

Reflections of Turkish Immigrants on Their  
Adaptation to the United States:  
A Qualitative Study

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work  
in the Graduate College of Social Work of the  
University of Houston, 2015

Houston, Texas

Summer 2015

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to explore the effects of education, health, and family interaction on the professional and social integration of Turkish immigrants who are living in the United States, specifically in the Greater Boston area. There are a number of general studies on the adaptation of different immigrant groups in the United States; however, the specific adaptation process of Turkish immigrants in the United States has not been examined. This research aims to provide some insight into the effects of a new cultural context on the professional and social life of Turkish immigrants who have different types of visa status. The overarching research question of this study is, “*What are the adaptation experiences of Turkish immigrants who have migrated to the greater Boston area, either for employment or academic purposes?*” This alternative (3-paper) dissertation explores the adaptation experiences of Turkish immigrants in the Greater Boston, Massachusetts area. Forty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted and form the basis of three separate manuscripts.

The first paper is about the occupational adaptation of professional and unauthorized working class immigrants who are residing in the Greater Boston area. In order to examine the differences and similarities between professional immigrants and unauthorized working class

immigrants in the process of adaptation to their new environment, the perspective of Occupational Adaptation Theory was used. Twenty-nine interviews were used for the first paper: fourteen were from unauthorized working class immigrants and fifteen were from professional (white collar) immigrants. The major findings include the critical role of age, education, employment, interpersonal relationships, and networking on adaptation.

The second paper explores the relationship between the family members' and spouses' roles and expectations and their post immigration adaptation. The overarching research question is: "what is the role of family and/or spouses in the process of adaptation to the host culture?" Double ABCX Theory was used in order to define the major hallmarks of family functioning and dynamics in the adaptation process. Twenty-nine semi-structured interviews were analyzed. Major themes regarding to the role of family members' on the adaptation process include changes in family structure and dynamics following settlement in the new host culture and how these changes impact adaptation; the role of children; and the effect of marital status.

The third paper covers general perspectives on immigration and the adaptation process in the host country. New Migration theory was used to better understand the daily life experiences of three different groups of Turkish immigrants during the adaptation process to new social and professional environments. All forty-two semi-structured interviews were used for the third paper: fourteen were from unauthorized working class immigrants, fifteen from professional immigrants, and thirteen were from student immigrants who were pursuing masters or doctoral



degrees. The findings of this third paper cluster around three major topics; maintaining inter-generational relationships, changing of expectations from the host country after immigration, and the role of Internet and technology on adaptation.

This research fills a gap in our understanding of the adaptation processes of a new, rapidly growing, and under-studied group of immigrants. Direction for future research and implications for social work policy, specifically about the immigration and adaptation of Turkish immigrants in the U.S., are discussed.

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

The United States continues to be a country that draws immigrants from all over the world to work and/or study. One of the most recent waves of immigrants to the U.S. is from Turkey. Immigrants from Turkey share many similar characteristics with immigrants from other countries. However, they share two major characteristics that make them unique and may impact their expectations and adaptation processes to the United States as a host culture: their religion and socio-demographics.

There are a number of research studies regarding the experience of Turkish immigrants in Europe, where Turkish immigration has existed since the 1950s (Phalet & Hagendoorn, 1996). However, Turkish culture and Turkish immigration are not widely studied in the U.S., which started in earnest in the 1990s (Kaya, 2004). Many Turkish immigrants in the U.S. do not identify openly as Turkish due to anti-Muslim sentiments in the U.S., especially after the events of September 11, 2001. Approximately 99% of all Turks in Turkey and in the U.S. are Muslim (U.S. Department of State, 2009). While being Muslim in the U.S. may be riddled with controversy, there are important generational, political and class differences in the Turkish immigrants in the U.S. (Haddad & Smith, 2002). Most Turks, and most Turkish immigrants to the U.S., are secular and more progressive in their thinking than other Muslim groups (Kaya, 2009). This makes Turkish Muslim immigrants unique from other Muslim immigrant groups in the U.S.

