speaking country, and to challenge herself to be actively involved in a different experience of teaching, Maive applied for the Fulbright FLTA program. After an extremely busy K-12 experience with 20 hours of classes, planning, coordination meetings, parent meetings, and many other duties, working at the college standards seemed quite slow and relaxing for Maria, who chose integration strategies. Contrary to her assumptions, there was no rush in the office and the workload was quite manageable, which she regarded as a dream-like job. "After the chaos, it felt good. I don't think there will be another year like this in my life. Life has slowed down. I can do an extra activity every week without the rush. Having a day off from work and all the load is only on two days."

Initially, as an acculturative stressor, Maria was not comfortable teaching adults because she was not sure about their immediate reaction that she was used to receiving

while teaching young learners. She chose to approach them as her K-12 students and became very successful in implementing her integration strategy. She was shocked when one of her US students wrote her a card about her effective teaching and fun classes and her plans to visit Turkey.

One other stressor for Maria in her acculturation journey was being a native speaker for the first time. There was much she did not know about her own culture and her language, which were not the things that she thought about during her sojourn in the US. When her students asked about them, she was making a couple of explanations and got stuck. After her research, she was sharing with them what she learned on the topic because of the need for confirmation. "There is nothing that a person who knows Turkish history and culture very well. One may be acknowledged, but there might be things one does not know."

Maria implemented the assimilation strategy for her teaching since she could not follow an established curriculum. She enjoyed the self-study programs, with no books, curriculum, examinations, or grades, for her Turkish language classes a lot. Moreover, the student profile was quite ready and motivated. It was a satisfying teaching experience for her since she was free to plan her content truly based on her students' needs. It seemed like a dream to Maria since it was not so possible to implement in Turkey. However, to find her new teaching style, Maria initially used her existing teaching methods when teaching to adults but had worries when she started her classes regarding the differences between adult and young learners' behaviors. She utilized gamification and made it as fun and interesting as possible for her adult learners. Since she had hybrid teaching systems, she had a chance to see her limits and was quite satisfied with her digital literacy as a teacher.

In addition to the Turkish language, Maria made all her efforts to represent her country's culture in the US. She was also teaching culture to her students. To do so, she examined various movies, series, video clips, books, and songs in Turkish, which allowed her to learn new information about the Turkish language and culture. Due to the rather limited time for her language classes, she also implemented flipped learning strategies to balance the learning inside and outside the classes since she wanted to increase her students' exposure to Turkish culture to promote their learning. By

equally giving importance to national special days and utilizing integration strategy, she celebrated Turkish special days and wore her *Zeybek* (a traditional dance of Aegean Turkey) costume she brought with her to the US. She turned her students' enthusiasm for Turkish TV series into a material and held meetings to discuss the depicted cultural issues in those series. In addition, she organized Turkish Tea Days with the occasional attendance of some co-nationals.

While sharing culture, which also includes religion, as well as the national special days. Maria was willing to introduce the Ramadan traditions to her students, although she was not a practitioner. Her attitude was the same way for the host culture's religious holidays since she adopted integration strategy for special days since she also gave importance to national special days of both cultures. With her voluntariness, she also acknowledged the importance of special days in American culture.

Maria was able to meet her need to live in an English-speaking country with her sojourn in the US. While being able to provide the learners with her best knowledge of her own language, she also received valuable input for her English, along with the culture. It especially drew her attention through her departure that she intentionally paid attention to learning a daily expression or a phrase every day. It was difficult for her to do it in Turkey since the dictionaries were not alive like the firsthand experiences in real time.

Her Fulbright scholarship was praised in the academic setting, whereas she thought there would not be many institutions to know her experience like them in Turkey since her expertise in teaching was not academic. However, having a limited budget in the US was an acculturative stressor for her. They felt like qualified "low-cost laborers" in the host institutions. While Maria had positive thoughts about her scholarship, she also agreed with the criticism. She also experienced additional monetary stressors during the tax filing period and believed that the guidance was limited. Her sojourn was negatively affected by losing their stipends due to taxes, experiencing the recent cuts in their budgets, and the cancellation of many conferences.

Maria had career-related concerns that were present during her experience as an acculturative stressor, which was mainly because of her employment conditions and economic uncertainties in her home country. She started job applications to continue

her previous teaching level since it would be rather easy for her to find a teaching role with her expertise.

It created her acculturative stress that, comparing her life in Turkey with the US life standards, Maria could have had an incredibly wealthy life with her background, with her master's degree and five years of experience. She could have bought her own house and car. However, when she looked at her current conditions in her home country, although she was a graduate of the highest-ranked university, had experience in a prominent institution, and had overseas experience, there were still question marks on her mind about her future. She thought about her need to have a roommate as a continuation of student life since she could not afford her rent by herself. "There is a crazy difference between the welfare level" between Turkey and the US that she could achieve. For Maria, if one had an education and was dedicated to their profession, the standards of living would be so high in the US, unlike in Turkey.

On the other hand, she thought that her birth country had changed some things in her life since some scholarships were not giving a chance to Turkish students "due to ongoing situations" in Turkey. Maria was questioning what a hindrance in the way of a scholarship could be.

> What do we have, a war or something? They mean economic imbalances and assume everyone is trying to flee. When I wanted to visit my partner in Europe, I had trouble because I am young and Turkish, although I have money, many visas and travel documented in my passport. Since I am a Turk, they look at me with uncertainty during recruitment as well.

4.5.4. Discussion

Across Maria's acculturation journey, there were many different aspects that she utilized *separation* strategy, being parallel to the literature on Turkish sojourns and immigrants' tendencies towards separation as in Ataca and Berry (2002), Bektaş (2004), and Bektaş et al. (2009)**.** Nevertheless, while Hart (2008) explains the choice of separation with discrimination, she had no direct discrimination; therefore, it could not be shown as a prompt for her separation tendencies across her journey. Having used the separation, the points that she reconsidered about her home country were limited while she inclined to criticize the host countries' culture. Maria used *assimilation* or *integration* strategies when she had no other choice to implement her

home culture's way in the host setting parallel to Yagmur and van de Vijver (2011) on the Turkish immigrants and sojourners' pragmatistic preferences of strategies for a better acculturation experience in the host culture.

For the aspect regarding family and friendship bonds, Maria utilized separation by also experiencing a self-realization of being less individualistic, unlike her assumptions before her sojourn in the US confirming Mocan-Aydin (2000) on the aspect that Turkish individuals might be challenged for their understanding of collectivist behavior in a formally idealized individualist culture. As a member of a feminine social group, Maria had difficult times with homelessness in the US and tried to care for them if she had a chance, unlike mainstream behavior in the individualistic host culture (Hofstede et al., 2010). The economic welfare in the US disturbed Maria instead of making her relax for a while. Similar to Berry et al. (2006) that the high standards made individuals feel less valued when compared to an economically advanced society, Maria compared her life with her US peers and witnessed that she could not have the life standards that she deserved even though she had higher qualifications in her home country. Maria had difficulty being positive and filtering her communication with people since she was strongly advised to be positive by refraining from making any negative commentary on anybody's life. Drawing upon Garza (2015) that the internationals crucial support in the host country, Maria's close contacts were internationals as well as locals with whom she intentionally made efforts to have bonds confirming Bochner (2006) on the friendship pattern of sojourners to benefit from the locals by learning about the host culture and language. However, she had the absence of co-nationals from time to time, which is parallel to the findings of Bektaş et al. (2009) and Erturk and Nguyen Luu (2022) for Turkish sojourners' needs for support from their co-nationals. Overall, she was glad to have shared her journey with people with diverse backgrounds. Maria's academic journey made her adopt integration strategies for teaching related issues and academic life choices. Moreover, Maria was welcomed by the host institution and academic circles, which contributed to her acculturation journey in the US, which was in line with the literature that the approach of the host institution might ease the acculturation stress of the sojourners as in Bektaş et al. (2009) as well as Erturk and Nguyen Luu (2021).

The acculturative stressors for her journey were the issues regarding; *expectations from strangers, roommates, family bonds, homelessness and poverty, positivity, compliments, small talk, directness, friendship needs, socializing, transport, old-fashioned systems, US prices, home country, weather, individualism, travel, loneliness, family, friendship, diet, units of measurement, teaching adults, being a native speaker, teaching methodology, representing home culture, special days, limited budget,* and *unemployment.*

When Maria thought about her own country, she shared her critics on topics such as *conservativeness, good-looking attire, women's visibility in various professions, education system, tight curriculums, welfare, poor living standards, economic conditions, unrewarded hard work,* and *its misleading reputation.*

4.6. Denise's Story



There are things
one cannot deny about their own culture.
They are there
and you are a part of it.

4.6.1. Social Aftermaths

There was *hospitality, offerings, co-nationals, boundaries, publicity of culture, friendship, compliments, small talk, misconceptions about Turkey, getting used to the life, slow pace, transport,* and *diet* as acculturative stressors affecting Denise's sojourn experience. In US social life, she primarily used *assimilation* and *separation*, as well as *integration* to a limited extent. While observing and comparing the cultures, Denise touched upon *boundaries, intervention in people's lives, judgements of society, interacting with strangers, self-care and personal investments, rush,* and *personal space* aspects of Turkey with a critical stance.

Denise came to the United States ten years ago with Work and Travel program. She felt she could be amazed by the differences between the US then and now if she had not watched any TV or movies. Since she was in a different state, she did not know anybody there. Therefore, she tried to reach a former Fulbrighter who was working at the same institution, and she helped her to find the best deal for her neighborhood, which was called "Turkish Neighborhood" due to the high number of Turkish sojourns and immigrants with various backgrounds.

Denise shared an apartment floor with a European FLTA. The apartment building was dominated by Turkish sojourners who went to the US for short-term educational purposes such as scholarships for masters or PhD studies, forming a small Turkish community in the area since the neighborhood accommodated many Turks.

Therefore, she was in a socially active group with her close circle, mainly international and co-nationals. Among all the co-nationals, Denise was enthusiastic about sharing her culture as a newly arrived sojourn. Denise's efforts to show Turkish hospitality turned into an acculturative stressor that challenged Denise while she was trying to preserve her cultural values. They ended up with a pile of dishes after a large feast she hosted with her roommate for their international community. Since Denise instinctively intended to wash all the dishes, she realized that there was a system that they were following. Each guest took ten minutes to help with the dishes, one after another. Denise felt "so ashamed" as the host that she said she could handle it all. However, they persuaded her that their system was the fair one. Denise utilized the separation strategy for her insistence on hospitality.

There was an issue as an acculturative stressor for Denise and other internationals who were not happy when it reoccurred in the following meetings. The Turkish males did not help with the dishes at all. Since it made others wonder whether it is the norm in Turkey that males do not help with the kitchen work, Denise felt distressed and could not know what to say.

Denise showed separation for continuing the hospitality as well as the offerings. She could not understand "how one does not share food" since offering food that was cooked in a communal place was a very common trait in Turkish life. When Denise shared her food with her American roommate, to her surprise, she could not understand

why such a behavior made her American roommate grateful to her so much. "I do not know whether it was something big from them to offer food." Denise also found her American roommates' diet unhealthy since she consumed fast food and frozen meals.

Moreover, she had a series of instances with the Turkish community that made her feel uncomfortable by their behavior as an acculturative stressor. In her observations of the Turkish community, some of them were well adopted and American lifestyles, while some of them were very careful about eating halal and being a bit conservative." Co-nationals tried to build a small Turkish life in the US, which made them less open to the rest of the world around them.

> A couple of Turkish friends are still keeping their routines here... A neighbor regularly drops in, bringing some food or snacks, or inviting us to tea parties... But there were times that I was in online classes. They could write to me beforehand... or I had plans in my head, but they came, and the plans flew away. They are so sweet, we love them, but for the last time, I just sent one back from the door.

She realized that her European roommate's comment on the boundaries between Turkish people, which she could see as non-existent, was bothering as an acculturative stressor for Denise as well. When she had a new roommate, her Turkish neighbors came by as usual to meet with the American roommate, which was "quite strange" for the new roommate. Denise set boundaries with her co-national for the discontinuation of her Turkish habits. "It is not a behavior that everyone can stand. If we do not have the boundaries, they would definitely keep coming uninvitedly." Denise demonstrated assimilation for such randomized visit of neighbors as an intervention to her private life and plans. Such Turkish customs as having close relations with the neighbors or having tea parties were not fully possible to maintain in the US setting where people found them inappropriate.

Another stressor that they caused due to her co-nationals was that the Turkish community seemed to maintain their languages. Even if there was a foreigner in the gathering and they were a part of a large multinational, they would speak Turkish with each other from time to time. There were even times when they wanted to exclude internationals from their meetings so that they could speak in their native tongue. It was surprising to Denise since those co-nationals were highly educated and had rather longer stays in the US. In another case when they danced *halay* (a traditional dance)

at a party. Denise fed up with their behavior asking about what was the point of dancing halay in a party with a totally unrelated theme? Those tries were "like an effort to cover some inferiority… to prove something". It is a good thing to feel a sense of belonging to a place, but there needs to be a balance. Their understanding of cultural exchange was "one-sided". Unlike her co-nationals, Denise was showing integration of her culture and language preferences in the host setting.

> I met very different people and worldviews. Crossing them out as this is right and that is wrong, No! They are just different. I started to understand everything better. I knew about the other cultures, but I had a chance to see them. We interact and talk about our cultures.

The imbalances in friendship were an acculturative stressor during her stay. She had more quality time with internationals. However, she felt as if she was being judged by her co-nationals for not having a conservative lifestyle. "You are invited to the same party as your multinational friends. You are drinking and they are not... well, there was an awkward situation."

Other than her observations of international and co-national communities, Denise had mainly positive communication with locals. In her first days, it was like a dream when compared to Turkey's current situation where everyone was sad, angry, or tired. People were smiling in the coastal area where Denise was living during her sojourn. Denise assumed that people's extreme happiness could be related to the fact that they did not have such problems. Constant compliments and it makes her day. Even though she got used to hearing them in the US, it would be difficult to apply in Turkey. There would definitely be misunderstandings, and they might be regarded as pick-up lines or might create suspicion and discomfort for the receivers. Although Denise showed integration in the US for complimenting other people, her tendency was only valid in the US.

In contrast to compliments, small talk was an acculturative stressor for Denise. Her efforts to initiate small talk were not quite successful. She was puzzled when she could not "gauge the timing" of the utterance and they turned into unfinished and strange dialogs, which made her show separation.

> I told myself, *Denise do not talk that much,* but then an absurd atmosphere occurs. I was merely thanking at first. Or should I say something? or not? Then

> I didn't say anything because, until I answer back, they would have already passed by at the first half of my sentence. I intended to say hi as well, but I did not get an answer. I said to myself, *Never mind*.

On the other hand, in the US, no one was judging anyone as she observed. The tendency in social life for refusals or requests was that people could directly tell without making up excuses or receiving questions. People care about others' and their freedom and rights. In contrast to the indirect Turkish culture, which includes creating excuses and mutual responsibility between people through judgement and control.

Moreover, locals valued themselves since they had expectations from life. They were spending their time for themselves and their families here both financially and mentally. Instead of splitting into many people, to actively invest time in everyone that they know, as the Turkish people were doing by prioritizing others.

Nevertheless, there were some instances that caused her acculturative stress when Denise had to deal with "peculiar questions". Such questions showed their lack of knowledge about the rest of the world, such as mistaking the Turkish language as Arabic. It also shocked her when her close international friends, with whom she talked about languages at all times, asked a similar question. Although such interactions disappointed Denise, she gave importance to the representation of her language as well as the culture without regarding it as superior.

The host city brought many acculturative stressors to it while Denise felt herself as a member of her host city and felt blue since she got used to her life. In particular, she got accustomed to the mentally and physically caring people Having the airy physical space between the houses and the roads. The affordable prices and navigating in the city for her basic needs, availability of the variety of everything especially for the clothing that she could easily find the style one could express themselves better were the issues she felt well-adjusted to the life in the US. She showed mainly assimilation strategies for those aspects of life.

As an energetic person, Denise's another acculturative stressor happened to be the slow pace of life in the city. Since people are very relaxed and extremely slow, it made her feel bored while she was waiting for services such as dining or banking. However, in time, although not turning into a slow person, she extended her limits for slowness

and became more tolerant. She showed integration for the slow pace of life, but she was thinking about turning back to her Turkish way of life in Turkey since there could be people who might cut the lines or be in a rush.

In addition to being patient and relaxed, the people in her neighborhood were respectful and paid attention to personal space. It was hard to keep a physical distance in the large cities of the US. Denise criticized the possible case in any city of her home country:

> But you cannot behave like this in Turkey. If you try to leave a personal space, people will think that you give them a place and they will cut you in. A former friend told me about the chaos in a hospital and the traffic, but she was really amazed at how nobody caused accidents and it just flew like that.

While the city was peaceful and had a higher socioeconomic condition, there were difficulties for sojourners, especially transportation as an acculturative stressor. "If you do not have a car, it's over." Especially for the trips between cities, the bus system was not well established, and it was hard to rely on to plan the trips since they were not on time. However, rental cars were affordable, which they preferred to use on their vacations.

Food was the last of her social life acculturation stressors in the United States. Although they serve huge portions, Denise found the solution by saving half of the portion for the next meal. However, eating out was still expensive for her stipend; therefore, she preferred to cook at home. There was also a "food bank" option that her institution allowed them to use. The online options and the European and Middle Eastern markets made it easy. She felt "I am proud of our cuisine" when she prepared traditional food and snacks from Turkey. People enjoyed them and even asked for recipes. Denise missed drinking soup since the US soup concept was quite different than in her home country, which she did not like. Traditional cheese and bread types were also among the foods Denise had a longing for. Additionally, she tried to compensate for her need for Turkish yoghurt by trying Bulgarian yoghurts to have the similar taste she was searching for. While her overall tendency was towards integration, she showed separation on the traditional food and dishes.