During its history, the U.S. has had a unique position as a receiving country in the context of immigration compared to other receiving countries (Micallef, 2004). In 1965, due to changes in the U.S. immigration Law Act, the U.S. started receiving more immigrants without consideration of their country of origin, but instead based on their professions (Camarota, 2002). This allowed more Turkish immigrants to come to the U.S. than ever before (Halman, 1980), and Turkish immigration to the U.S. and to Europe diverged. In terms of socio-demographics, Turkish immigrants in the U.S. and Europe occupy opposite ends of a spectrum. Turkish immigrants living in the U.S. tend to have higher education levels and socio-economic status than Turkish immigrants in Europe. However, existing research in Europe regarding Turkish working class immigrants refers to higher and gainful rates of successful adjustments in social and professional life compared to the U.S. migration context (Kaya, 2009).

This alternative (3-paper) dissertation explores the adaptation experiences of Turkish immigrants in the Greater Boston, Massachusetts area. The three paper are: Occupational Adaptations of Turkish Immigrants Residing in Massachusetts, The Relationship between Family Members' Roles and Expectations and Post-Immigration Adaptation, Perspectives on Immigration: Push and Pull Factors

### **Statement of the Problem**

Research about the context of Turkish immigrants in the United States is severely lacking, despite a growing Muslim American Turkish population in the U.S. By 2010, an estimated 500,000 Turkish immigrants were living in the U.S., making it a population that cannot continue to be neglected by researchers (Mediander, 2014). An enhanced understanding of the characteristics of U.S. Turkish immigrants and how these characteristics impact successful adaptation, including what makes them unique compared to other immigrant groups, will assist researchers, social workers and policy makers who are working to develop services for immigrant groups and to enable immigrants to successfully adapt.

### **Background and Significance**

The primary characteristic of the Turkish population around the world is that it is mostly Muslim. After changes in the U.S. Immigration Law Act of 1965 (Camarota, 2002), there was an increase in the population of Muslim immigrants to this country (Kaya, 2009). This act not only allowed more immigrants from third world countries to enter the U.S., but also entailed a separate quota for refugees. Another important aspect of this act was that future immigrants were to be considered more on the basis of their skills or professions, rather than their countries of origin (Web Chron, 2003). According to a 2012 report from Global Religious Landscape, there are about 1.6 billion Muslims (23% of the world population) around the world, making Islam the second-largest religious tradition after Christianity (Desilver, 2013). Almost 62% of this

population is concentrated around the Asia-Pacific region, 20% in Middle East-North Africa region, and 1.8% in the United States. The number of Muslims in the U.S. is significantly smaller compared to other regions of the world. One factor might be that self-identifying as Muslim is a sensitive choice, especially after September 11, 2001. Since the U.S. Census does not track religious affiliation officially, the number of Muslim-Americans has been difficult to measure. Given the lack of official figures, the dearth of research on Muslim and Turkish immigrants to the U.S., and under-reporting of Muslim identity due to fears, it is not possible to come up with accurate, up to date numbers regarding this growing minority population. What is clear about the estimated 2 million to 7 million Muslims in the U.S. is that the rapid growth is being fueled by immigration, high birth rate, and conversions (US Department of State, 2009).