4.6.2. Personal Aftermaths

First Denise faced acculturative stressors related to *recreation, being away, co-nationals' pressure, living with people, cultural differences, home traditions,* and *special days.* In response, she implicated *integration* strategies and *marginalization* specifically for an aspect. In addition to those, she criticized *difficulties for travelling, commenting on people's performance, personal boundaries, intervention to people's life, taking things personally,* and *material and familial aspects of weddings* about her home country and its culture.

Acculturative stressor as budget management was a bit challenging at the beginning since she needed to buy household items. Luckily, there were many options for secondhand goods and many free household items were left in the curbside for other people to take home. Moreover, she found it like in Turkey that one can find a grocery store according to their budget to meet their basic needs. In short time, she managed to find a balance for her spending for living and travels.

She enjoyed travelling before her sojourn, but she had never traveled so frequent in her lifetime, causing her worry that she might not travel much once she returned due to the high travel expenses. This reminded Denise her Hawaiian dreams four years ago. She was watching Hawaiian videos online and she sighed to be there to get herself a new ukulele. She would never imagine ending up in Hawaii and turning her dreams true. It was easy to go abroad in the US, she was utilizing integration by maintaining her instincts freely in her sojourn.

There were many opportunities that she took in the US regarding her interests. She was giving concerts with the ensemble that she randomly joined and be a member of the musicians. Moreover, she continued doing yoga and even initiated an online club with her circle in the US where they meet and do yoga with Denise's guidance. With those instances, she had a chance to see her potential thanks to the honest comments and criticism of her participants, which she could not receive much in Turkey since people were not used to comment on the people's performance into their faces. Therefore, it increased Denise's awareness.

> Of course, I knew the diversity across the world, but I had a chance to have the first-hand experience. I started to understand others better and their worldviews

> even in extreme topics for our culture. I think my tolerance level is also increased a bit. Especially for the slow pace of life.

Her overall experience was worthy, and her mode was at a high level. However, for a couple of times, Denise felt acculturative stress of being away from her loved ones. She stopped for a second and thought that her loved ones are on the other side of the world. Her enlightenment bothered her. She tried to pay attention to this feeling "Anyway, what could happen?"

Since Denise got many messages from her acquaintances who were curious about life in the US, Denise had even thought about making a podcast about it letting her people learn about everything. In addition to their questions, whomever Denise talked with said not to come back though not being feasible. Experiencing an acculturative stressor from other people's pressure, Denise felt distressed as when she returned, she would face their questions about her return *"Why did you return?"* Of course, thinking about the changed life expenses in Turkey making her feel distressed, but she knew that it was not easy as they suggest. "I do not know what they want me to do. Should I stay in the streets like illegals?" Denise was aware of her countries current situation however she really missed her family and friends. She was excited about her return and teaching again.

Moreover, Denise also missed her home and neat order in the house. While she was living by herself for years in Turkey, she was sharing the flat with different people during her sojourn. She felt the need to be alone and not to talk to anybody from time to time like in her life in Turkey. However, she tried to tolerate it through her stay as an acculturative stressor.

Although there were things, she valued much, she approached objectively to the life in her country and she missed to be there, Denise had the impression that the spell would be broken in short time upon her arrival.

> There is an awakening… I question why is that so? It's my country, of course, the food, music, and dances impress me, but when I get into the town to the everyday life… people's mindsets. I felt stressed because people are stressed, unhappy, heavy smoker. It is hard to find happy ones, unfortunately.

Among those issues Denise was critical about her country, there was the people's understanding of personal boundaries which were quite different than hers. She

remembered being bothered the never-ending struggles with the questions about marriage, her age, and the social roles. People tried to impose their own worldview to others in Turkey since they had no room for "the different". She also criticized that in Turkey people intervene the others' life plans. such behaviors were forcing people to generate excuses since personal decisions might not be enough and they could insist. Only giving health issues as make ups was working to be excused in the past since people cannot insist on due to the health concerns.

However now, Turkish people even found a place for intervening people's behavior and choices during the COVID-19 measures by taking them personally whereas, for most of the US, it was expected to protect oneself and the efforts were appreciated. In some instances, people even though it as if it was an insult to stay away from them or to wear mask next to them. *"They have contacted with a patient, but say I am fine."* though there was nothing to dramatize the issue and taking it personally.

Even though her tendencies were towards assimilation for many of those point she was critical about her home culture, acknowledging her culture by its all components Denise showed integration strategy. "There are things one cannot deny about their own culture. They are there and you are a part of that culture." While introducing some cultural symbols and practices by utilizing traditional items she brought with, such as evil eye beads, Turkish coffee, henna, and scarfs. She thought that some traditions such as the ones had prescribed gender roles or animal rights issues should end with time.

Such traditions were causing her to experience acculturative stressors since there were times when she was talking about the wedding traditions to others and experienced an epiphany about the traditions, she normalized such as the first meeting of parents and asking permission of the elders of the family, giving gold and money to the bride and groom. "When I tell them to the foreigners, they found it strange and recognize it as if a trade for goods. Well, it comes to me quite normal since I was raised with all these traditions. I questioned it when they ask, I felt an enlightenment."

On the other hand, Denise showed marginalization for religious holidays by not adopting both cultures behavior but just enjoyed the aspect that people were together to spend some time. Denise had not done much for the Ramadan, but she had intentions

to give iftar dinner for her fasting friends. It was same as the Easter and other religious special days that she was voluntary to get together with people by focusing on the social aspect of these gatherings more than the religious purposes.

4.6.3. Academic Aftermaths

The acculturative stressors that had an effect on Denise's sojourn were *teaching her native language, the right methodologies,* and drawing on *students' existing knowledge.* Denise primarily used *assimilation* and *integration* strategies. Through her observations, she scrutinized *the availability of opportunities, supportive environment,* and *hierarchical system* in Turkey.

From her childhood, she had big dreams of discovering different countries and places. Her passion for travel was not only for the US. Another desire of Denise's was to learn different foreign languages. Even as in children's plays, she was travelling to different countries and speaking in different languages. Her dreams came true when she finally arrived in the US with the Work and Travel Program. After that, she experienced many other cultures in different countries. She even got accepted for a PhD program abroad, but she was not able to start due to financial issues. Being an English language instructor with more than 5 years of teaching experience, she realized that she needed to share more and find another chance to experience the US for her students.

> I realized that the students wanted something. You know, you can see it from the TV series. Everyone watches American TV series, but it seems different to them to listen to it from someone who actually been there and had memories. When I shared a few memories abroad, their eyes started to open like this, and especially then, I said, I need to be in an English-speaking country to both meet my desires and promote development by motivating my students to make new memories for them.

Although the US seems far away from home, she wanted to take a chance to exchange culture and continue to teach. When her host university was announced, Denise was so enthusiastic that she opened Google Maps' Street View and found her new house by virtually wandering around the neighborhood.

Denise was content with the atmosphere of her host university, where there were a variety of events, they were relaxed, they cared, and there was no tension in the atmosphere or between the students and the professors, unlike in Turkey. Moreover,

while giving feedback on the assignments, the professors in the US were approaching the students by highlighting the strengths and adding "but" to continue with the parts that could be improved by mitigating the indirect negative aspects that were hidden under the shade of positive sides.

Being aware of her initial goals to explore the US for her students, Denise kept her social media accounts active by interacting with her students at her home institution. He received many questions and comments through her posts, and many of the students motivated her to share more of her US experience. She was determined to use her memories to give authentic cases for her students in Turkey since she had had a close observation of the Turkish people in the US as both an insider among them and an outsider among her international and local friends. Denise thought that she could help her students gain knowledge and eliminate their prejudices towards the US. “I used to say to my students *I had been to the US before*. I probably wouldn't have been able to describe it in such detail, with so much mastery. Now, I know more about the system and everything. I can see it in more detail now.”

Denise had no experience with teaching her native language, and this reflected her sojourn as an acculturative stressor that she was able to overcome in the next semester. When she first tried to apply her English language teaching strategies, she left behind the program. Hence, she tried to update her teaching knowledge to adapt it to teaching Turkish. Applying the right methodology was challenging for Denise. Moreover, she needed to teach Turkish to her students who had zero background knowledge. She wanted to see their point of view from the English language to Turkish, which was the opposite of what she had been doing for over five years. She made her students realize that there were no meaningless rules in languages; they were just different since there were no rights or wrongs. She enjoyed the flipped learning activities she observed in the other classes she took and thought about using them instead of spending the whole lesson watching something for the topic by utilizing the integration strategy.

Her students knew her Turkish music with banal pop songs as an acculturative stressor since the stereotyping made her uncomfortable as a music enthusiast. Therefore, she equipped their students with a rich Turkish music inventory. As well as teaching Turkish music to her students, Denise also introduced it to her friends. Her friend did

not understand a single word, but she could feel the heavy emotions. She showed separation towards her country's musical representation among other people.

While Denise was contributing to her knowledge and skills in the US, she was also developing and updating her existing knowledge. She learned the expressions but could not find the context to learn them normally in Turkey. Even though she did not know about the existence of those utterances, she became accustomed to using them.

Additionally, with her prestigious scholarship, she was able to meet high-ranking individuals, from renowned professors to consuls. Wherever she went, people welcomed her warmly. "You feel special. It is like *I achieved something, so they appreciate me*." She reached for the confidence that she could do something if she really wanted, feeling strong enough to pursue a goal. Thanks to her sojourn in the US, Denise acknowledged her potential. Moreover, she believed her program would benefit her in Turkey for both job applications and for the students' perception of her. They might pay more attention if she talks about her experience and life in the United States, which was her initial motivation for embarking on her sojourning journey.

4.6.4. Discussion

Denise's overall tendency during her stay in the US was *assimilation* to *integration.* In addition to them, there were aspects that she chose, such as *separation* and even *marginalization,* for one aspect.

In her social and personal implications, there were issues regarding the social behavior of Turkish people which Denise was not aligned with before her sojourn. For instance, since Turkish people had a tendency to ask personal questions and try to intervene or comment on the deeds of others, one of the common pattern in collectivist cultures as in Hofstede et al. (2010), she tended to show assimilation. If it was also negotiable to give right to the home culture's way, she employed integration strategy. Confirming Garza (2015) on the importance of having international community support, Denise built close relationships with internationals and favored their company when compared to her co-nationals at times. Denise realized there were set codes in her mind that showed everything normal without judgements during her time she exposed to the host culture. When they surfaced, she experienced discomfort. On the other hand, since

Denise had difficulty with her diet, as in Guvendir's (2016) and İlhan and Oruc's (2020) studies, she had a longing for essentials such as cheese, bread, and Turkish yoghurt in the US. In addition, since food preparation could be interpreted as a cultural behaviour for Turkish culture as in Sağır's study (2012), Denise cooked her own food by ensuring that it was healthy and nutritious while her local roommates preferred fast food options. In terms of academic aspects, Denise started her journey mainly to be a better teacher for her students in Turkey and used integration to adopt useful and innovative techniques by combining them with her preexisting knowledge of teaching as in Demir et al. (2000) and Cohen et al. (2005) that language teachers adopt good practices and tried to reflect their knowledge to their students beyond teaching the language within the curriculum.

Denise's acculturative stress was stemmed from the following stressors: *hospitality, offerings, co-nationals, boundaries, publicity of culture, friendship, compliments, small talk, misconceptions for Turkey, getting used to the life, slow pace, transport, diet, recreation, being away, co-nationals' pressure, living with people, cultural differences, home traditions, special days, teaching her native language, teaching methodologies,* and *students' existing knowledge*

The issues Denise was not comfortable with regarding her own culture and country were *boundaries, intervention in people's lives; judgements of society, interacting with strangers, self-care and investments, rush, personal space, difficulties for travelling, commenting on people's performance, personal boundaries; taking things personally, material and familial aspects of weddings, availability of opportunities, supportive environment,* and *hierarchy.*

4.7. Elise's Story



First I have
my own values and judgments for life
that I built
with my own worldview

4.7.1. Social Aftermaths

In social life, Elise faced issues due to *a roommate, expectations from others, concept of friendship, locals, educated locals; being the first, various religious people, special days, transport,* and *safety* as acculturative stressors. Her acculturation strategies in response were mainly *separation* and *marginalization* as well as *integration*. Finally, *not obeying rules, poor justice,* and *freedom* were the highlights that she drew attention to through her experience in her own home culture and country.

She was living with East Asian, Mediterranean, and American roommates in their shared apartment. Elise was more comfortable with the Mediterranean roommate with whom she was enjoying the common living area by spending time together, inviting friends over, cooking, eating, and having fun while the American and East Asian roommates only preferred coming to the shared kitchen to cook but eat in their rooms. "Maybe they are disturbed by us, but they did not reflect it to us." Although both were members of the same religion, the East Asian roommate was not getting along with Elise and soon left the apartment. In time, they realized the American roommate started to share food with them since they, as Mediterranean, were usually offering food and voluntarily cleaning household items and making small favors for the roommates' errands. Her attitude also changed, and she started to share more about her life and family, unlike before, when she was keeping the interaction limited with short answers.

Her American friend's behavior was an acculturative stressor since "the first cold attitude" initially distressed Elise for not having family-like interaction in the communal living place. She only interacted, when necessary, not more than "hi" or

"good morning". They did, however, continue to invite her to join them when they invited friends or prepared food. When Elise occasionally saw her American roommate's dishes on the counter, she washed them. Since her friend thanked her, Elise responded, "Not a problem at all; we live in the same house. Such small errands don't even matter." Elise's views were adopted by her US friend, and she tried to be more engaged with them. Over time, she even started to open up about her family matters and life concerns to their friends comfortably.

For Elise, not being direct about the intentions and expectations from other people was another acculturative stressor. While she was continuing her Turkish customs in the US by offering food to other members of the house, she was content that her new Eurasian roommate had the same habit. However, their American roommate did not intend to share, even though they had a conversation about what she was baking that day. "She ate it all by herself, well, not even made an offer. That was a bit interesting because I asked the recipe when I saw it. I asked and it meant I liked it.", which made her think that people did not know how to share since it was not in their culture. Elise was sure that her American roommate would be willing to share a slice of their freshly baked food, but there was no "offering" unless there was a demand.

Not reaching the desired friendship level was an acculturative stressor for Elise, whereas in her circle there were students or internationals who shared common concerns about life and families, causing them to form a social atmosphere to maintain support. To build a genuine friendship, there needs to be years of time. Although she could easily interact with people and become friends in the US, it seemed to stay on the surface due to the limited time. For Elise, really good friends were easy to have, but not cordial. If people spent years together, they would definitely reach the friendship level as in Turkey." Therefore, she showed separation in her understanding of friendship.

Nevertheless, for her friend circles, while she felt the need for a Turkish community, she did not intend to befriend co-nationals at all times. Elise also needed to hear her native language in the US. The sound effects and the long emotional stares... she had an instinct to watch Turkish shows, whereas she used to watch solely foreign shows

since she previously regarded the Turkish ones as trivial. Then, they seemed quite nice to her since she had a longing for the Turkish series.

> I think speaking Turkish is one thing that is much needed. It is a source of pride to show your own culture in a foreign country. There should also be communication with a Turkish group. Otherwise, you feel very lonely. I recognized it a couple of months after I came here. I joined them. I was so happy to find and join them. No matter what, you must be in different environments with all the differences to learn... I want to mingle more with strangers because I have a limited time here. I want to make the most of it. Of course, it would be wrong for me to constantly meet with Turks.

Therefore, Elise was truly interested in meeting the locals, who mainly consisted of immigrants with Hispanic ancestry (Latin Americans), Jewish people. Her interaction with the Americans was rather limited for Elise's experience.

People told her from her early days that "This is Latin America", which Elise found them unlike general US people but more like Turkish people. When she saw families shopping with their kids around and their actions and dialogue, her eyes became watery. "There is such a culture here with sociable, helpful people."

Elise found locals "cold", but they were also "so nice" while she did not even say hi in her home country, she got into conversations with them, which allowed her to utilize assimilation strategy Elise enjoyed chatting with strangers in her new city and learned that everyone brought their stories with them there. "Everyone is an immigrant here. They made it here somehow. They say nothing is impossible as long as you find a way."

Representing her home country as the first Turkish person that the locals and internationals met in person in her city was an acculturative stressor. The locals did not know much about Turkey since it was quite far away. However, Elise was happy and comfortable representing her country in the US by demolishing prejudices and by leaving good impressions.

On the other hand, educated locals were discussing Sufism with Elise, which was her personal area of interest. However, it seemed that most Americans thought of Turkey as an underdeveloped Arabic country while Arabs regarded Turkey as a developed country where they came for summer vacations.

> Turkey is perfect. We go there for vacation. Very developed, wonderful. I prefer not to chat with them. It disturbs me. It plays with my nerves that a tourist comes to my country and tells me about the things that I cannot do, regarding it as a perfect and strong country… They have no idea. They make judgments over their two-week vacations. It seems perfect and cheap for them. I cannot stand listening to these. If the chat looks like it is going towards such issues, I walk away.

Elise attended a church choir event where it was all white Americans. Elise and her friend went there, being "very obvious" in the crowd as a woman with a headscarf and a woman of color from Southeast Asia. At the end of the concert, everyone was given a "wafer". At that time, they were shocked when somebody stopped them and told them they had to eat it in the church and could not take it out of the building. Her American friend sadly stated that they were discriminated against and reacted in this manner because in the past, some people had disrespected the wafer. However, they were suspicious of them for no reason since there were other people seen taking it outside the church before.

She was living in a place where the Jewish community was dominant. Therefore, she had close contact with the Jewish community in the neighborhood, which allowed her to observe the community. She was even involved in their daily lives and was mistaken for Jewish by some locals because she covered her hair in a manner similar to that of Jewish people despite being a Muslim. “Jews don't usually deal with other people. They are just talking to the members of their community. They probably think I'm Jewish, and they welcome me very warmly. They're normally sullen. They don't deal with anyone, but they talk to me.”

There were Muslims she could have joined more, but she did not attend the religious get-togethers for worship since she could practice them in their own country as well. Elise intentionally chose to attend different activities to learn about diverse cultures that might not be possible in Turkey. Although she did not attend the Easter celebrations, it was a surprise to Elise that her father, as a Lazuri man, was celebrating a special day in spring similar to Easter where they tried to find the naturally dyed eggs hidden in the woods. Elise appreciated the Muslim communities’ activities abroad:

> They are acknowledged, modern, and not too reserved. They live their religion really well by supporting each other. They are mainly educated immigrants. I definitely believe Islam is practiced perfectly abroad... They also invite people

> from other religions, creating a peaceful interreligious and intercultural atmosphere. As a good representation of Islam, Muslims are regarded as successful and helpful individuals.

The city she lived in, transport safety rules, freedom from neglect rights, and the health system were the issues she experienced acculturative stress. In the vast country, almost everyone had a car, and it seemed the ideal thing to happen. However, the poor public transport was only used by the rather poor population of the country.

She had previous hesitations about the crime rates in her host city, but she realized that she could walk outside at night much more relaxed than in her home country. Even if she saw people fighting outside or even if there was a murder, no one intervened. Although she felt safe and was not affected by the troubles outside, Elise was not comfortable with people's attitudes. For instance, public buses seemed dangerous for being used only by people with low socio-economic backgrounds. While she initially believed that drivers would assist her in the event of a problem, she later realized that the drivers did not even make eye contact with the passengers or turn their heads to check on them when a problem occurred. This was something that worried Elise even more since people in Turkey were moving towards such an attitude.

There are strict rules in the US and, since they do not interfere with people's lifestyles, they follow them meticulously, unlike in Turkey. However, she found the US people were too free, and that sometimes made them neglectful, which was not something Elise appreciated. Especially, for her paperwork or any issues with the institutions, she realized that just like in Turkey, she had to insist on things to get them done.

> I realized if you do not fight for your rights, they say, T*here is a problem, there is nothing we can do about it,* or *not my not expertise…*But if you are the only person that I can contact, I will not let you go until I get what I want… No way that I stay silent and sit still. There is a problem here, and I want my right to get to the solution. Like this, I have always dealt with some things by arguing in any field here... They're getting out of the way by saying *There is nothing to be done.*

Nevertheless, since she saw the law working rightfully in the US, she felt peace and trust that "If something happens, my rights will be protected." Her worries about returning to Turkey were also about poor justice and freedom, which were proof of her low life quality for Elise.

She faced acculturative stressors in the health system when she needed to see doctors for her problems. Since the population in her city was Spanish-speaking, all the information lines were offering only Spanish-language options. Therefore, she suffered a lot until she figured out how to access health facilities.

4.7.2. Personal Aftermaths

The acculturative stressors for Elise were *weather, diet, portions, local food, tea, family gathering, hobbies, return, economic issues,* and *co-nationals' assumptions*. In response, she tended to use *separation* strategies. *Shame, hobbies and interests, welfare, interferences in others' lives, people's judgements,* and *crowdedness* were the issues that she was critical about Turkey.

This was not Elise's first time in the US, as she came to the US with Work and Travel program Then, Elise was in a different state that had a different climate and temperature. However, when she got off the plane and "a humid hot air" surrounded her: "I still remember, I have never seen such choking weather. Oh god! Am I going to live with this weather here?" Then, on her first night, she was awake till morning crying because of the cold air coming from the air conditioner "right to her face" on the ceiling of her dormitory room. Her attempts to close or deflect it were in vain. She even went outside to warm herself a couple of times. "That was a hard night." In the morning, when she was talking about the night, she learned that her Spanish roommate went through the same with Elise, while the American roommate found it "not that cold" and had a comfortable sleep. They tried to find a physical solution by placing a piece of cardboard over the vent to deflect the air after they learned all rooms were controlled from a single panel. However, it helped Elise to acquire a glimpse of the American customary system for temperature. "I am bad with math already, so I do not learn or try others. I only know the temperature in the house as 75. 75 is very good for me. Other than that, I am not into figuring out the other ones, either for the road nor for weight."

Another acculturative stressor that had also happened before was her diet. There were three main reasons for her tendencies, such as religious restrictions, nutrition, and the Turkish palate. Although Elise was not comfortable with the local food since her US region had mainly pork-based cuisine, which was not allowed in her religious

practices, typical US fast food with beef or chicken options was her preference. Besides, she especially found Italian cuisine similar to Turkish cuisine as being healthier.

Although she tried to consume a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables as she was accustomed to in her home country, she had the impression that they did not have enough nutrients or taste, and the feeling was like eating something empty. Parallel to her instincts, her blood test results did not come out well and she started to take supplements.

Besides, her perception of size was challenged, especially for the portions of the food and drinks, which seemed to be twice as much in Turkey. There were also aspects she did not like, such as the amount of sweetener and additives in food. Although she had chosen separation for her religious dietary preferences, in general she tended to assimilate into the US way of eating.

Elise missed the Turkish food, especially in Ramadan, when her mom sent her photos of the iftar table. She went to many of the Turkish restaurants in her city and enjoyed the food by US standards, but the taste of meat and rice was not on the Turkish palate. She also preferred kosher products since Jewish dietary constrictions were also valid for Islam. As a tea addict, she also started to enjoy drinking coffee in the morning.

As well as the food, Elise felt homesick since she could not be at the family gatherings. As the distance was far away from home, and she was sad to be far away from her parents whenever they got sick. "What could I do if something happens to them? How could I go there? Reach out to them?" She worried with every phone call from her family, especially when they called her at an unexpected time due to the time zone differences.

Elise had a conversation with her sister in Europe about comparing life in Turkey to Europe and the US. They realized that in Turkey, people feel inferior or ashamed of doing something in public or stepping forward, whereas in the other two, they feel comfortable. Europeans and Americans do not care what people do. There is no "ayıp" meaning disgrace or shame. “Even at a restaurant, taking the leftovers home is

something to hesitate to do in Turkey, but here, in the US, they do not refrain from doing such things, they think of themselves first [not others].

She had a critical look at her life as well. When she needed to introduce herself, she had no hobby. Unlike the people she saw there, who had interests from childhood that they developed and enjoyed for years, she had none. Elise realized that in Turkey, many of her friends were like her. It is generally as simple as reading books or watching movies – "everyone could do it". Moreover, she felt its absence when she introduced yourself, "you need to say something about you. I studied, worked hard, came here, passed exams…"

Her critical look was also related to the opportunities of both countries. Creating something is easy in the US. Even if one does something that they are interested in, they can receive appreciation and encouragement to pursue it. However, in Turkey, expecting hobbies and interests that one could make the required investment was not likely for successful people who needed to study all their lives. So, they did not seem versatile.

By living by herself for almost a year in the host country, the experience matured Elise. While Elise defined herself as "an individualistic person" which was hard to maintain in Turkey due to the interference of others, in the US, one can build their own world and live free of others' intrusions: "Individualism is not doable in Turkey. I got to the level of confidence that whatever happens to me, I can handle it… I know what to do when, but this could be in the US context. I don't know if they can apply them in the Turkish context."

For her, the US was the best country to live in with its relaxed people and their ignorance; she enjoyed everything there. She was thinking back to her previous stay in the north of Turkey, which was her parents' hometown. Although she had a relaxed life, it was difficult for her to interact with people, and she was mainly alone, other than a few colleagues. People did not accept anyone since their ideas were in conflict with the stranger ones. Nevertheless, Elise enjoyed the diversity and harmony in the US, where people of different ideas can build friendships. "Yes, I live my religion, but I have my own values and judgments for life that I built with my own worldview." However, unlike her supportive family, she could not see the appreciation for her own

beliefs by the Turkish people in her area with their attempts to interfere and impose their ways on her life.

> Not being judged by the people was comfortable [in the US]. They are open-minded and reluctant to learn about different cultures and befriend those people, unlike in Turkey. There, people's lifestyles are not only for themselves, but they are also intervened upon by others, which is disturbing.

She got used to living alone in the US such that she was comfortable living with fewer people. For her, nothing would happen if she did not get out of her room for fifteen days. No one would notice. However, when she imagined her return to Turkey, she would get into the public transport, the crowd, and the chaos, while she did not travel with strangers face-to-face and no one caused direct stress for her in the US. "Until you get off the bus, you spend time with many people, talking, arguing. I lived for 22 years in a large city, and I no longer need to experience it."

In addition to her travels across the other US states, Elise was excited about traveling to a neighboring country, which she felt like Turkey upon arrival. Since they went there with dollars and converted them into their currency, which they found quite cheap for the US people, they felt like American tourists in Turkey. "It was so good." However, having obtained the summary of what awaits her in Turkey by means of the crowd, she realized that she had not missed anything related to her hometown.

Thus, her acculturative stressors about returning were alleviated. Elise was so stressed about her return that "my life is terrible right now. I lost my sleep at night while thinking about my return. I don't do anything much lately. All I was doing is lying in my bed and thinking about her future." In her earlier message, she was having the same worries that her life was perfect in the US and that she could not image how she could end that life and live in her home country.

Since the prices would be hard to adjust back in Turkey, she wanted to try as much as she could in the US. While locals were complaining about the increasing prices, Elise found everything affordable. Since she could compare the prices of living to her experience five years ago, Elise only saw a minor increase in prices, which was "nothing to worry about for us [for Turkish people], but they must be right in their own way." Elise still thought buying a house and a car was not impossible in the US, but it had recently become quite hard in Turkey.

The locals were complaining about the economy, and it was strange for Elise. She decided not to get into a discussion about what is expensive and what is cheap after getting the implication that people thought life was cheap in Turkey since they earned in dollars.

> A local friend told me that her car's tank is filled for 40 dollars and said their state has the highest gas prices. I said nothing but nodded. I won't get into dialog on such topics anymore. Because you cannot make them understand. Lira converted into dollars is nothing for them. Only Turks would comprehend this.

Adversely, co-nationals living in the US for a long time had positive thoughts about the life conditions in Turkey, unlike Elise's assumptions. They believed it would be simple to return and work in Turkey, and they advised Elise to do so. With all these, Elise stopped showing efforts to tell them as well, because it was "not possible to tell what it is like."

4.7.3. Academic Aftermaths

Starting with *disappointment, professionalism, flat hierarchy, great opportunities at college, religious priorities, unemployment, religious youth* and *religious activities in campus,* she experienced acculturative stressors in academic and professional settings. She utilized mainly *assimilation* as well as *separation* strategies throughout her journey. Elise was critical of some aspects of Turkish life, such as *imbalanced academic life, keeping religion away from politics or different ideologies, bureaucracy,* and *hinderances for projects.*

Elise prepared herself for teaching Turkish by bringing materials and sources with her while she was given the office work that would benefit her language classes and research in their department at the host university instead of teaching or assisting classes. It was shocking that she would not be teaching, and her sojourn would have almost no professional outcome for her. She tried to ask for a teaching role, but the institution did not allow her since she did not have a master's degree. It all became a burden at some point after the first term. She felt that she should stop since it had nothing in common with the aims of her program. Therefore, she was left alone, disappointed with even no interest in the classes that she was taking and no motivation to travel more to experience culture. All her enthusiasm left its place to the worries

about her return. When she finally accepted the fact that she knew this, "one could have no energy nor motivation left to pursue."

Therefore, she lost her interest in classes after realizing that this was wasting a whole year without teaching. She wondered how far she could academically improve herself by doing repetitive office work. By creating various hindrances, the school administration did not allow her to give Turkish classes. She was so irritated, "If I am not suitable for teaching, why did you choose me to teach here?" For Elise, under the name of professionalism, people could put one in difficult situations. They got out of the issues by saying there was nothing they could do, but Elise was insistent and ready to argue against their answers, maintaining her home country tendencies with separation.

Although she was a bit enraged, in time she liked her supervisor because of the support and motivation she received to study further for academic growth. However, when she saw the hustle and the intensity of the courses, she realized she had no desire left to be a learner again. She decided not to pursue an academic future for herself but only to continue working.

Since she could only contribute to her native language through passive roles by translating or finding resources, Elise wanted to contribute her cultural knowledge of the students on the campus. Therefore, she established bonds with the co-national organizations at her host university, and they held various cultural events and activities in an effort towards integration.

When at cultural events, Elise found it childish to wear folkloric costumes and showcase her culture, like celebrating national special days. It seemed orientalist to her and, in response to this, Elise wanted to teach her culture by sharing values and creating dialogs with other cultures as being good representations of her home culture.

> Everyone can see advertising for Turkey on the internet. I became close friends with people. They learn about Turkey and Turkish values and culture from me... In particular, by presenting your good moral values as a good human being, you change their perspectives."

Other than the Turkish community at her host institution, Elise also interacted with the academic community. She got along well with an elderly Fulbrighter in her institution.

When she realized that the elderly were alone, Elise wanted to join her to discover their city, which was one of the most attraction centers in the US. Apparently, no one offered her a tour of the town except for her.

Since there were mainly undergraduates around Elise, who was not a person to get along with youngers, she did not have a close friend except for a Turkish-speaking Iranian professor at her host institution. However, their department and Muslim student groups took her to their circles, which allowed her to see that in her host university the academic hierarchy was not the same as in Turkey, where she rarely interacted with a professor outside of class. She became close friends with academics in the US.

Elise was taking courses and had a chance to observe students in the US. In Elise's attention, they had great opportunities at their colleges. Yet they had the autonomy to balance their studies and social lives, which made them relaxed when compared to their peers in Turkey. This was hard to maintain, and if you lose, you need to give up at some point. Sacrifices were given at either end of the scale in Turkey.

She realized that there was a priority for Christians at her host institution. In an instance, when she needed to show proof of a vaccination in her childhood for course registration in her host institution, they did not accept Elise’s registration. However, she was offered a solution by writing a petition about being Christian and a follower of a cult, which restricted her from getting the vaccination. Elise followed the way to pass the hinderance that she no other choice to solve otherwise. On the campus, the youth groups were using many ways to invite her to religious meetings, such as stopping on the road, giving leaflets, and text messaging. Even though she thanked and said she was a Muslim and she did not want to go to Bible readings, the insistence was quite a lot more than she got used to in Turkey.

Besides, while it was interesting for Elise to see the large religious youth population in the US, it was surprising to Elise that there were many religious groups in the host institution organizing events, unlike she could observe in Turkey, where religious activities were not common in educational institutions. Therefore, she criticized that the same conditions in Turkey would be regarded with suspicion of cult-related activities, and people could think there might be something else behind the event. It

was the same for the Muslim community at the school; it was safe as long as politics was not included in it for her. Elise supported that all religions should be free to worship or organize events and meetings at colleges as long as they do so without putting pressure on people to spread their beliefs to others. She showed assimilation to the idea of religious freedom in institutions as long as the aim was religious.

> There is a Muslim group at school, and they close a classroom and do Friday prayer namaz with around 50 people. It might look scary from the outside, but they ask for permission from the school administration for it. I think this is what should be normal and natural.

Her experience was barely affected by the religiousness of the educational setting. There were main hindrances that let her experience acculturation stressors on her return to professional means. She remembered her past efforts for her students and the hardships she faced in return. When she wanted to initiate projects, her school was limiting her options by interfering or requiring procedures and approval, even for basic aspects of her projects. She was not comfortable teaching in such a place.

Moreover, having an unclear future ahead made her experience acculturative stress since she was overthinking her career back in Turkey. She had no plans or intentions since she had to quit her job for the Fulbright scholarship in the US. Having a Fulbright scholarship was prestigious and renowned in the US. Nevertheless, she was not foreseeing what her Fulbright experience would promise her in Turkey, but it could be influential in her resumé. All in all, she had no intentions or future plans for her home country and wanted to find a teaching career in European, Asian, or Middle Eastern countries. “I try not to think about what I am going to do after June. I will eventually have to face the fact that the time will come to return. I am sure that it will be very bad. I will collapse psychologically.”

4.7.4. Discussion

To a great extent, Elise tended to choose *separation* and *assimilation* in her acculturative journey. Although she defined herself as an individualistic person, she had the tendencies that made her closer to collectivism, confirming Mocan-Aydin (2000) that although Turkish individuals have individualistic tendencies, they remain and seek collectivist attitudes in their host setting.

For social and personal aspects, Elise experienced restrictions on her diet, as in Guvendir (2016) as well as İlhan and Oruc (2020), on the difficulties experienced by Turkish sojourners' reactions to food in the US. Elise did not have a large group of friends and was not living in a busy large city, which made her enjoy being alone by herself, confirming İlhan and Oruc (2020) that Turkish sojourners might have a change in their search for social life by preferring loneliness after initially complaining about it. Therefore, Elise tried to be friends with her local friend by keeping the separation strategy to make her get to know the Turkish way of sharing food and talking. In addition to this, Elise was very sensitive when people shared their misconceptions of Turkey. Hence, Elise also continued her home culture ways in the US by being responsible for others' learning, confirming the literature that Turkish sojourners and immigrants felt the need to be sure to depict the right image of their countries and cultures in the minds of the locals and internationals during their overseas experiences (Kagitcibasi, 1978; İlhan and Oruc, 2020; Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021). Since she could not get the expected encouragement and support from the host institution, she faced acculturative stressors as given in the studies of Bektaş et al. (2009) and Erturk and Nguyen Luu (2021) that the individuals need the support from the host countries to experience a smooth acculturation.