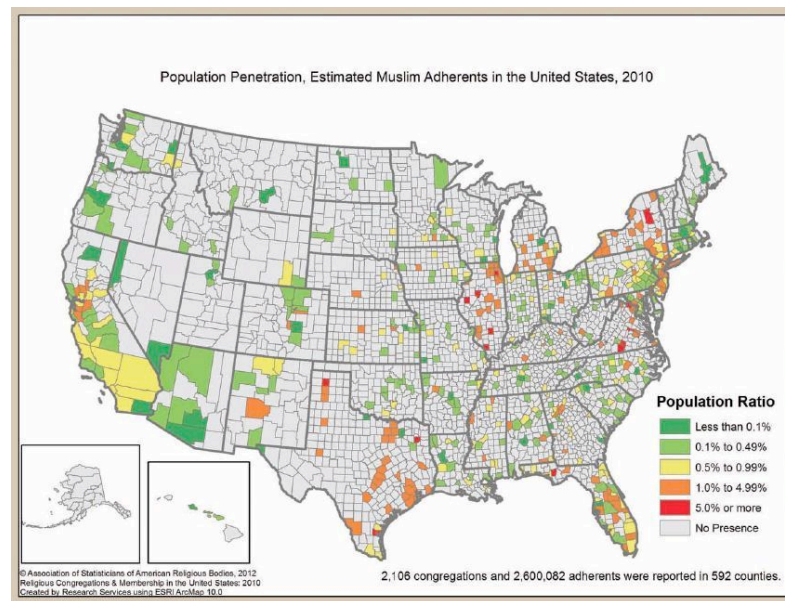
Mayton (2013) mentions that more than ten years after September 11, 2001 Muslim women in the U.S. still experience suspicion and discrimination, and many of these women mention that they have difficulties to define their identity, facing verbal attacks because of their ethnic and religious points of view. Mayton (2013) also states that according to the U.S. Government, 65% of Muslim-Americans are first-generation immigrants, and 61% arrived in the 1990s. Currently, 77% of these groups are citizens and 65% of the foreign-born being naturalized citizens. Comparatively, 58% of foreign-born Chinese individuals living in the U.S. are naturalized citizens.

Even though there is not a significant difference in terms of the numbers of Chinese-Americans vs. Muslim-Americans, Muslim-Americans, and especially women, experience more discrimination because of the pervasive stereotypes in society. And yet, before the events of September 11, 2001, there was little research devoted to this population, despite, as Kaya (2009) stated: “Muslims in the United States are quite diverse in terms of their cultural practices, political views, and national identities” (p.617). Since U.S. Turkish immigrants may comprise up to a quarter of the population that researchers refer to as Muslim Americans, there is a risk that the unique Turkish experience of immigration is washed over in favor of a broader view that is limited to religious affiliation. As Haddad and Smith (2002) noted, “There are important generational, political and class differences in Turkish immigrants in the U.S.” (p. 306). The adaptation of professional and non-professional Turkish immigrants in the United States should be studied in depth in order to understand the differences in their social, professional, and religious experiences. The need for further research is punctuated by the fact that Turkish immigrants are a growing but under-studied minority population in the U.S. (Micallef, 2004).

The estimated number of Turkish immigrants coming to the U.S. for the purpose of education or employment increased by 35% between the years 2000 and 2008 (Migration Policy Institute, 2011). In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 117,619 people identified themselves as Muslim-Americans (Kaya, 2009). As seen in the Figure-1, in 2010, the number of Muslim-American reached to 2.6 million (Distribution of Muslim Population in the United

States, 2010). The Greater Boston area is one of the single most important geographic regions for Turkish immigrants in the U.S., according to the Turkish consulate. As of 2012, the consulate reports there are approximately 10,278 Turkish nationals living in Boston, or roughly 2% of the total U.S. Turkish population. It is for this reason that the proposed study will focus on Turkish immigrants who reside in the Greater Boston area.

**Figure 1. Distribution of Muslim Population in the United States, 2010**



To date, there have been three significant waves of immigration from Turkey to the U.S. The first wave began in the mid-19th century, from the area that was the Ottoman Empire, and reached its peak around the year 1900, tapering off after the end of the First World War (Kaya, 2004). This wave, which was comprised mostly of male agrarian workers, experienced inevitable cultural assimilation, as they frequently intermarried and did not possess strong bonds to a

national identity outside the U.S. As a result, very few historical accounts exist from this era of the immigrants who comprised the first wave. Turkish immigration had almost grounded to a halt during the interwar period and after the Second World War. However, on October 17, 1951 Turkey was accepted into NATO (The North Atlantic Treaty Organization), and almost immediately the second major wave of immigration began. Like the first wave, most of the immigrants during the second wave were men. However, this wave saw more professional people immigrating than before, such as doctors and engineers. They proved less likely to assimilate than their forbears, preferring to marry within their own populations. Further, they created and actively participated in the first Turkish cultural and religious organizations.