Elise's acculturative stressors were as follows: *local roommate, expectations from others, concept of friendship, locals, educated locals, being the first Turk, Christians, Jews, Muslims, special days, transport and safety, weather, diet, portions, local food, tea, family gathering, hobbies, return, economical, issues, co-nationals' assumptions, opportunities at college, religious priorities, unemployment, religious youth,* and *religious activities on campus.*

She had a chance to question her own country on the aspects that were related to *disobeying rules, poor justice and freedoms, shame culture, hobbies and interests, welfare, interferences in others' lives, judgements, crowdedness, imbalanced academic life, keeping religion away from politics or different ideologies, bureaucracy,* and *hinderances for projects.*

4.8. General Discussion

First This section presents a broad view of the acculturation of seven language educators from Turkey in the United States during the present study. The following discussion comprises their acculturation strategies, acculturative stressors, and the aspects they reevaluated regarding their own country and culture.

Unlike what acculturation scales based on rather limited pre-decided topics show regarding the individuals' acculturation strategies when they went to host countries, this study invited researchers to look at the distinctions and the details of themes that occasionally surfaced as co-occurrences of acculturation strategies (Berry, 1992 & 2017) visited by the sojourners.

Four main considerations could be evoked by the study regarding the provided Turkish sojourners' narratives of questioning their home country and culture. First of all, the sojourners who intensely applied separation strategy across various aspects of their journeys were inclined to question their home country to a lesser extent when compared to the others. Instead, they chose to criticize their host cultures as well as highlight the worthy aspects of their home cultures between the lines. Secondly, they held their critical magnifying glass either as a member of their home culture or as an already outsider in their home culture to try to alienate from it to utilize the host country's perspective. Thirdly, all participants showed that their acculturation strategies were limited to their stays in the US for some core aspects. While Pam, Denise, Maria, and Beren thought it would be wise to leave them in the US and continue to live in their home country in their home country's way carrying the host country's behavior or mindset with them without a ground to apply. Their hesitations were about mostly not being judged by others or not receiving disapproval by refraining from possible discomfort or conflicts and hiding from their immediate circles or their city of residence. Denise took the initiative to try to continue their newly adopted behavior when she returned to their home country. Finally, there were times when the sojourners wanted to adopt separation strategies such as interpersonal relations, traditions, or food they had to choose the mainstream ways to continue their presence in the society without creating discomfort for the host nationals. This was parallel to Yagmur and van de Vijver (2011) when Turkish immigrants had to

assimilate their language uses while tended to maintain their values with separation in France where there were language enforcements for the mainstream host language use. Parallel to the questionings of former Fulbright grantees (*"75th Anniversary of Fulbright",* 2021), the participants developed better understanding of themselves and their home country (Demir et al., 2000; Kirkgoz, 2017; Andawi et al., 2019) and developed tolerance (Kagitcibasi, 1978; Burkholder, 2014; Andawi et al., 2019). For instance, Maria, Pam, Beren realized that while they were thinking themselves as individualistic people, they discovered their predominant collectivistic tendencies.

Rather than starting with separation strategy (Kirkgoz, 2017), those questionings helped the individuals to critically scrutinize their own norms and prejudices and to leave their place to a more advanced world view and understanding of others leading to "flexibility, openness, and ethnorelativism; all of which shape their perceptions of cultural plurality and the coexistence of multiple viewpoints." (Akli, 2013, p. 3).

The following word cloud in Figure 5 had the frequently used words extracted from Turkish sojourners' focus group interview demonstrating the wide variety of commentaries and emotions they revealed regarding their acculturation experience in the US. This section was intentionally added to touch upon the commonalities among Turkish sojourners' experiences on the issues resonating noticeably across individual narratives. Besides, all participants showed country-specific acculturation strategies that might show these strategies might not cause changes from the foundations of their behaviors. However, they might have caused a superficial change that would disappear after the sojourn or when the conditions were no longer met.

One of the major aspects that were reflected as an acculturation stressor for all participants was interpersonal communication as in small talks and compliments. The former was more challenging than the latter one since it requires interaction in the form of question and answer for Turkish sojourners. Hofstede et al. (2010) elaborated on the behavior patterns of individualistic and collectivistic societies as "in an individualist culture, when people meet, they feel a need to communicate orally. Silence is considered abnormal. Social conversations can be depressingly banal, but they are compulsory" (p108) which makes the Turkish sojourners who were finding it

strange since for them “the fact of being together is emotionally sufficient; there is no compulsion to talk unless there is information to be transferred.” (p108)



Figure 5
Word cloud formed in the focus group interview

Moreover, while making compliments and smiling at strangers on the road were regarded as normal in Indulgent societies such as the US, the Turkish sojourns who especially come from larger cities had difficulty understanding or implementing the behavior (Hofstede et al., 2010). Yet, Denise and Beren intended to try complimenting people in their home country while the rest of the participants were unsure about the reactions from Turkish society.

Most of the participants preferred separation strategy for their understanding of friendship except for Olsen and Denise. Galchenko and van de Vijver (2007) emphasized that Turkish internationals from their collectivistic cultures try to find the lack of sincerity, they were accustomed to, in their new circles. Furthermore, Pam, Maive, and Maria's narratives provide evidence for the study of Bektaş et al. (2009) suggesting the possible causes of Turkish sojourners' separation strategy tendencies could be due to the collectivist Turkish culture prioritizing the communal good and their limited sojourn to build strong connections.

For interpersonal relations, in the literature, the majority of Turkish sojourners and immigrants tend to choose separation strategy (Bektaş et al., 2009; Wang, 2014; İlhan & Oruc, 2020). However, when they were listened to as in the present study, the participants elaborated their choice of separation due to their expectation and understanding to form a friendship. When they really needed interaction with locals for the benefit of their experience (Bochner, 2006), they chose integration by trying their best even though it was not meeting their needs, or they did not get enough recognition from the locals (Jackson, 2011). In such instances, Beren, Elise, Maria, and Pam needed their co-nationals at least once during their sojourn when they needed friends to provide emotional support or to cure loneliness in general. Parallel to the benefits of co-national support in the host country Bektaş et al. (2009) Among them, Beren, Maria, Maive, and Elise try to convince their close circles to have a friendship in the Turkish way by being close enough to share personal matters and be talkative. Among them, Maria and Maive just needed a person to tell them what happened to them without expecting them to make it look positive or give a solution. All of the sharing was to share with an attentive listener.

Since they got used to being lonely and in a quiet neighborhood, as in İlhan and Oruc, (2020), although Maive and Elise felt the need to socialize, she enjoyed being on her own with time and was distressed when she imagined being in Turkey. On the other hand, Maive, Olsen, and Denise did not have the need for co-nationals and intentionally preferred locals and internationals. While talking to an American was easy, they found it difficult to establish a friendship while all participants successfully built lifelong bonds with other internationals, which resonates with the emphatic expression "we're all in this together" (Garza, 2015, p. 28). For the sojourners in this

study, the locals who had overseas experience or the ones participated in international communities were regarded differently since the former had their developed intercultural competencies and did not differ from the internationals.

Questioning the social norms in Turkey, Pam and Olsen were not pleased with the parents' intrusion into young people's lives as in Kagitcibasi (1978), while all participants were uncomfortable with their co-nationals' involvement and judgments of their life.

The acculturative stressors were parallel to the literature (Balaz, 2017) on the personal, social, and academic aspects of individuals. Firstly, transportation (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007) was regarded as one of the greatest acculturative stressors for FLTAs except for Olsen since he was in a rather larger city. Maria stated that transportation was not a great problem for Americans since they had their cars, but sojourners such as themselves had experienced great difficulties and hindrances that affected her experiences negatively. Homelessness was another mutual aspect that they emphasized. As being raised in a Feminine culture (Hofstede et al., 2010), Turkish sojourners cared about people in need and tended to be in cooperation for the good of the whole society. Therefore, they felt sad when they witnessed homeless people, especially during their visits to larger cities. All participants believed that homelessness is an issue that the US could solve if actual steps were taken. Another common aspect was diet. Pam, Beren, Elise, and Denise experienced changing degrees of acculturative stress due to their diet (Guvendir, 2016, İlhan & Oruc, 2020) while Maria, Olsen, and Maive did not have any issues.

It was distressing for all Turkish FLTAs that their family and friends from Turkey were advising them not to come back since they had a better life quality in the US. However, they all knew that it was not feasible due to their visa and program requirements, so they felt the need to have the best out of their US experience. Nonetheless, when the Turkish lira rate lost its value in US dollars, the sojourners except for Pam and Maria, and Maive panicked and seriously thought about ways to stay in the US for a longer period and not to go back to Turkey.

The economy of their home country was distressing emotionally during their sojourn experience in line with (Burkholder, 2014; Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021) since it was

hard to plan expenses and travels for cultural exchange. Moreover, there were also participants who had resigned from their jobs and experienced the stressors as Elise, Olsen, Pam, and Maria. Since it was exceedingly affecting their experience, they intentionally tried not to focus on their issues related to home and tried to get the most out of her their experience.

As cultural ambassadors, all participants showed an effort to provide good representations of their country and culture and attempted to interfere when they witnessed misinformation about their own countries (Kagitcibasi, 1978; İlhan & Oruc, 2020; Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021). They even introduced customs and special days even though they were not practicing them in their host cultures such as fasting and wedding ceremonies. Beren, Denise, and Olsen intended to spread what they accumulated in the host country to improve their home country (Demir et al., 2000).

Unlike Maive, having a supportive host institution and involvement in the host culture benefited Turkish sojourners (Bektaş et al., 2009; Erturk & Nguyen Luu, 2021; 2022). All participants benefitted from their experiences for the development of their English, especially from daily expressions and humorous references (Garza, 2015; Mutlu & Ortaçtepe, 2016) as well as raising their attention toward Turkish.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to scrutinize Turkish sojourners' acculturation experiences in the United States as Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants via their acculturation strategies, the acculturative stressors, and finally reveal the aspects that make them reconsider their own country and its culture.

Findings from the study convey that the Turkish sojourners utilized a variety of acculturation strategies. The combinations of strategies were observed in detail. The tendencies for certain strategies and their relationship with the sojourners' experiences were presented along with the reasons, which were provided and concluded by the sojourners themselves. As for acculturation strategies, the Turkish Sojourners' overall tendencies were stretched between integration and assimilation. Although they attempted to use the separation strategy in some areas, such as daily life habits and diet, they mostly found an equilibrium by either compromising from their own routines or attempting to adopt the accepted mainstream ways in the host society. While not negatively affecting their overall acculturation in the US, there were instances of marginalization for personal aspects such as religion, nationalism, and diet for some of the participants.

Since the study was completed with the holistic analysis of multiple data points and from seven distinct individuals, the array of acculturative stressors was broad, including all facets of life. The dominant acculturative stressors were parallel to the Turkish sojourners' literature. However, the detailed new distinctions as understanding of concepts and their practice were elaborated to contribute to the acculturation literature. Due to the great effect of American culture on Turkish daily life, rather visible elements of US culture such as urban life, consumption, and fast food were not surprising in general. However, the acculturative stressors were present

in various social settings, such as interpersonal relations, friendship with host nationals, routines, and behaviors in public. From the personal perspective, the sojourners faced acculturative stressors for such issues as recreational time activities, hygiene, mental and physical health, diet, monetary issues, and security, and they tried to give meaning to those by reflecting and being critical. For the acculturative stressors that occurred in the academic settings were among the learner's autonomy, teaching as a native speaker, load of the coursework, host institutions' attention and opportunities for the members, as well as the flat hierarchy and high achiever tendencies were present in their narratives.

Through their acculturation journeys in the US, Turkish sojourners were questioning their taken-for-granted judgements, settled behavioral patterns, and views that they brought from their home country to the US on personal, social, and academic levels. They reconsidered various aspects by touching upon the tenuous topics of the unyielding order of life in their home country. Their sojourn experience had a reflection on their understanding of their home country as well as the host country. Almost all sojourners in this study developed more welcoming attitudes towards people who are both outside their own communities and in the circles that they had prejudices against prior to their sojourning experiences in their home country. The challenges they faced improved their understanding of the world and allowed them to see their limits and capabilities. Many of the sojourns made frequent comparisons, criticisms, and reflections between the host country and their home country. They agreed upon the economic and social issues that resulted in a certain way in the course of daily life for people of both countries.

All sojourns agreed that it would definitely be hard for them to understand the real-life challenges of the United States from Turkey via the media or other people without living in the culture. They were also glad to be in the same social atmosphere as an international setting, which helped them situate their own country with culturally and geographically similar cultures. Through their sojourn experience, they developed awareness and acknowledged the challenges of living in the US and Turkey by having the endeavor to unlearn and relearn the norms of both cultures. Almost all participants emphasized that their language abilities had improved, especially for pragmatics, daily language use, and understanding jokes better.

5.1. Limitation of The Study

The large participant group was more than required for a narrative inquiry. While decreasing the number might put the data collection in danger since the participants were free to abandon the study, deleting the participants would be unethical to invalidate their time and commitment for such a delicate and rather longitudinal study. Nonetheless, it did not affect the quality of the study other than taking additional time and effort to conduct the study.

The participants and the researcher had never met in a face-to-face meeting during the study since they were in their host institutions and the researcher did not have funds to visit and observe them. Therefore, the multiple online tools were utilized to obtain the most accurate data from the participants by assuring their comfort and ease.

Another limitation was the lack of studies in the literature with the specific group of individuals known as the Turkish sojourners as educators, in addition to being Fulbright FLTA grantees.

5.2. Theoretical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

There are theoretical implications for the study. Firstly, the thesis could be used as a comprehensive basis to see the distinct array of individual differences among Turkish sojourners for the specific group or to the extent of the experience for an individual to deepen the acculturation studies. Moreover, further research could also focus on acculturative stressors by evaluating only one aspect or phenomena by narrowing the scope. As a result, future researchers could include it as friendship and its altered dimensions to be examined as friendship expectations, friend selection, hindrances, and efforts toward friendship. Additionally, the religiousness issue could also be worth studying further since the study revealed the impact of being raised in conservative circles on the individuals' life experiences as adults and/or young adults. Moreover, future research could look into prejudices or tendencies toward the interaction of individuals' own country dynamics.

5.3. Practical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Since this thesis examined the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants from Turkey and their acculturation journeys in depth, the findings of this thesis may be useful to international or local Fulbright Commissions, host institutions, international houses, program advisors, and individuals, as well as other cultural exchange programs accepting applicants with Turkish backgrounds.

Firstly, *the Fulbright Commissions*, through governmental sources, invest in those individuals to become the bridges between both countries by attaining them the role of cultural ambassadors. To ensure a healthy bond as a consequence of such mobilities, they might reevaluate and strengthen their pre-departure and re-entry as well as the initial and mid-year *orientation programs,* which they respectively hold in the home and the host country. The given cohort of FLTA's were found to remember and implement the advice given during the initial orientations before they started their journey in the US. However, due to the online fashion of the initial orientation and the cancellation of the face-to-face mid-year conferences, they felt disappointed to lose the first-hand opportunities to build networking with their colleagues and educators across the world and the experience that might enrich their knowledge of life in the US and the cultures it embodies.

Even though grantees were chosen among a competitive group of candidates, unforeseen challenges might completely or partially affect the FLTA mobilities. Fulbright programs can advance their selection criteria to ensure successful acculturation for the individuals. They can also prepare content for individuals indented to apply for the grant.

To ensure the smooth acculturation of sojourners, the commission might send monthly surveys to check on the issues that the grantees feel comfortable and uncomfortable with and respond to the needs of the individuals before waiting for them to take action or experience stress. The commission might also demand the stakeholders of the programs or institutions to give monthly short reports about the activities and assistance given to FLTAs.

Another issue highlighted across the narratives was monetary issues that FLTAs felt problematic. Those individuals lead rather settled lives in their home countries as adults and young adults. Therefore, receiving a rather lower monthly stipend than the minimum wage in their states negatively affected their experiences since they also needed and were advised to spare money from their spending after the rent, bills, and basic life expenses while finding chances to travel and explore activities, events, food, and services during their stays.

Secondly, *host institutions and their international houses* should have a welcoming attitude and ensure the integration of individuals. While few participants felt fully embraced by the attitude of the host institution, including the international houses, some of them felt loneliness and invisibility within their departments and universities. The host institutions or international houses might share best practices with each other to have a better understanding of the sojourning individuals.

Thirdly, *program advisors* in the host institutions can introduce FLTAs to the academic circle in the department, which could be implemented through holding initial welcoming events along with the orientations. The FLTAs can also be invited to the events, and their needs should be considered, such as transportation and hesitations since they might not have previous experience in the academic setting.

Fourthly, the study also suggests practical implementations for *individuals* who were grantees or candidates for FLTA programs to have seven different varieties of what might await them on their journey overseas with luggage full of hopes, insecurities, goals, hesitations, and dreams.

Lastly, *other international mobilities* other than Fulbright FLTA programs can benefit from the findings of the present study to advance their orientation programs and communication with the sojourners to ensure a smoother acculturation that would also have greater positive outcomes for both cultures' mutual understanding through the teachers' first-hand experiences.

To conclude, the above theoretical and practical implementations might be suggested through the FLTA's detailed narratives since the findings of this thesis were not deeply investigated in the literature.

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APPENDICES

A. UNOFFICIAL INITIAL CONTACT WITH THE SOJOURNERS

Merhaba, ben Dilara, FLTA 2*** döneminde ***'a gitmiştim 🙋🏻‍♀️🍀 Orada deneyimlediğim ve düşündüğüm bir konu üzerine bir tez çalışması yapacağım, hedef grubum sizler olduğunuz için katılım durumunuzu öğrenmek için size yazmak istedim. ***'a sizinle bağlantı kurmama yardım ettiği için ayrıca teşekkür ediyorum ☺️ Umarım bu çalışma ilginizi çeker. FLTA deneyiminiz boyunca bana istediğiniz zaman soru sorabilirsiniz :) Ayrıntılar şu şekilde:

Proposal aşamasında olduğum için henüz bir metin gönderemiyorum ama başlamadan önce size kabaca nasıl bir tez olacağını ve veri toplama konularını anlatmak isterim. Doğal bir iletişim halinde, olabildiğince sizi sıkmayacak bir araştırma tasarımı yapmaya çalışıyorum:

Özetle ana tema "Questioning Home" yani FLTA olarak Amerika'da yaşamaya başlayan sizlerin Amerika'daki ve ülkemizdeki yaşamımıza, yaşam alanımıza olan bakış açınızla ilgili diyebiliriz. Bu, alışma süreçlerini de kapsayan bir araştırma olacağı için uzun süreç içinde data toplamam gerekecek.

Üç farklı şekilde data toplamayı planlıyorum:
1- Sizinle çalışma başında, ortasında ve sonunda olacak şekilde birer online interview. Bunlar muhtemelen ilk vardığınız sıralar, ortalarda bir zaman ve dönmenize yaklaşan zaman diliminde birer tane olacak. Muhtemelen yarım saat-45dk sürebilir.
2-İkinci olarak sizden 2 haftayı aşmayacak aralıklarla özel bir zaman ayırmanıza gerek olmadan yolda yürürken, sırada beklerken, bir şeylerden söz etmek istediğinizde kısa ses ya da mesaj olarak gönderebileceğiniz monologlar olacak. Bunlar herhangi bir konuda paylaşmaya değer bulduğunuz, o anki deneyiminiz hakkında yorum yaptığınız, sesli düşündüğünüz kayıtlar olabilir. Ben de Amerika'dayken bu şekilde kayıtlar almıştım. Hem kolay hem de gerçekten kendi deneyimim için faydalı bir farkındalık olmuştu.
3-Bu madde danışmanımın tavsiyesiyle düşündüğümüz bir şey, sizlerin orada olduğunuz süre boyunca sosyal medyadaki paylaşımlarınızdan derlenecek. Bunların arasından kişisel olanlar değil de daha çok mesaj içeren, heyecanlandığınız, değişik bulduğunuz, bilgi verdiğiniz paylaşımlar dikkate alınacak. Yine tahmin edeceğiniz üzere kimliğiniz gizli olacak ve kimliğinizi ayırt edecek herhangi bir detay sizin bilginiz dahilinde olmadan araştırmada yer alamayacak.

Eğer katılacağım diyorsanız bana WhatsApp 0*** ya da d[redacted]@metu.edu.tr ile ulaşabilirsiniz.

Bu uzun bilgilendirmeyi okuduğunuz için teşekkürler bu noktadan sonra uzun bir şeyler okumanıza gerek olmayacak ☺️🙏🏻

B. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This study, *Questioning Home: A narrative inquiry of acculturation of Turkish sojourners in the United States,* was conducted by Dilara Maya, a Master of Art Thesis student of the Department of English Language Teaching, under the consultancy of Assoc. Dr. Betil Eröz Tuğa. This form has been prepared to inform you about the research scope and process.

What is the Purpose of the Study?

The aim of the study is to examine the acculturation through their narratives of experiences of individuals who went to the USA with a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant scholarship from Turkey and who have the responsibility of teacher/assistant and cultural ambassador in different universities. The aim is not to make judgments or generalizations over the experience of living abroad, but to closely examine the unique experiences of the individuals. If you agree to participate in the research, you are expected to make online interviews, send voice recordings/messages and photos about your experiences. Participation in this study covers the period you are in the USA.

What is expected from you?

In the research, data will be collected in different ways as interviews, memos, and social media posts. The first one of them will be in the form of semi-structured interview questions via the video conference program Zoom on your cultural observations and challenges during your acculturation experience in the US. From the beginning of the study, you are asked to share your current or retrospective memoirs or evaluations that you want to talk about at least once every two weeks during your stay. You can send them as often as you feel comfortable in the format you prefer as a voice recording or in writing via the WhatsApp application. In addition, you are requested to share your photo or video posts about America or Turkey via social media sharing platforms such as Instagram or Facebook with the researcher.

How will the gathered information be used?

Your participation in the research must be entirely voluntary. Direct or indirect identifiers of participants' identity will be kept completely confidential and will only be available to the researcher. The information obtained from the participants will be evaluated on an individual basis and will be used in scientific publications. Your data will not be matched with the identity information collected in the informed consent forms.

What you need to know about your participation

Your work does not involve any risks that may be encountered in daily life. If you feel uncomfortable during participation due to questions or for any other reason, you are free to leave the task answering halfway. In such a case, it will be sufficient to tell the researcher that you want to withdraw from the study. At the end of the tasks, your questions about this study will be answered. In addition, you can always reach the researcher outside of the scheduled interviews and ask questions about your experience in the United States.

If you would like more information about the research

Thank you in advance for participating in this study. For more information about the research, you can contact the researcher Dilara Maya, a graduate student in the Department of English Language Teaching ([redacted]@metu.edu.tr).

I have read the above information and participate in this study completely voluntarily.

(After completing and signing the form, return it to the practitioner).

Name Surname	Date	Signature
	--/--/-----	

C. ONLINE DEMOGRAPHICS AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

You Dear Participant,

The questionnaire, designed to receive your demographics and background information, has two main parts. While Part A focuses on your life in Turkey, Part B is about your life in the USA. Please provide any further necessary information or notes at the end of each section. Required "*"

1. Name and surname *

_____

2. A pseudonym to be used in the research
(Your choice of language/gender: Pam, Eric, Lui etc.) (You can also decide later)

_____

3. Age *

_____

A. This section is about your life in Turkey.

4. The city you lived in for the longest as a child and roughly the duration (e.g., Ankara, 10 years)

_____

5. Your undergraduate university, department, and graduation year? *
(e.g. Karadeniz Technical University - English Teacher - 2016)

_____

6. If any, your latest job, and position prior to your departure to the USA *
(e.g. MEB-English Teacher-secondary school)

_____

7. Your teaching experience *

1-5 years	5-10 years	10+ years	other

8. City where you lived before moving to the USA *

_____

9. The neighborhood profile around your residence in Turkey? *
(class, ethnicity, religion, etc. You can define as you want)

_____

10. Your income status before you went to the USA, how did you see yourself according to the conditions of that time?

low	lower middle	upper middle	high

11. Your hobbies and interests in Turkey (origami/ swimming/ tennis/ cleaning/…)

_____

12. Additional notes or information, if any:

_____

B. This section is about your life in the USA.

1. In which state and city do you live in the USA? *

_____

2. The neighborhood profile around your current residence in the USA? *
(class, ethnicity, religion, etc. You can define it as you wish.)

_____

3. Where do you stay? *

dormitory	rental room	flat for rent	house for rent

other (please specify): _____

4. With whom do you share the place you live in? *

_____

5. Your income status in the USA, how do you see yourself according to the living conditions of the time?

low	lower middle	upper middle	high

6. Your current or newly added hobbies/interests in the US?

_____

7. Additional notes or information, if any:

_____

For inquiries, please contact to the researcher Dilara Maya, graduate student in the Department of English Language Teaching ([redacted]@metu.edu.tr).

D. SAMPLE CODES FOR INTERVIEWS - FOCUS GROUP



12 Maive: Ben ilk ay şey yapamamıştım –hemen buradan örnek– ilk ay maaşımı alamamıştım çünkü. Mail olarak göndermişler maaşımı ben banka mı yüklenecek diye bekliyorum falan. Ve 15 gün ben para bekliyorum, gelmiyor falan. Meğerse bir tane bir şey gelmişti yani mail gelmişti bir bakayım falan dedim. Üzerinde çek yazıyor Meğer çek olarak göndermişler yani. Bana da inanılmaz hala bu kadar kâğıt bağımlı olmaları. Evet çok tuhaf geliyor gerçekten.

13 Maria: Ya mesela son zamanlarda olan olaylar filan da Abortion ayrı işte bilmiyorum sizin şeyleriniz nasıl? Ama burası sözde daha işte liberal, daha Avrupai bir yer filan deniyor ama hiç öyle değil yani özellikle ben belki Amerikanlar ile birlikte yaşadığım için sürekli bunu gözlemledim. Mental problemlerin mesela zirvede olduğu. Pam'a anlattım sanırım burada sadece bilen Pam ve Maive varsınız yani burada ev arkadaşım cozuttu kafayı kırdı. 3 hafta hastanede yattı. Sonra bir 3 hafta daha yattı vs. bir şeyler ama bu çok sık olan bir şeymiş. İnsanlar buna normal bakıyor. Ben böyle "Aa gerçekten mi? Nasıl yani" falan diye. Ama başına gelmedikçe böyle şeyleri öğrenemiyorsun. Burada özel timler filan varmış. Bilmiyorum işte kültürel hani o individualistic culture olmasından kaynaklı olan ben çok fazla tecrübe ettim. Ondan dolayı ben biraz negatif bakıyorum aslında. Hani belki bunu 6-7 ayda siz tecrübe etmemiş olabilirsiniz? Bana denk geldi yani benim şansıma yaşadıklarım gerçekten. Ama bunun çok normalleştirilmesi "a evet doğru" yani buradaki koordinatörle bile bunu paylaştığımda "a evet ya hani bunun tecrübe ettiğine üzüldüm" falan tarzı şeyler söyledi ama bu çok yoğun olarak gözlenen bir şey. Kahve falı biz burada bakıyoruz işte siz de yapıyorsunuzdur. Bana özellikle uyarı geldi dediler ki hep şey, pozitife odaklan, hiç negatif söyleme çünkü insanların yüzünden anlayamazsın. Gençler özellikle 18 ve 25 yaş arasındaki gençlerde inanılmaz bir böyle dışarıdan mutlu gözükse bile içinde depresyon, işte ilaç kullanımı zaten bu opioid mi ne o inanılmaz yaygınmış bunu söyledim. Evdeki kız "a ben de kullanıyorum" falan dedi yeni gelen kız. Ben böyle şok oldum. Bugün çok enteresan şeyler yani hiç duymadım daha önce.

14 Denise: Aynı konuda mesela benim ev arkadaşım diyor işte. Amerika'lı biriyle yaşıyorum. Şu anda bir aya yakın. Oldu hakikaten onun da çok tuhaf mental sorunları var. Ve hep aynı. Şeylerden bahsediyor ve diyor ki, yani hani? Nasıl yani? Bu nasıl? Dert ediyorsun? oturuyor, düşünüyor, kuruyor, kuruyor, kuruyor ondan. Sonra baya yani mesela şu an yeni tanıştığı biriyle göz teması falan kuramıyor. Öyle bir tip insan ve yaşça benden büyük 36 yaşında falan bir kızı var. Mesela evdeki hayatı falan da aşırı dağınık bilmem ne falan böyle. biraz zor oluyor açıkçası. Çok o yüzden çünkü. Çok anlatıyor, anlatıyor, anlatıyor kendiyle ilgili, seni dinlemiyor gibi bir şey oluyor yani. Gitmem lazım diyorum ya başka bir şey anlatıyorum. Hep kendisinden bahsediyor.

15 Researcher: Elise senin bu konuda bir yorum var mı?

16 Elise: Beni uçaktan indiğim gün alıştım çünkü liseden beri beni Amerika'da yaşama hayali kurduğum için. Bu ikinci gelişim zaten biraz da alışıktım. Hiçbir kültür şoku yaşamadım. Yani olumsuz yönleri var ama Türkiye ile kıyaslayınca hiçbir olumsuzluk bir şey yok Her şeyi görmezden geliyorum, Türkiye'den iyidir diyorum, o yüzden daha fazla seviyorum burayı.

17 Maive: Ben de bir şey söyleyeyim mi? Biraz farklı çünkü söyleyeceğim şey. Benim de şey. Ben de burada çok zengin mahallesinde yaşıyorum diyeyim. Çok eğitimli ve zenginlerin olduğu bir mahalle. O yüzden mesela bahsettikleri şeylerle hiç karşılaşmadım neredeyse. Yani böyle bir kere şey konusunda inanılmaz bendeki şok tam tersi oldu. Çünkü o bildiğimiz imaj var bizde, o bizi asla şaşırtmıyor, ilk geldiğimiz günden beri buralı hissediyoruz. Hiç kültür şoku yaşamadık. Ama şok yaşadığım şey mesela ev sahibim olsun, onun arkadaşları, tüm mahalle şey konusunda inanılmaz bilinçler bu geri dönüşüm konusunda. Geri dönüşüm çılgınlığı var. Yani o kadar bilinçler. Atık hiç görmüyorum. Her şey işte kompost ediyorlar bilmem ne hiç bir şeyi atmıyorlar, etmiyorlar. Üniversitede sadece çok fazla plastik kullanımı var. Rahatsız eden ama onun dışında böyle inanılmaz bilinçliler. Böyle mental problemler falan yani kahve içmiyorlar, şey içmiyorlar inanılmaz sağlıklı yaşıyorlar, sürekli koşuyorlar, spor yapıyorlar. Yani şey böyle ekstrem anlamda olumlu olarak söylemiyorum bunu ekstrem anlamda sağlıklı yaşıyorlar falan hiç böyle. Asla ilaç falan kullanmıyorlar. Hani başlarına bir şey gelse de ilaç kullanmaya karşıyım falan yani bendeki de tam o taraftaki insanlar bana da bu çok şey geliyor. Mesela ben de bu kadar sağlıklı olacaklarını beklemiyordum. Yani şu an çevremdeki herhangi bir Amerikalıyla şu an öğlen 12'den sonra birlikte kahve içemiyoruz. Hepsini çarpıntı yapıyor yani.

18 Denise: Çok iyi ya.

19 Maive: Artık bana çok komik geliyor. Hepinize çarpıntı yapıyor olamaz.

20 Maria: Benim yaşadığım yer bence çok extreme bir yermiş.

21 Maive: Benimki ya hem burası genel şehir olarak öyleymiş. Bir de ben şehrin biraz daha işte böyle zengin tarafında yaşıyorum. Öyle olunca bir de zaten özel üniversite öğrencilerinin hepsi öyle falan biraz öyle oldu. Benimki de biraz farklı yani o yüzden.

22 Researcher: Pam, bir şey ekleyecektin sanki ben onu kaçırmış olabilirim.

23 Pam: Ben şey söyleyecektim din konusu beni şaşırtan konulardan biri yani ben burada küçük bir üniversite şehrinde yaşıyorum. Burada bile yani mesela Hristiyanlık çok çok üst seviyede geliyor bana. Ben bu kadarını beklemiyordum. Her benimle iletişime geçen insanın kilise ile bir iletişimi var yani. Ben sonradan öğreniyorum falan. Yani bu tabii ki de bana olumsuz bir şekilde yansımıyor ama benim beklemediğim bir şeydi. Beni şaşırtan şeylerden biriydi açıkçası.

24 Beren: Ben de bu konuyu açınca şey zannediyordum. Sen güneydesin ondandır falan diyordu bazıları ama sonra sizden de duydukça duydukça aslında öyle olmadığını her yerde aynı şeyin olduğunu ben de sizden öğrendim.

E. SAMPLE ANALYSIS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

	location	date	description	comment
post#1	Beverly Hills, CA	Sep.21	her - in the street	It is ironic that the word 'space', which completes the sentence written on my T-shirt, could not find space in the photo🤦🏻‍♀️
post#2	Isla Vista, CA		a place with a pride mural	Kıyıda köşede kalmasını istemediklerimden🤓
post#3	Los Angeles, CA		her - landmarks Venice, Beverly Hills, Santa Monica	
post#4			her - in front of a wheel	
post#5	Santa Barbara Downtown		her - sitting outside of a cafe	When you finally settle down and read a bit🌴🤓
post#6	Santa Barbara, CA		her - on th grass in a campus	Literally getting closer to nature🍀
post#7	Venice Beach, CA		her - kissing a bear sculpture, sitting over a bridge, and landmanrks	Ağacı sev Yeşili koru Ayıyı öp
post#8	Orange County, CA	Oct.21	her - orange headwear	Kafalarımızı saran ve doğru renk sayesinde kalabalıkta kaybolmamızı engelleyen Hintli abiye şükranlarımızı sunarız🌴
post#9			wtih a Turkish person	(PS: başımıza güneş geçmedi en azından ama ağırlığa sadece bir süre dayanabildik)
post#10	Santa Barbara, CA	Nov.21	her - in costumes, people, a pumpkin	Halloween in a nutshell.
post#11	Dallas, TX		her - with a Turkish person with fall decoration	When distance does not matter💙
post#12	Boston, MA	Dec.21	her - in the city	Kış sezonuna tam anlamıyla geçmek için 3093 mil yol tepmem gerekti.
post#13				(A fun fact: Kilise ziyaretinde verilen etiketle saatlerce dolaşmışım)
post#14	Boston, MA		A colorful mural	A representation of my Spotify account.
post#15	New Haven, CT		sitting on the stairs of a building	Eğer dikkatli bakarsanız havanın ne kadar soğuk olduğunu, uslu bir çocuk olursanız şirinleri bile görebilirsiniz. Thanking another FLTA
post#16	SoJo Spa Club		swimming in the infinity pool	
post#17	Las Vegas, NV	Jan.22	landmarks	Vegas Diaries
post#18	Las Vegas, NV		her - with an iconic sign	Mission completed.
post#19	Venice Beach, CA		palm trees	Well, palm trees always rock!
post#20	Griffith Park, CA	Feb.22	her - with a Turkish person - city scape	Biz Porsuk Çayı'nın kenarında buluşan insanlardık🌴
post#21			holywood sign	
post#22	Disneyland, CA	Mar.22	her - with a Turkish person posing infront of a landmark	this pic is the best summary of our story. It is a small world, it literally is🌴
post#23	Honolulu Wakiki, HI		her - with Turkish people	Needless to say that we are over the moon!
post#24	Waikiki, HI		her - in the city	
post#25	Honululu, HI		her - in branches	Kendimi daha önce hiç bu kadar minik hissetmemiştim.
post#26	Pahoa, HI		her - with a local flower necklace in nature	Heaven is a place on earth.
post#27			her - with an International student	Let me introduce my lovely friend, student and Armenian teacher A. J.!💙
post#28				We should take more photos' (G., 2022).