There were changes to U.S. immigration law in 1965 that gave more mobility and leeway to Turkish immigrants than ever before (Halman, 1980). These changes directly contributed to the third major wave that began in the 1980's and lasted until the end of 1990's (Kaya, 2004). Furthermore, the wave of immigration was encouraged by the changes made to Turkish law by the government of Turgut Ozal, 8<sup>th</sup> president of the Republic of Turkey. As a result, the third wave saw the most diverse collection of immigrants yet – male and female, rich and poor, professional and working class, religious and secular.

Today, U.S. Turkish immigrants primarily settle around large urban areas such as New York City and adjacent portions of most parts of New Jersey, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles. One third of all Turkish immigrants live in the Northeast area (Kaya, 2009). Working class



immigrants mainly settle in parts of New Jersey that provide easy access to the labor market available in New York City, while taking advantage of the less expensive housing opportunities in New Jersey. New York City also has a number of international flights that travel to Turkey, no small consideration for many immigrants. Therefore, most professional immigrants and students tend to settle in Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles, international travel hubs with direct flights to and from Turkey.

This study addressed a gap in research regarding the Turkish immigrant experience in the U.S., with a focus on immigrants with professional qualifications or who are employed in a professional field, those who work with undocumented status, and those who are graduate level students. This research seeks a better understanding of the daily life experiences of these different groups of Turkish immigrants during the adaptation process to new social and professional environments. This study will be helpful in uncovering potential physical and mental health consequences of adaptation for immigrants in the U.S. Conducting qualitative interviews to collect data related to their life experiences in the host country will provide an explicit description that could be of use for further studies, such as developing culturally specific coping mechanisms.

In order to gather the data and then analyze the result in this research, a phenomenological research approach was used. The main goal of this approach is to explain a “lived experience” of a phenomenon (Waters, 2014). Phenomenology begins with an experience

or condition and while interviewees describe their “lived experiences”, the researcher looks into the effects and the perception of that experience. Basically, the phenomenological approach, interprets an experience or phenomenon, while interviewing with the participants to get their different life histories. The phenomenological method describes phenomena from the subjective perspectives of the participants (Willis, 2007). In phenomenological approach most of the time the researcher looks for common characteristics across participants instead of just concentrating on what is distinctive to a single participant. Primary data collection for this method involves in-depth interviews and data analysis to identify significant statements that allow to extract meaning of phenomenon in question (Lester, 1999).

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to IMPRINT (Immigrant Professional Integration, 2011), the term “skilled immigrant” refers to individuals “who hold a bachelor’s or post-graduate degree, have permanently immigrated to the U.S. (permanent residents, refugees, asylum-seekers, or naturalized citizens), have full work authorization without the need of visa sponsorship, or are unemployed or working at jobs that do not draw on their in demand skills”. The U.S. Immigration Services considers the H1-B Visa as a “non-immigrant” visa. As such, professionals foreign sponsored by U.S. companies using the H1-B Visa mechanism are considered foreign workers, not immigrants. The individual, however, might see him or herself as an immigrant, depending on whether he/she has plans to return to their country of origin or not.

Distinct theoretical frameworks have been used to understand the process of professional migration during the last few decades. This qualitative research is based on a theoretical framework informed by three different theoretical perspectives. The first is the Double ABCX Theory (Caliguiri et al, 1998), which focuses on the difficulties of the adaptation process for spouses. The second theory will be Occupational Adaptation Theory (Schkade & Schultz, 1992) which will be used to attempt to understand the adaptation process of Turkish immigrants who are living in the Greater Boston area. The third perspective will be New Immigrant Theory (Portes & Borocz, 1989), which identifies the stages of the migration process under the concept of push and pull factors.

The following section will first lay out the basis of family adaptation and its consequences in the success of immigration. Using the theoretical frameworks of Double ABCX Theory and the Occupational Adaptation Theory, the section will review the importance of family support and communication as inputs for adaptability. The next section will focus its attention on new theoretical perspectives on international immigration (e.g., push and pull model).