F. TRANSCRIPTION SAMPLE FOR VOICE MEMOS

Pam - Feb 24, WP-Rec. 22:31:

Ben bu sefer sana vaktinde dönebiliyorum hayat nasıl gidiyor ya son birkaç haftadır şimdi inanılmaz bir verimsizlik şöyle şu an Şubat ayı biliyorsun burada ve Şubat ayı tam böyle kışın zirvesi ve ben böyle bu ayın başından beri dedi bir isteksiz hissediyorum yani isteksiz derken hani böyle mutsuzluk depresyon gibi değil ama böyle ne bileyim işlerimi erteleme eğilimindeyim odamı bile temizlemek istemiyorum falan böyle bir tuhaf moddaydım ve bu benim danışmanıma göre SAD dedikleri bu Seasonal affective disorder dedikleri bir şeymiş bu kış çok uzun olduğu için ve uzun süre güneş görmediğimiz için böyle şeyler yaşanabiliyormuş ben de biraz bu noktayı açıkçası yani şimdi çok da yaşamadığım bir şey olduğu için hani genel olarak ben özellikle iş konusuna çok böyle takmayan bir yapıda değilim yani takmamak da değil aslında ama ne demek istediğimi anladığını sanıyorum ki yani böyle içimden gelmiyor yapmak yapıyorum ama içimden gelmiyor öyle bir dönem geçirdim ama şu an toparladım odamı temizledikten sonra birden birden kafam yerine geldi onun dışında artık böyle şey tabii ki düşünmeye başladım yani eve dönüşü işte böyle haftalık toplantılarımızda da konusu açılmaya başlandı nasıl hissediyorsunuz eve döneceksiniz neler yapmayı düşünüyorsunuz ya bu düşünceyi o kadar erteledim ki kafamda şu an nasıl o kafaya gireceğimi gerçekten bilmiyorum bir de böyle bir durum var onun dışında şu anda spring break'e bir haftamız kaldı arkadaşımla New York'a ve DC'ye gideceğim bunun için heyecanlıyım yani bunun için de aslında biraz stresliyim çünkü hani böyle planlama işi biraz son dakikaya kaldı gibi oldu bilet falan alma ama onları hallettik yani o iyi olur diye düşünüyorum bir 9-10 günlük aramız olacak eğlenceli geçer sanıyorum ki çünkü böyle son zamanlarda gerçekten herkes değişik bir kafaya girdim ya ben bir tek kendimin yaşadığını düşünüyordum hani ne bileyim odamdan pek çıkmak istemiyorum sürekli uyumak istiyorum falan herkes aslında bunu yaşıyormuş belki dediğim gibi hani bu dönemsel bir şey olabilir mevsimsel bir şey olabilir ya da işte bu geriye dönme vakti yaklaşıyor hani şu an sana demiştim ya geçen konuştuğumuzda döneceğim için ne yapacağımı şaşırdım diye şu an o kafa daha da farklı bir seviyeye geldi çünkü yapmadığım herhangi bir şeyin pişmanlığını yaşamak istemiyorum ama neyin pişmanlığını yaşarım onu da bilmiyorum ya o yüzden hakikaten ilginç bir dönemdeyim ama yani şey beni çok korkutmuyor yani geriye dönme fikri çünkü bu bunun yüzünden böyle kabus gören falan arkadaşım var mesela arkadaşım iki gündür şeyi görüyormuş uçağa biniyor Amerika içinde seyahat edeceğim diye kendi ülkesine dönüyor falan yok dedim yani ben o kadar da değil Türkiye'ye dönmek başıma gelebilecek en kötü şey değil ama tabii ki plansız olduğum için yani bilmiyorum ya oraya dönünce nasıl hissedeceğimi bilmiyorum biraz bilinmezlik hissindeyim ben bayağı konuştum ya bende haberler böyle…

G. OUTSIDER COMMENTS

Outsider Comments

* Gerekli

1. Please choose a language? / Lütfen bir dil seçiniz? *

   Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

   - ◯ English *9. soruya gidin*
   - ◯ Türkçe *2. soruya gidin*

----------for Turkish Commentors----------

Outsider Comments - TR

Bu araştırma (Questioning Home: A narrative inquiry of acculturation of Turkish sojourners in the United States), İngiliz Dili Öğretimi Bölümü Yüksek Lisans Tez öğrencisi Dilara Maya tarafından Doç Dr. Betil Eröz Tuğa danışmanlığında yürütülen bir çalışmadır.

Araştırmanın amacı Türkiye'den Amerika'ya Fulbright Yabancı Dil Asistanlığı bursu ile gitmiş ve farklı üniversitelerde öğretmen/asistan ve kültür elçisi sorumluluğunu taşıyan bireylerin kültürleşm deneyimlerini anlatıları yoluyla incelemektir.

Sizden beklenen size ulaşan katılımcımızın yakını/arkadaşı/tanıdığı olarak onun Amerikadaki deneyimi üzerine aşağıdaki soruları yanıtlamanızdır.

Vermiş olduğunuz kişisel bilgiler tamamıyla gizli tutulacak, sadece araştırmacı tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Rahatsızlığa sebep olan herhangi bir noktada cevaplama işini yarıda bırakıp çıkmakta serbestsiniz.

Katılımınız için teşekkür ederim - D. Maya

2. Yukarıdaki bilgileri okudum ve bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum. *

   Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

   - ◯ Evet
   - ◯ Hayır

3. Lütfen adınızı yazdıktan sonra hakkında yazacağınız katılımcının baş harflerini de ekleyin (örn: Ayla Çiçek - D.T.)*

   _____

4. Katılımcıyı nereden ve ne kadar süredir tanıyorsunuz? *

   _____

5. Onun Amerika'daki deneyimini nasıl gözlemliyorsunuz? *

6. Bu deneyimin ona neler kazandırmış olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz? *

7. Edindiği deneyimlerin kendi ülkesine ve kültürüne olan bakışını nasıl etkilediğini düşünüyorsunuz?*

8. Size Amerika ya da Amerikan kültürü hakkında söylediği en ilginç şey neydi? *

----------for Non-Turkish Commentors----------

Outsider Comments - EN

This research (Questioning Home: A narrative inquiry of acculturation of Turkish sojourners in the United States) was conducted by Dilara Maya, a Master's Thesis student of the Department of English Language Teaching, under the consultancy of Assoc. Dr. Betil Eröz Tuğa.

The aim of the research is to examine the acculturation experiences of individuals who went to the USA with Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant scholarship from Turkey and who have th responsibility of teacher/assistant and cultural ambassador at different universities.

As a relative/friend/acquaintance of our participant who has contacted you, you are expected to answer the following questions about his/her experience in the US.

The personal information you provide will be kept completely confidential and will only be evaluate by the researcher. You are free to stop at any point of this form.

Thank you for your participation - D. Maya

9. I have read the above information and participate in this study completely voluntarily. *

Yalnızca bir şıkkı işaretleyin.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

10. Please write your name and include the participant's initials in the end (Amy Smith - D.T.) *

11. How long have you known the participant? What is your connection with the participant?*

12. What are your opinions/observations about his/her experience in the US? *

13. In what ways could this experience have contributed to her/him? *

14. How could this experience have affected his/her view of his/her own country and its culture?*

15. What was the most intersting fact about Turkey or Turkish culture that s/he told you about?*

H. SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTION FOR OUTSIDER COMMENTS

Maria's Outsider Commentors

OC1SUF - 8 years – partner

Q1: Challenging at first, but in terms of education very enriching.

Q2: This experience contributed her: It has surely widened her horizons. She has now more technical and intellectual tools to do a much better job in her field.

Q3: She could see her culture and country: In many ways, being far away and observing one's culture from outside always gives you another perspective. I believe she now cares even more about her roots and has more pride about her own culture.

Q4: The most interesting sharing: The traditional dance, which she actually knows how to perform.

OC2LU - 7 months - another FLTA & roommate

Q1: Her experience has been: She has successfully balanced her work, her studies, and her free time. She has had the chance to explore life in the US to the fullest. She has made lifelong connections.

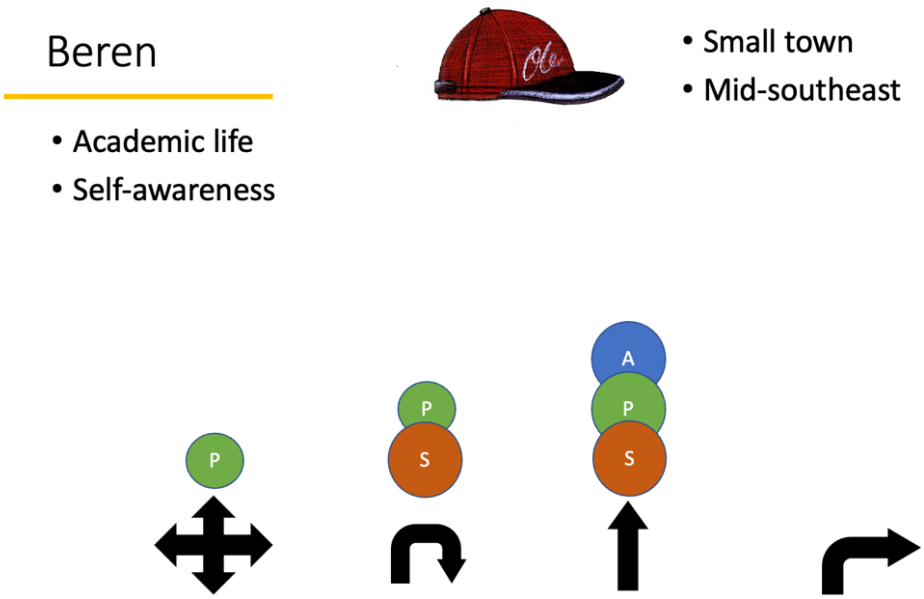
Q2: This experience contributed her: She has developed her skills as a teacher. She has learned about different cultures, especially American culture, and that will contribute to her work as an English teacher. She has developed her intercultural communication skills. She has gained experience teaching a foreign language to adults in a university setting. She has developed as a person and global citizen.

Q3: She could see her culture and country: The opportunity to look at her own country and culture in order to create the lessons for her students requires her to try to see it all through the eyes of a foreigner and notice aspects that perhaps had been too familiar before. Maybe she has learned to appreciate things that she had taken for granted before. Maybe she learned or realized new things about her country, language, and culture. Now she has a better understanding of what it means to be Turkish abroad.

Q4: The most interesting sharing: I can say now that I love Turkish food and all the care that is put into the meals. The Turkish breakfast I had was incredible. I learned how to say "afiyet olsun" when someone is about to eat their meal and "eline sağlık" too. I like these expressions and how they show the importance of food and health.

I. SUMMARY CARDS OF PARTICIPANTS

Legend: Upper section introduces the participants' pseudonym along with the reminiscing visual of their experience. On the upper right corner, the neighborhood information and the US region were given while the upper left side lists the highlighted themes for the given personal's experiences regarding challenges and reconsiderations. The lower part has arrow symbols for the acculturation strategies as integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization, respectively. The round symbols were positioned over the mostly implemented strategies. The partially visited strategies were also illustrated by smaller round symbols. They symbolize each focus of the narratives as S for social, P for personal, and A for academic aspects.

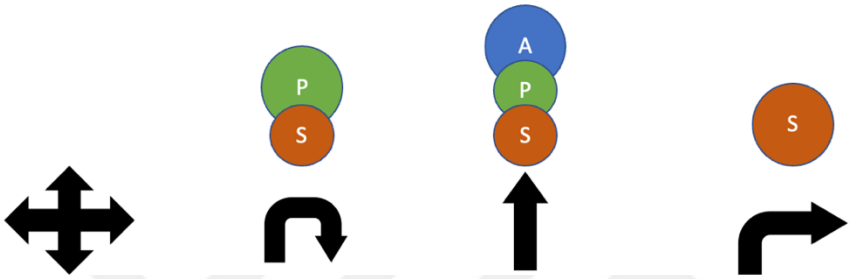


Maive



- Small town
- South-East

- Loneliness
- Religion
- Economy

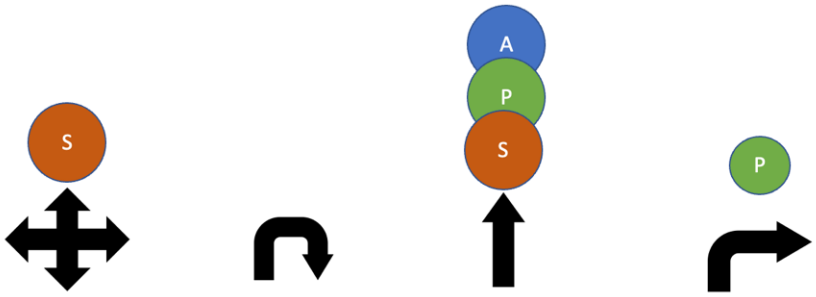


Olsen



- Large city
- North-East

- Disappointment
- Self-awareness
- Enlightenment

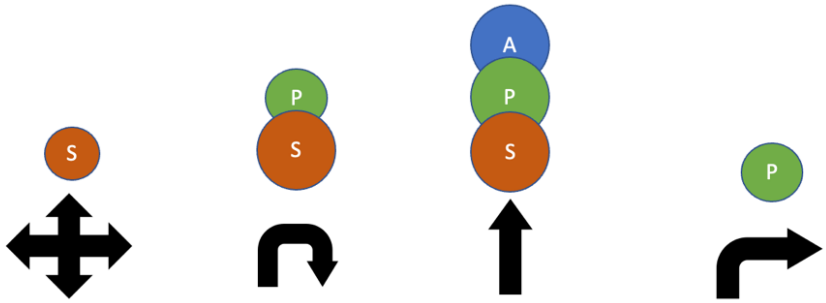


Pam

- Religiousness
- Self-awareness
- Diet



- Small town
- Mid-North

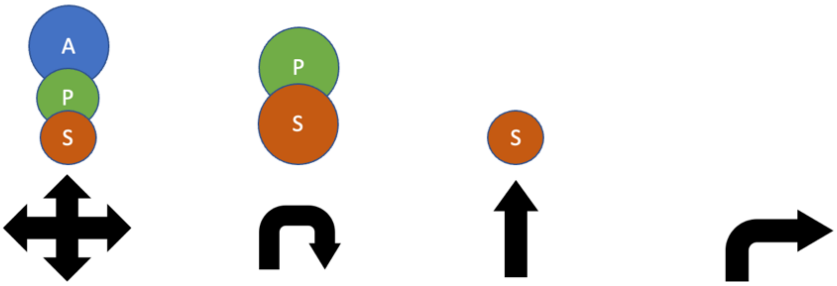


Maria

- Self-realization
- Economy
- Humanity



- Small town
- North-West

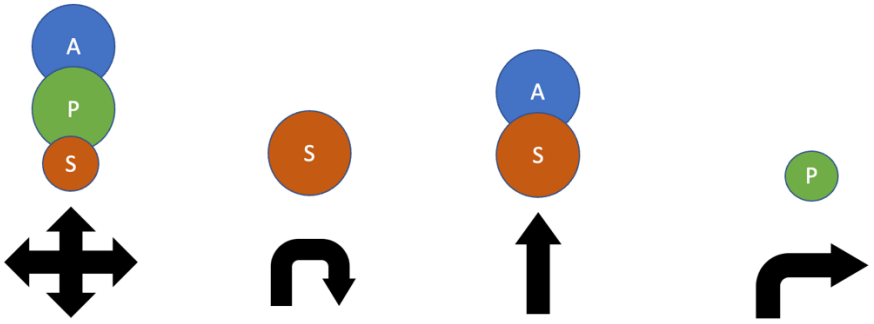


Denise

- Habits
- Co-nationals
- Intervention



- Large town
- South-West coastal

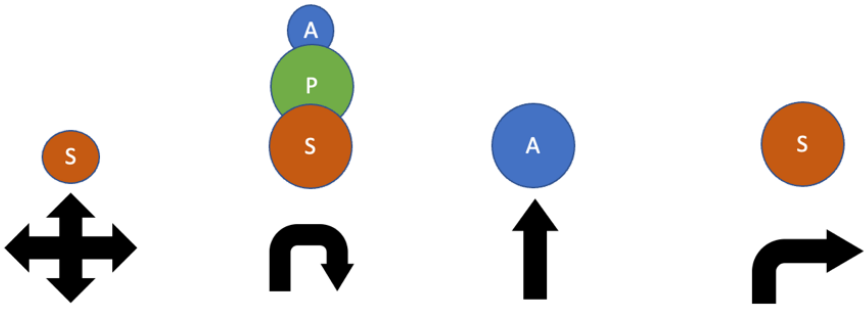


Elise

- Disappointment
- Religion
- Economy



- Large city
- South-East coastal



J. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

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14 OCAK 2022

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Betil ERÖZ TUĞA

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Dilara MAYA'nın "Questioning Home: A narrative inquiry of acculturation of Turkish sojourners in the United States" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **0024-ODTUİAEK-2022** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

[redacted]

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkan

K. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Mevcut çalışma Türkiye'den geçici konuk olarak (sojourn) Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'ne Fulbright Yabancı Dil Öğretim Asistanı (FLTA) olarak giden yedi İngilizce öğretmeninin kültürleşme stratejilerine ve ev sahibi ülkede yaşarken deneyimledikleri kültürleşme streslerine odaklanıyor. Çalışma aynı zamanda bu bireylerin kendi ülkeleri ve kültürleri hakkında yeniden gözden geçirdikleri noktaları sunmayı amaçlamıştır.