### **Double ABCX Theory**

There are numerous reasons why immigrants experience failure during the immigration process, including: returning to their home country prior to finishing their education; experiencing serious mental health issues due to homesickness; and issues related to familial and

financial responsibilities. Family issues in particular can adversely affect the immigration process, as family characteristics and dynamics have an important role to play in successful adaptation, as much or perhaps more so than success in one's professional life. The social networks created and the personal capabilities of the individual also define a successful adaptation. Double ABCX Theory explains that family dynamics and the adjustment processes of other family members, such as spouses, are important contributors to the success or failure of the immigration process. Caligiuri et al. (1998) point out that those who prematurely and permanently left their host culture most frequently cited their spouse's inability to adjust to living in the host country as the reason for failure. Therefore, a key component to successful adaptation is the concurrent successful adaptation of one's spouse or family (Black & Gregersen, 1991b).

The Double ABCX Theory was developed by Hill in 1949 (Caligiuri et al, 1998) and has been used to explain the adjustment period for families of immigrants living in host countries. Its application to the sociological study of families is based on the examination of family dynamics as they relate to family adaptation and to stressors, such as global relocation. They define this as the examination of familial dynamics in relation to the stresses associated with immigration.

Caligiuri et al. (1998) propose that three different determinants work together to generate a family's adaptation: stressors (A), the resources the family has in order cope with stressors (B), and how the family perceives stressors (C). These work together and result in low or high levels of stress (X). Furthermore, Caligiuri posits that the major stressors in a host culture result from

repositioning to the new location. During the adaptation process the most major stressors are, for instance, fear of physical and emotional contact with new people, excessive personal grooming, feeling of helplessness, delay and outright refusal to learn the language of the host country, and homesickness for familiar people and places (Stewart & Leggat, 1998).

The effects of these stressors are made worse by “pile-up demands.” According to Wiggins-Frame and Shehan (1994), these are stressors that affect how a family is able to deal with crises and their aftermaths. Wiggins-Frame & Shehan (1994) explain that other than the stressor itself, the other two determinants of successful or unsuccessful adaptation are the family’s resources or characteristics to cope with the stressor; and the family’s perceptions of the stressor. The three major signs of family functioning identified in the model proposed by Olson, Russell, and Sprenkle (1984) include family communication, family adaptation, and family support. This study utilizes the Double ABCX theoretical frame work developed by Caliguiri and colleagues. The major exponent of this theory is to produce a family’s adaptation (Caliguiri, 1998). Reviewing Double ABCX Theory will assist in determining how a spouses’ adjustment can determine success in immigration. It will also help to clarify the relationships between immigrants and their spouses.

Family is one of the most important institutions in society, and it is especially important when that family is living away from its own country and the built-in levels of support that are there. Family support is a crucial factor during the adaptation process to a new culture.

## **Family Support**

Olson et al. (1984) defines family support as “being together” with strong harmonic relationships. This strong and respectful relationship gives the feeling of emotional support to members of a family unit. Emotional support allows family members to feel more independent and self-confident. However, this support should be in balance. If an individual’s family does not care about their needs and does not support them, it can cause problems for the individual in the form of stress. Conversely, too much support can cause problems, such as perceived oppression due to familial intervention in one’s private or business matters. Such a situation can cause stress for the family as a whole. Caligiuri et al. (1998) elaborate that a healthy level of familial support can assist with the formation of relationships outside the family. There is a positive correlation between familial support and interaction with the success of the immigration process, regardless of how that familial support is defined. A professional immigrant having more interaction and adaptation with the host society is related to one’s perceived level of familial support.

## **Family Adaptability**

The second construct, family adaptability, is essential for the stability of the family during dramatic changes (Minuchin, 1974). Caligiuri et al. (1998) explain that familial adaptability can be discerned by how well a family can change its routines and habits in the face of stressors that result from the immigration process. Adaptability is defined by the assessing of stressors, and the positive steps that are taken to deal with those stressors.

According to Teresa and colleagues (2010) highly adaptable families are able to maintain better interactions with the host culture, such as more personal contacts with that culture, than those who have difficulty with adaptation. This is one of the many ways that familial support affects the immigration process. However, in order to obtain good and effective adaptability to the host culture, there must be strong communication between family members.

### **Family Communication**

Family communication is an important construct of the family system model (Olson et al., 1984). Caligiuri et al.(1998) note that a healthy level of communication between family members, such as being able to express opinions and resolve conflicts, is conducive to feeling supported and being better able to adapt. For instance, The Family Communication Patterns, originally developed by McLeod and Chaffee (1972), assumed that communication patterns develop from experience in interactions rather than from personality characteristics. Family communication can establish the mental and social orientation to the new culture. Therefore, establishing a communication link between the immigrant family members could help them to adjust to a host culture (Dumlao & Botta 2000).

Being far away from the home country can affect family communication. For immigrant families, the amount of energy spent on anxiety reduces the energy available for dealing with behaviors associated with better adaptations (Feldman & Tomson, 1993, Wiggins-Frame & Shehan, 1994). Caligiuri et al. (1998) in their research on family and work adjustment found that

although 75% of immigrants described their experiences as stressful, their perception of the experience had a large impact on how stressful the experience was.

Adaptation to the host culture can cause serious difficulties and conflicts during the immigration process. As explained in the Double ABCX Theory the adjustment problems for immigrants and their families can be minimized by having strong family support, adaptability and communication.

In the next section occupational adaptation theory highlights some of the problems professional immigrants face during the integration to a new business environment.

### **Occupational Adaptation Theory**

Occupational Adaptation Theory is used to explain individual habits, beliefs, and hopes that originate during the process of entering an occupation in an unknown setting in a host country as an immigrant. This theory lays out the success of the professional immigration in the adaptation period.

Occupational Adaptation was coined by Schkade and Schultz (1992). There are two forms of occupational adaptation: “the state” and the “process.” Schkade and Schultz explained “the state” as “a state of competency in occupational functioning toward which human beings aspire.” The “process” is “the process through which the person and the occupational environment interact when the person is faced with an occupational challenge calling for an occupational response reflecting an experience of relative mastery” (p.831).



Occupational adaptation is a personal and inner practice that originates during the process of entering a new occupation in a host country. There are many researchers who have studied various factors of occupation and how those factors influence personal life (George, Schkade & Ishee, 2004; Kielhofner, 2002; Mallinson, Mahaffey & Kilehofner, 1998; Schkade & Schultz, 1992). The major, common finding among these researchers is that obtaining a meaningful job is indispensable to the adaptation period (Parsons & Stanley, 2008).

Through extensive research it has been concluded that in the occupational adaptation theory the first factor is “the person.” “The person” consists of three parts: sensorimotor, cognitive, and psychosocial. They indicate that every individual has hopes, knowledge of their qualifications, and how those relate to his or her role in an occupation. In this sense, parts of “the person” may affect these individuals’ hopes and knowledge (Boutelop & Beltran, 2007). A person’s occupational environment is another factor that was used by Boutelop & Beltran (2007) to examine occupational adaptation. They defined “occupational environment” as “the context in which an occupational role is performed, that is work/school, leisure/play and self-care contexts” (p. 231). Therefore, occupational adaptation is generally defined as an individual process that covers adaptation to a new business culture in the host country. This process is part of an individual’s ability to cope with occupational functioning.

Using a theoretical framework that includes the Occupational Adaptation Theory, the researcher will review the importance of the individual’s interaction with the new work

environment as inputs for adaptability. For qualitative research it is necessary for the researcher to get close enough to the research participants in order to gain their confidence and obtain a deeper understanding of their perspective. The investigative approach of this research will seek to understand the daily lives and the meaning of professional immigrant in the U.S., as a way to contribute to the existing knowledge associated with understanding the specific adaptation process of these immigrants.

The adaptation of professional immigrants to a new business culture will be examined according to Occupational Adaptation Theory.

### **New Migration Theory**

The effects of globalization, particularly its association with international migration, have become an important concern for both researchers and public officials (Sanderson, 2009). According to Castles & Miller (1993), globalization has directly influenced immigration, as the increased internationalization of business has led to an increase in the movement of people.

A central question for researchers concerning immigration is the social environment of the immigrant in their new location (Freedman & Hawley, 1949). In this sense, there is significant difference between the terms ‘migration’ and ‘mobility.’ Freedman & Hawley (1949), clarify that while migration is related to the physical movement of people, mobility refers to a person’s change from one social system to another.