Araştırmanın ortaya çıkış nedeni: Araştırmacı daha önce FLTA olarak Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde (ABD'de) bulunmuştur, dolayısıyla bursun hem akademik sonuçlarını görmüş hem de kendi kişisel ve toplumsal görüş ve anlayışlarında değişiklikler gözlemlemiştir. Ancak bu dönüşümsel değişimlerin ortaya çıkarılması için dışarıdan somut bir talep olmadığında, fark edilmeden bireylerin kendi deneyimi olarak kalmakta ve bu gibi mobilitelerin kültürlerarası etkileşimdeki bilinirliği kısıtlanmakta olduğunu fark etmiştir. Bu nedenle, mevcut araştırma bireylerin bu deneyimlerini aktarmalarını sağlamak ve aynı zamanda bir kişinin ev sahibi ülkede kaldığı süre boyunca yaşayabileceği çok sayıda gerçekliğe tanık olmak için yürütülmüştür.

Araştırmada "kültür" konsepti mutlak bir fenomen olarak değil, her bir bireyin önce ailesi ve çevresi aracılığıyla edindiği ardından eğitim ve kişisel gelişim yoluyla geliştirdiği ve ev sahibi kültüre getirdiği "kendi kültürü" olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Türkiye birçok kültüre ev sahipliği yapan çeşitliliğe sahip bir ülke olduğu için, Türkiye'den gelen İngilizce eğitmenlerinin Amerika Birleşik Devletleri 'ne getirdikleri değerleri, ritüelleri, sembolleri ve uygulamaları tanımlamak için "ev kültürü" terimi kullanılmıştır. Tüm bu nedenle çalışma boyunca "kültür", bireylerin çok yönlü, çoğul bir anlayışı olarak sosyal bireysel ve akademik olarak üç ana başlık halinde ele alınmıştır.

Bu çalışmanın önemi: Çalışma bireylerin ABD'de yaptıkları ilk elden gözlemler ve kültürleşme yolculukları üzerinden, Türkiye'de ikamet eden Türk eğitmenlerin kendi ülkelerinde eleştirmeye değer buldukları hususları anlamaya yardımcı olacaktır. Ayrıca, çalışma, bireylerin kültürleşme stratejileri ile birlikte, deneyimleri sırasında kültürleşme stresini nasıl ve yaşamın hangi yönlerinde yaşadıklarını kapsamlı bir şekilde göstermektedir. Bulgular aynı zamanda ABD ve Türkiye'deki Fulbright programlarının gelişimine ve aday ya da bursiyerlerin bilgi sahibi olmasına olanak sağlaması beklenmektedir. Bunlara ek olarak, Türkiyeden kültürlerarası temasta bulunmak üzere yurtdışına çıkan bireylerle çalışan diğer kültürel hareketlilik programları için de ön görü sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Bu araştırmanın amacı; Fulbright Türkçe Yabancı Dil Öğretim Asistanı olarak Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde dokuz ay süreyle ikamet eden yedi İngilizce okutmanının özgün kültürleşme yolculuklarını nasıl deneyimlediklerini, anlatıları üzerinden kullandıkları kültürleşme stratejileri, deneyimledikleri kültürleşme stresörleri ve kendi ülkelerindeki yaşamları üzerinden yaptıkları sorgulamalarını araştırmaktır. Araştırmanın ana sorusu ve üç alt sorusu şu şekilde sıralanmaktadır:

1- Fulbright Türkçe Dil Öğretim Asistanı olarak Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde dokuz ay kalan yedi İngilizce öğretmeninin yaşadığı deneyimler nelerdir?

a- Sosyal, kişisel ve akademik açılardan kültürleşme stresörleri nelerdir?

b- Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde kaldıkları süre boyunca kullandıkları kültürleşme stratejileri nelerdir?

c- Ülkeleriyle ilgili hangi unsurları kısa süreli deneyimleriyle yeniden gözden geçirmişlerdir?

Bu araştırmanın odağı teorik çerçevesini oluşturan kültürleşme teorisi, psikoloji, sosyoloji ve eğitim gibi birçok disiplinde yaygın olarak çalışılan bir ilgi alanı olmuştur. Berry (2003), bireylerin veya grupların ev sahibi ülkede kaldıkları süre boyunca *entegrasyon, asimilasyon, ayrılma* ve *marjinalleşme* olmak üzere dört ana stratejisini belirleyerek kültürleşmeyi bir çerçeveye oturtmuştur. Bu stratejiler, grupların veya bireylerin kendi kültürlerini ve kimliklerini koruma eğilimlerine ve baskın kültürle amaçlanan etkileşim derecelerine göre oluşturulmaktadır.

Berry'nin öne sürdüğü belirlenen kültürleşme stratejilerden ilki, *entegrasyon*, yaygın olarak beklenmekte ve diğerleri arasında en ideal strateji olarak görülmektedir. Yurtdışında kısa süreli giden bireyler kendi getirdikleri ev kültürlerini yeni hayatlarında maruz kaldıkları ev sahibi kültürle entegre ederek, daha az kültürleşme sorunu yaşar ve yurtdışındaki deneyimlerinden en fazla fayda sağlarlar. *Ayrılma stratejisi* gibi diğer bir strateji ise, genellikle ev sahibi ülkede ayrımcılık olduğunda ortaya çıkar (Sam ve Berry, 2010). Bireyler ev sahibi kültürü reddetme ve kendi yaşam tarzlarını kültürlerinin normlarında sürdürmekte ısrar etme eğilimindedir. Bu bireyler kendilerini ev sahibi kültürden ayırarak kendi topluluklarını oluştururlar veya kendi yurttaşlarıyla daha fazla zaman geçirirler. Ancak bireylerin kendi kültürlerini de temsil ederek ev sahibi grupla aktif olarak etkileşime girmesinin beklendiği kültürel değişim programlarının amaçlarıyla çelişebilir.

Bunun tersine, kültürleşme sürecindeki bireylerin uygulayabildiği diğer bir strateji ise *asimilasyondur*. Bu özgül strateji türünü tercih eden bireyler kendi ev kültürünü terk edip ev sahibi toplumun kültürünü benimsediği için *ayrılmanın* stratejisinin karşıtı olarak değerlendirilebilir. Bu stratejilerin en sonuncusu ve en nadir görüleni, bireylerin hem kendi ev kültürlerini hem de ev sahibi kültürü de reddettikleri ve her iki kültüre göre de uyumsuz yaşam biçimlerini benimsedikleri *marjinalleşme* stratejisidir. Her ne kadar farklı gruplar içine yerleştirilmiş olsalar da bu stratejiler genel eğilimler olarak genelleştirilmediği sürece izole olarak gözlemlenmesi gerekmemektedir çünkü "tek bir kültürleşme modeli beklentisi yoktur" (Berry, 1992, s. 74). Aksine, "son derece değişken stratejiler ve sonuçlar" (s. 74) etkin bir adaptasyon yolunda görülmektedir. Deneyimlerin bireysel farklılıkları ve nüansları nedeniyle, bireylerin ev sahibi kültürdeki deneyimleri aracılığıyla hem asimilasyon hem de entegrasyon veya entegrasyon ve ayrılma gibi birden fazla stratejiyi farklı durumlarda göstermeyi tercih edebilecekleri sonucuna varılmaktadır.

Literatür taraması neticesinde kültürleşme stresörleri hem stres faktörlerini hem de kültürleşme sürecinde yaşanan uyumsuzlukları ifade etmek için kullanılmıştır. Özellikle literatürde Türk katılımcıları içeren araştırmalarda yer alan Temel kültürleşme stresörleri yurt özlemi, dil kullanımı, yalnızlık, sosyal ilişkiler, arkadaşlık, bütçe, psikoloji ve rekabetçi akademik çevre gibi misafir ve göçmenler için

kültürleşme stresörleri şeklinde aşağıdaki temalarla geniş bir şekilde verilmiştir (Desai, 2021).

Bireysel düzeyde kısa süreli konukların (sojourn) kültürleşmesi, dünya çapında büyük bir hızla devam etmekte olan hareketlilik faaliyetlerine rağmen literatürde derinlemesine araştırılan bir konu değildir (Yuniarti, 2004; Smith ve Khawaja, 2011; Sullivan ve Kashubeck-West, 2015). Kültürleşme araştırmaları kısa süreli yurt dışında bulunan söz konusu bireyleri çoğunlukla azınlıklar, göçmenler ve sığınmacılarla aynı grup içinde değerlendirmektedir. Ancak bu bireylerin ülkeler arasında "birkaç günden birkaç yıla kadar" süren kısa vadeli hareketlilikler şeklinde konakladığı gözlemlenmektedir (Bochner, 2006). Bu grup diğerlerinden yurt dışı deneyimi amaçları ve ilk beklentileri açısından farklılık göstermektedir. Azınlıklar, göçmenler ve sığınmacılardan farklı olarak, ev sahibi ülkede daimi ikametgah bulmak, savaştan veya suçtan kaçmak, sığınma talebinde bulunmak ve çalışma izni almak, bu grubun temel amaçları arasında değildir. Bu konukların motivasyon ve amaçları, yabancı bir ülkenin dilini ve kültürünü tanımak, dil becerilerini geliştirmek ve oldukça sınırlı zamanlarında öğretmen, yönetici, asistan veya öğrenci olarak bir role sahip olmak gibi ev sahibi kültürde çeşitli ek fırsatlara sahip olmaktır (Bochner, 2006). Bununla birlikte, Berry (2003), göçmenler, mülteciler veya diğer insan gruplarıyla karşılaştırıldığında, bu konukları gönüllü olarak ev sahibi ülkede olmayı seçmeleri, orada öğrenci, öğretmen, yönetici veya stajyer gibi atanmış rollere sahip oldukları ve ev sahibi topluluklarla günlük yakın temas kurmaları gerektiğinden, kültürleşme deneyimlerinin benzersiz konumuna dikkat çeker.

Sonuç olarak, bu araştırmanın bireysel kültürleşme deneyimleri üzerine yaygın nitel araştırmalarının bulgularını derinleştirerek literatürü zenginleştirmek için önemli olabilir. Literatürde diğer ülkelerle kıyaslandığında kısa süreliğine yurt dışında olan Türklere ilişkin çok fazla çalışma bulunmamakla birlikte, literatürdeki kültürleşme stratejileri örneklerinden farklı bulgular içermektedir. Örneğin, *asimilasyon* sadece sosyoekonomik düzeyi yüksek olan Türk katılımcılarda görülürken, literatürdeki Asya örneklerine daha çok paralel olarak ABD'deki Türk öğrenciler tarafından en çok uygulanan strateji *ayrılma* stratejisi olmuştur.

Ne yazık ki, Türkiye'den gelen bireylerin ev sahibi ülkedeki kültürleşmelerini araştırmak üzere ağırlıklı olarak Avrupa genelindeki göçmen Türkler ile ilgili birçok çalışma bulunmaktadır. Ancak bu çalışmanın odak noktasında yer alan Türkiye'den kısa süreli ayrılan grup özellikle öğretmen olarak dil dersleri veren ve aynı zamanda öğrenci olarak ders alan yabancı dil öğretim görevlilerine odaklansa da göçmen Türklerin de deneyimledikleri kültürleşme, bu süreçteki stresörler grubun dinamiklerinin anlaşılması açısından önem taşımaktadır.

Türkiye ve ABD kültürel değer boyutları, inançları ve uygulamaları açısında en az ortaklık görülen ülkeler olarak görülmektedir. Literatür taraması Türkiye'den gelen bireylerin kültürleşme deneyimlerini ve tercih edilen stratejilerini ortaya koymaktadır. *Entegrasyon*, kısa süreli yurtdışı deneyimini edinen bireylerde genel memnuniyet ve başarılı kültürleşme ile ilişkili olduğu için olumlu olarak görülse de Türkçe örnekler literatüre paralel değildir. Bulgular temel olarak kültürel değerlerin yoğunluğu, temas halindeki iki kültürün kültürel ve coğrafi yakınlığı, siyaset, din, ev sahibi kültürün tutumu, bireylerin dil yeterliliği, medeni durum, kültürlenen grubun türü ve yerel halkla etkileşim yoluyla yorumlanmıştır. Bu nedenle, bireyler tercihlerini kültürleşme deneyimlerinin hayatın çeşitli dinamiklerine göre oluşturma eğilimindedir.

(Ward ve ark., 2001), bireyler kültürlerarası etkileşim yoluyla birçok zorlukla karşıılaşır ve ev sahibi kültürle olan günlük etkileşimi içinde farklı durumlarda tepki verme gereksinimi duyar. Dwyer'a (2004) göre, kendi kültürleri hakkında daha fazla bilgiye sahip olan bireyler, diğer kültürleri daha iyi anlıyor, bu da onların eylemlerini, inançlarını ve uygulamalarını başkalarıyla karşılaştırarak ve inceleyerek oldukça ayrıntılı bir şekilde düşünmelerini sağlıyor.

Ancak kültürleşme üzerine yapılan çalışmaların çoğu, bireylerin hikayelerine derinlemesine girmeden nicel yaklaşımlarla yürütüldüğü için bu detayları yakalamaları güç oluyor. Bu sebeple bu çalışmada bireyin kültürleşme yolculuğunda Türk ve Amerikan kültürüne dair anlatıları kültürleşme stratejileriyle birlikte genellemelere varmadan sunulmaya çalışılmıştır.

Öğretmenlerin etkisi müfredatla sınırlı olmadığı için, kültürleri aracılığıyla kendi hikayelerini öğrenmek onların kişisel, sosyal ve profesyonel yolculuklarını anlamamıza yardımcı olabilir. Eğitimci kimliklerinin ötesinde ise mevcut katılımcılar

program tarafından kendilerine atfedilen *kültür elçisi* rollerine sahiptirler ve aynı zamanda ana dillerini öğretmek ve ABD üniversitelerinden ders almak koşullarını yerine getirmişlerdir.

Çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılan yedi katılımcı, ABD üniversitelerindeki Türkçe programlarına katkıda bulunarak, Fulbright Yabancı Dil Öğretim Asistanı olarak Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin farklı yerlerinde yaşıyordu. ABD'nin Fulbright programları, köklü bir burs geleneğini sürdüren dünyanın prestijli programlarından biri olarak kabul görmektedir. Katılımcılar, Türkiye'deki farklı üniversitelerden İngiliz Dili Eğitimi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ve Mütercim-Tercümanlık bölümlerinden mezunlardır. Bu çalışmada *gizlilik* ve *temsil özgürlüğü* için her bir katılımcıdan araştırmada temsil edilmek istedikleri şekilde kendilerine bir takma ad seçmeleri istenmiştir. Bazı katılımcılar ortak geçmişleri ve demografik özellikleri paylaşırken, bazıları farklı özelliklere ve deneyimlere sahipti.

Veri toplama araçları olarak demografik bilgiler ve arka plan anketleri, bireysel görüşmeler, sesli/yazılı notlar, sosyal medya gönderileri, odak grup görüşmesi ve tanıdıklarından gelen yorumlar *doygunluğa* (*saturation*) ulaşmak için birden fazla kaynaktan elde edilerek işlenmiştir.

Veriler her katılımcı için çok fazla kaynaktan toplandığı için, analiz sadece temaları belirlemekten ziyade, anlatı (*narrative*) analizinde temaların birbiriyle dinamik bir ilişkisinin olması sebebiyle bütüncül halde ele alınmıştır ve yürütülebilmiştir. (Josselson, 2011). Bu sebeple, Türk Yabancı Dil Öğretim Asistanlarının Amerika'daki deneyimini aktaran her bir veri kaynağı kapsamlı bir analize tabii tutulmuş ve uyum içinde değerlendirilmiştir. Veriler anlatı formuna yerleştirilmek ve düzenlenmek üzere zaman, yer ve sosyal bağlam olarak üç boyuta göre analiz edilmiştir (Clandinin ve Connelly, 2000). Riessman anlatıları "olaylar seçilir, düzenlenir, bağlanır ve belirli bir izleyici için anlamlı olacak şekilde değerlendirilir" şeklinde formüle eder (2005, s. 1). Bu nedenle veriler kod ve temalar halinde tematik olarak analiz edilmiştir. Kodlama, bu çalışma için "veri kümelerimizin büyük bir kısmının analiz edilebilir birimlere yoğunlaştırılması" ile yapılmıştır (Coffey ve Atkinson, 2013, s. 26). Daha sonra kodlar temaları tanımlayacak şekilde verilerin yorumlanmasına katkı sağlamıştır.