### **Push and Pull Model**

The most common explanations for international migration are economic and social. For instance, people may decide to migrate to another country because of economic and social difficulties in their country of origin. The difficult circumstances that encourage people to leave their home country, such as unemployment and poverty, lack of opportunities are known as “push factors.” Conversely, “pull factors” such as jobs, education, and freedom of religion attract people to migrate to a new country (Portes & Borocz ,1989). This push-pull model of international migration as outlined by Constantinou & Diamantides (1985) includes six main parts:

1. A pool of potential emigrants is created at the origin because of the perceived degree of difference between one’s home and intended place of movement;
2. Once a certain portion of this pool settles in the receiving society, an information flow begins between the receiving and sending societies and chain migration is set in motion;
3. The emigration laws of the country of origin and immigration laws at the country of destination influence the flow of migrants between the two;
4. Circumstances external to both the sending and receiving societies (extraordinary events such as wars) may either facilitate or inhibit the migratory flow;

5. Operating between the sending and receiving societies is the mediating factor that expresses the composite impact of the emigration and immigration laws and of the extraordinary events; and,
6. There exists a base emigration component that is propelled by reasons other than those of the pool and therefore operates outside the principal loop (p. 353).

However, the Push and Pull model has been discussed intensely due to its limitations. Portes & Rumbaut (1990) state that, the push and pull model explains the attractive factors of international migration partially instead of considering this issue as a whole.

By looking from three different theoretical perspectives it can be said that, it is crucial for immigrants of any social status or nationality, economic and educational background, or reasons for migration to find a place where they can meet and interact with people of their same cultural background and expectations. Historically, immigrant groups tend to concentrate in neighborhoods or develop networks in which they can share their respective culture and experiences. Most Turkish immigrants to the U.S. have adapted to American culture by keeping their religious, moral and social values and adapting some new norms and features to their social and professional lives. In this attempt they navigate between two cultures and try to integrate both without interfering with each other.

In light of these three theories, this research examines the effects of adaptation to American culture and the professional and social integration of Turkish immigrants as a result of

factors including education background, health conditions and family interaction. As it is stated in the Double ABCX Theory, family adaptability and support is the most crucial factor in the process of adaptation to a new culture. According to the Family Adaptation Theory, if an immigrant in the host culture has good family communication skills the adaptation period could be less painful. As it is defined in the Occupational Adaptation Theory, personal and inner characteristics play an important role entering into a new business environment. Successfully networking could be facilitated by personal characteristics. In addition, as is explained in the New Migration Theory, the use of social and business networks not only encourages migration but also contributes to this process on a continuing basis. Ways of maintaining inter-generational relationships and the reasons for returning to a home country as explained by New Migration Theory will be discussed further.

### **Research Questions and Specific Aims**

Throughout its history, the United States (U.S.) has had a unique position amongst other countries, being that it is a country defined by and comprised mainly of immigrants who have come to the U.S. in waves, from all corners of the globe, seeking amongst other goals: refuge, opportunity, education, or employment.

Immigrants from Turkey share many characteristics with immigrants from other countries. They are varied in their demographics, and come to the U.S. for many different reasons. However, there are several characteristics that make Turkish immigrants unique

compared to other immigrant groups. For instance, the majority of working class Turkish immigrants do not actually go to the U.S., rather they settle in Europe, especially Germany. Existing research in Europe regarding Turkish working class immigrants refers to higher and gainful rates of successful adjustments in social and professional life compared to U.S. migration context (Kaya, 2009). However, the case is not same for professional immigrants in Europe. Professional Turkish immigrants in Europe are now heading back to Turkey in groups or seeking to come to the U.S. They are explaining their reasons as being treated as outsiders in Europe, especially in Germany, and difficulties acquiring high-paying salaries even if they are qualified for those jobs in terms of their skills and training (Grieshaber, 2011). The situation is different in the U.S. for Turkish immigrants. In the migration literature, salary differentials are mostly cited as a distinction factor while explaining professional migration. In addition to the economic instability in Europe or in Turkey, receiving (pull factors) in the U.S. such as education, employment, health opportunities, and higher wages for professional immigrants increase the number of new comers and non-return immigrants in the U.S. (Gungor & Tansel, 2010)