Dört kültürleşme stratejisi (Berry, 2003), deneyimlerin yorumlanması için bir rehber olarak kabul edilmiştir. Araştırmacı, analiz yoluyla, "bir hikayenin farklı aşamalarını veya yönlerini" (Creswell, 2013, s. 259) birbirine bağlayarak ve aynı zamanda bireylerin anlatılarından ortaya çıkan temaları meydana getirerek her katılımcının kişisel anlatılarını yeniden yaratmıştır.

Her ne kadar anlatı çalışmaları, diğer araştırma tasarımları arasında bir bireyin hikayesini gerçeğe en yakın haliyle yansıtacak şekilde biçimlense de katılımcıların ve paylaşılan hikayelerinin güvenliğinin yanı sıra anonimliğinin de sağlanması önemlidir. Bu nedenle araştırmacı, çalışma öncesinde paylaşılacak verilerin sınırlarını belirli çizgilerle çizmiştir. Katılım isteğe bağlı olup, katılımcılardan dijital onam formu (*consent form*) alınmıştır. Toplanan tüm kayıtlar ve materyaller, katılımcıların kimliklerinin açığa çıkmaması için uygun bir şekilde kodlanmıştır. İsimler takma isimlerle değiştirilmiş olup (Ciambrone, 2004) araştırma boyunca katılımcıların anonimliği güvence altına alındı (Josselson, 2007). Görüşmeler ve sesli notlar yalnızca araştırmacıya açık olup araştırmacı tarafından deşifre edildikten sonra imha edilmiştir. Ne sorular ne de diğer veri toplama türleri katılımcıya zarar vermeyi amaçlamamıştır ve herhangi bir rahatsızlık durumunda çalışmadan çıkmakta veya veri sağlamayı bırakmakta serbest oldukları konusunda bilgilendirilmişlerdir.

Mevcut nitel çalışmanın kalite ölçütü gereği geçerlik (*validity*) ve güvenirlik (*reliability*) gibi unsurlar, çalışmanın nitel doğasına uygun olarak daha uygun formlarda değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmacının rolü çalışmadan önce iyi tanımlanmış ve kişisel yorumlarına veya deneyimlerine çalışmanın hiçbir bölümünde yer verilmemiştir. Araştırmanın zenginliğini ve güvenilirliğini sürdürmek için veriler, bireysel ve odak grup görüşmeleri, sesli ve yazılı notlar, fotoğraflar ve dışarıdan gelen yorumlar gibi çoklu veri kaynaklarından yazılı, görsel ve sözlü ortamlarda toplanmış ve veri üçgenlemesi (*trianguliation*) sağlanmıştır. Analiz yapıldıktan sonra veriler katılımcılara gönderilmiş ve kendilerine kontrolü yapmaları ve analizi onaylamaları istenmiştir (*member checking*). Bunlar, kapsamlı ve bütünsel bir analize ulaşmak için farklı analiz türleri kullanılarak analiz edildi. Analiz ayrıca kontrol edilmek üzere aynı ilgi alanındaki bir meslektaşa (*peer*) gönderilmiştir.

Türk FLTA'lerin anlatılarındaki ülkeleri ve kültürleri hakkındaki değerlendirmeleri dört ana çıkarımı öne sürebilir. İlk olarak, yolculuklarının çeşitli yönlerinde yoğun bir şekilde *ayrılma* stratejisi uygulayan katılımcılar, kendi ülkelerini diğerlerine kıyasla daha az değerlendirme eğilimindeydiler. Bunun yerine, ev sahibi kültürlerini eleştirmeyi ve satır aralarında ev kültürlerinin değerli yönlerini vurgulamayı seçtiler. İkinci olarak, kendi kültürlerinin değerlendirirken kendilerini de Türkiye'deki kültürün bir parçası olarak gördüler ya da ev sahibi ülkenin bakış açısını kullanmak için ondan uzaklaşmaya ve dışardan bakmaya çalıştılar. Bazıları ise kendi kültürlerinde zaten bir yabancı olarak kendilerini konumlandırmıştı. Üçüncüsü, tüm katılımcılar kültürleşme stratejilerinin bazı temel eğilimleri için ABD'deki kalış sürelerinin sınırlı olduğunu vurguladı. Pam, Denise, Maria ve Beren, ABD'de kalmanın ve kendi ülkelerinde, ev sahibi ülkenin davranışlarını veya zihniyetini yanlarında taşıyarak kendi ülkelerinde yaşamaya devam etmenin akıllıca olacağını düşünürken. Tereddütleri çoğunlukla başkaları tarafından yargılanmak, olası rahatsızlıkların önüne geçmek ya da yanlış anlaşılmalardan kaçınmaktı. Bunlar tasvip edilmemek ve yakın çevrelerinden ya da yaşadıkları şehirden tepkili bakışlar almak ile ilgiliydi. Sadece Denise, Türkiye'ye döndüğünde yeni benimsediği davranışlarını sürdürmeye çalışmak için inisiyatif aldı. Son olarak, FLTA'lerin kişilerarası ilişkiler, gelenekler veya yemek gibi ayrılık stratejilerini benimsememek istedikleri zamanlar oldu. Bu gibi zamanlarda direnç göstermek yerine Amerikalılar için rahatsızlık yaratmadan toplumdaki varlıklarını sürdürmek için ana akım yollarını seçmek durumunda kaldılar.

Kültürleşme stratejilerine gelince, katılımcıların çoğu arkadaşlık anlayışı konusunda *ayrılma* stratejisini tercih etse de çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular, Türk konuklarının çeşitli durumlar için çeşitli kültürleşme stratejileri ve kombinasyonlarını kullandıkları bilinmektedir. Strateji kombinasyonları ayrıntılı olarak gözlemlendi. Belirli stratejilere yönelik eğilimler ve bunların bireylerin deneyimleriyle ilişkisi, kendileri tarafından sağlanan ve sonuçlandırılan nedenlerle birlikte sunuldu. Söz konusu Türk FLTA'lerin genel eğilimleri *entegrasyon* ve *asimilasyon* arasında uzanmaktadır. *Ayrılma* stratejisini günlük yaşam alışkanlıkları ve beslenme gibi bazı alanlarda kullanılmaya çalışılmıştır. Çoğunlukla ya kendi rutinlerinden taviz vererek ya da ev sahibi toplumda kabul gören ana akım yolları benimsemeye çalışarak bir denge buldular. ABD'deki

genel kültürleşmelerini olumsuz etkilemese de bazı katılımcılar için din, milliyetçilik ve diyet gibi kişisel yönler için marjinalleşme örnekleri vardı.

Çalışma, birden fazla veri noktasına sahip olarak yedi farklı bireyden elde edilen bütünsel analizle tamamlandığından, kültürleşme stresörleri bireylerin yaşamının tüm yönleri içermektedir. Baskın kültürel stresörler aynı zamanda literatüre paraleldi. Bununla birlikte, kavramların anlaşılması ve uygulanması gibi ayrıntılı yeni ayrımlar, kültürleşme literatürüne katkıda bulunmak için detaylandırılmıştır. Amerikan kültürünün Türk günlük yaşamındaki büyük etkisi nedeniyle, ABD kültürünün kentsel yaşam, tüketim, hazır tüketim gıdaları gibi oldukça görünür unsurları genel olarak şaşırtıcı ya da farklı bulunmamıştır. Bununla birlikte, kültürleşme stresörleri, kişilerarası ilişkiler, Amerikalılarla arkadaşlık, rutinler ve toplumdaki davranışlar gibi çeşitli sosyal ortamlarda mevcuttu. Kişisel perspektiften bakıldığında, boş zaman aktiviteleri, hijyen, zihinsel ve fiziksel sağlık, beslenme, parasal konular ve güvenlik gibi konularda kültürleşme stresörleri ile karşı karşıya kalmışlar ve bunları yansıtıp eleştirel olarak anlamlandırmaya çalışmışlardır. Akademik ortamlarda ise meydana gelen kültürleşme stresörleri arasında öğrencinin özerk oluşu, anadili olarak öğretme, ders yükü, ev sahibi kurumun dikkati ve üyeler için fırsatlar olduğu gibi, düz hiyerarşi ve yüksek başarı eğilimleri noktaları da mevcuttu.

Türk FLTA'ler kültürleşme yolculukları boyunca kendi ülkelerinden ABD'ye getirdikleri doğal yargılarını, yerleşik davranış kalıplarını ve kişisel, sosyal ve akademik düzeyde getirdikleri görüşleri sorguladılar. Kendi ülkelerindeki yaşam düzeninin zayıf ve güçlü yanlarına değinerek çeşitli konseptleri yeniden gözden geçirdiler. Bu deneyimleri hem kendi ülkelerine hem de ev sahibi ülkeye ilişkin anlayışlarına yansıdı. Bu çalışmadaki hemen hemen tüm katılımcılar, kısa süreli konaklama deneyimlerinden önce hem kendi topluluklarının dışında hem de önyargılı oldukları çevrelerde bulunan kişilere karşı daha sıcakkanlı tutumlar geliştirdiler. Karşılaştıkları zorluklar, dünyayı anlama biçimlerini geliştirdi. Sınırlarını ve yeteneklerini görmelerini sağladı. FLTA'ler çoğu zaman ev sahibi ülke ile kendi ülkesi arasında sık sık karşılaştırmalar, eleştiriler ve düşünceler geliştirmiştir. Her iki ülkenin insanlarının günlük yaşamlarında belirli bir şekilde sonuçlanan ekonomik ve sosyal meseleler üzerinde anlaşmaya vardılar.

Tüm katılımcılar, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin gerçek hayattaki zorluklarını Türkiye'den medya veya diğer insanlar aracılığıyla bu kültürü yaşamadan anlamanın kesinlikle zor olacağı konusunda hemfikir olduklarını vurguladılar. Kendi ülkelerini kültürel ve coğrafi olarak benzer kültürlerle konumlandırmalarına yardımcı olan uluslararası bir ortamda olmaktan da memnunlardı. Kısa süreli deneyimleriyle farkındalık geliştirdiler ve her iki kültürün normlarını *tersine öğrenme* ve *yeniden öğrenme* şeklinde deneyimlediler. ABD ve Türkiye'de yaşamanın farklı şekillerdeki zorluklarını kabul ettiler. Hemen hemen tüm katılımcılar, özellikle edimbilim, günlük dil kullanımı ve mizah unsurlarını daha iyi anlama konularında dil becerilerinin geliştiğini vurguladı.

Çalışmanın teorik çıkarımlarının ilki tezin geçici süre için yurtdışında olan Türkler arasındaki türlü bireysel farklılıkları veya bireyin kültürleşme çalışmaları üzerine olan literatürü derinleştirmek ve deneyimlerin boyutlarını görmek için kapsamlı bir temel olarak kullanılabilir. Öte yandan, araştırma kapsamı daha fazla daraltarak yalnızca bir yöne odaklanılarak veya bir fenomeni değerlendirerek kültürel stres faktörlerine odaklanabilir. Örneğin, araştırmacıları *arkadaşlık* temasını bir stresör olarak ele alıp *arkadaşlık anlayışı* hususunu arkadaşlık beklentileri, arkadaş seçimi, engeller ve arkadaşlığa yönelik çabalar olarak değişen boyutlarıyla incelenmek üzere karşılaştırmalı olarak inceleyebilirler. Ayrıca, muhafazakar çevrelerde yetiştirilmenin bireylerin yetişkin ve/veya genç yetişkin olarak yaşamları üzerindeki etkisini ortaya koyduğu için dindarlık konusunda daha kapsamlı çalışılmaya değer noktalar olabilir. Gelecekteki araştırmalar, bireylerin kendi ülke dinamikleriyle olan etkileşimlerine yönelik önyargılarını veya eğilimlerini inceleyebilir.

Bu tez, Türkiye'den ABD'ye Fulbright Yabancı Dil Öğretim Asistanı bursiyeri olarak giden bireyleri ve onların kültürleşme yolculuklarını derinlemesine incelediğinden, ulaşılan bulgular uluslararası veya yerel Fulbright Komisyonları, ev sahibi üniversiteler, üniversitelerdeki uluslararası ofisler, program danışmanları, bursiyerler ve adaylar için de faydalı olabilir. Ayrıca, Türkiye'den katılan adayları kabul eden kültürel değişim programları için de yararlı bilgiler sunabilir.

Fulbright Komisyonları, hükümet kaynakları aracılığıyla, bu bireylere kültür elçisi rolünü atfederek iki ülke arasında köprü olmaları için yatırım yapmaktadır. Bu tür

hareketliliklerin temel amacı olarak sağlıklı bir bağ sağlamaktır. Bu sebeple, Fulbright komisyonları bursiyerlerin kendi ülkelerinde ve ev sahibi ülkede düzenlenen *başlangıç* ve *yıl ortası* oryantasyon programlarının yanı sıra *ayrılış öncesi* ve *yeniden girişlerini* konu alan oryantasyonların içeriğini yeniden değerlendirebilir ve güçlendirebilirler. Söz konusu FLTA bursiyerlerin, ABD'deki yolculuklarına başlamadan önceki ilk oryantasyonları sırasında verilen tavsiyeleri hatırladığı ve bilinçli olarak uyguladığı görülmüştür. Bununla birlikte, ABD'deki ilk oryantasyonun çevrimiçi olması ve yüz yüze yıl ortası konferanslarının iptali nedeniyle, dünyanın dört bir yanındaki meslektaşları ve eğitimciler ile ağ oluşturma fırsatlarını kaçırdıklarını ve ABD'deki yaşam bilgilerini zenginleştirebilecek deneyimleri ilk elden öğrenememe hususunda hayal kırıklığına uğradıklarını belirttiler. Bursiyerler rekabetçi bir aday grubu arasından seçilmiş olsa da öngörülemeyen zorlukların FLTA hareketliliklerini tamamen veya kısmen etkileyebileceği komisyonlar tarafından göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır. Fulbright programları, bireyler için başarılı bir kültürleşme sağlamak üzere aday seçim kriterlerini gözden geçirebilirler ve ayrıca hibeye başvurmak isteyen bireyler için içerik hazırlayabilirler. Bursiyerler için ise sorunsuz bir şekilde kültürleşmelerini sağlamak için kendilerini rahat ve rahatsız hissettikleri konular kontrol edilebilir. Ayrıca, bireylerin harekete geçmelerini veya stres yaşamalarını beklemeden önce ihtiyaçlarına yanıt vermek için cevaplaması isteğe bağlı olan aylık anketler gönderebilir. Komisyon, programların veya kurumların paydaşlarından, FLTA'lere yapılan faaliyetler ve yardımlar hakkında aylık kısa raporlar vermelerini de talep edebilir.

Anlatılarda vurgulanan bir diğer konu ise FLTA'lerin sorunlu hissettiği parasal konulardı. Bu bireyler yetişkin ve genç yetişkin olarak kendi ülkelerinde daha çok yerleşik hayatlar sürmektedirler. Bu nedenle, eyaletlerinde asgari ücretten oldukça düşük bir aylık maaş aldıkları göz önünde bulundurularak temel ihtiyaçları olan kira, faturalar ve mutfak giderlerinden sonraki harcamalarından para ayırmaları ve seyahat etme ve aktivite gibi ev sahibi kültürü keşfetme fırsatları bulmaları tavsiye edildiğinden deneyimlerini olumsuz yönde etkilenmiştir. İkinci olarak, ev sahibi üniversiteler ve onların uluslararası ofisleri misafirperver bir tavır sergilemeli ve bireylerin entegrasyonunu sağlamalıdır. Birkaç katılımcı, uluslararası ofis de dahil olmak üzere, ev sahibi kurumun tutumuna kendilerine tam anlamıyla kucak açıldığını hissederken, bazıları ise bölümleri ve üniversiteleri içinde yalnızlık ve görünmezlik

hissettiler. Ev sahibi kurumlar veya uluslararası kurumlar, bursiyerleri daha iyi anlamak için en iyi uygulamaları birbirleriyle paylaşabilir. Üçüncüsü, ev sahibi kurumlardaki program danışmanları, oryantasyonlarla birlikte ilk karşılama etkinlikleri düzenleyerek FLTA'leri bölümdeki akademik çevreye tanıtabilir ve etkinliklere davet edilebilir. Ancak akademik ortamda daha önce deneyim sahibi olmayabilecekleri, ulaşım imkanlarının kısıtlılığı nedeniyle izole olmaları ve sosyal ortamlardaki tereddüt yaşama durumları göz önünde bulundurulmalı ve entegrasyonları için yönlendirmeler ve rehberlikler yapılmalıdır. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda FLTA programları için burs alan veya aday olan bireyler için umutlar, güvensizlikler, hedefler, tereddütler ve hayallerle dolu denizaşırı yolculuklarında onları neler bekleyebileceğini yedi farklı pencereden görmeleri için fırsat sağlayıp kendileri için pratik uygulamalar geliştirmek için kullanılabilir.

Son olarak, Fulbright FLTA programları dışındaki diğer uluslararası hareketlilikler de her iki kültürün karşılıklı anlayışı için daha olumlu sonuçlara sahip olacak sorunsuz bir kültürleşmeyi sağlamak için oryantasyon programlarını ve bursiyerlerle olan iletişimlerini ilerletmek üzere bu çalışmanın bulgularından yararlanabilir.

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TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce** / English): QUESTIONING HOME: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF ACCULTURATION OF TURKISH SOJOURNERS IN THE UNITED STATES

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE: **Yüksek Lisans** / Master ☒ **Doktora** / PhD ☐

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