### **Context of the Adaptation**

The first wave of Turkish immigration to Europe began in the 1960's and has been strong since (Sohn & Ozcan, 2006). As a result, there is a significant amount of varied information and research regarding Turkish immigration specific to Europe. Though most Turkish immigrants settle in Europe, the history of Turkish immigration to the U.S. is not significant, with waves of

immigrants dating back to the 19th century (Senyurekli & Menjuvar, 2012). However, compared with the research conducted in Europe, there is a dearth of information available regarding Turkish immigration specific to the US.

In its most general sense, adaptation refers to the process of making adjustments of individuals or social groups in response to the environment. The result of the process of adaptation occurs mainly in two different phases; one is long-term evolutionary adjustment of a population to environmental changes, or can be also short-term physiological or behavioral responses compensating for environmental changes. Frequently a short-term behavioral or physiological response, if it is generally adaptive, will be reinforced by genetic adaptation that proofs the longevity of the short-term response (Berry, 1997).

For many immigrants, the process of adapting to a new culture is difficult, and can pose many challenges in terms of education, physical and mental health, and finding adequate places of employment and housing. Successful adaptation to a new culture is an important psychological process for immigrants (Robie & Ryan, 1996). Adaptation may cause various cross-cultural challenges, in terms of adapting to new roles, different cultural expectations, difficulties with language and academics, financial problems, religious difficulties – all of which can contribute to problems with mental and physical health. Given the issues involved, it is not surprising that many immigrants experience psychological problems during their adaptation period. For instance, stress is a primary adaptation problem faced by professional immigrants

(Tahir & Ismail, 2007). Given that Turkish immigrants in the U.S. come primarily for educational and economic opportunities (Akcapar, 2009), they may be more susceptible to the stress and psychological effects of adaptation than other immigrant groups. Even if there is a big mixed group of Turkish population in terms of the social classes in the U.S., such as working class, students, and professionals, they are relatively disconnected from each other compared to other immigrant groups. However, due to the lack of research on Turkish immigrants in the U.S., this cannot be confirmed.

The possibility and achievement of an adaptation period in the host culture, also relies on the willingness and acceptance of the host culture strategy. Therefore there is a clear interaction in terms of being inclusive or exclusive between immigrants and the host culture population. This study aims to address some of the gaps in research regarding Turkish immigration and adaptation in the U.S. Its focus is on the cultural adaptation of professional, working class (mostly unauthorized), and student Turkish immigrants in the Greater Boston area. The researcher expects that a core motivation of the adaptation process will be the search for improved occupational status, given the socio-demographic characteristics of the population. The researcher explored the adaptation of Turkish immigrants in terms of obtaining basic needs, and dealing with social and family issues. Mental health issues such as depression, homesickness, and anxiety were also explored. Additionally, the importance of technology and Internet use while adapting to a new culture were explored, since technology is an important key point in our



century in terms of maintaining close ties with loved ones in overseas countries. This research is guided by an overarching question of “What are the adaptation experiences of Turkish immigrants who have migrated to the Greater Boston area for employment or academic purposes?”

A qualitative approach was used to examine the affects of education and socio-economic status on the socio-cultural integration of Turkish immigrants in Boston. This research explored the effects of high professional achievement as well as the social and health consequences of immigration, such as stress, language barriers, and changes in family interactions within a new cultural context. The study findings were used to better understand the modes of adaptation and inclusion.

Forty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore and document the experiences of adaptation of three different Turkish immigrant groups. Participants’ responses provided an experiential description that could be a useful auxiliary to the existing literature and the basis of future research as well. Therefore, each separate paper focuses on a corollary question:

1. **Study 1.** Examines the differences and similarities between professional immigrants and working class immigrants in the process of adaptation to a new environment.
2. **Study 2.** Describes the role of family and/or spouse adjustment during the period of adaptation into a new society.

3. **Study 3.** Explores the daily life experiences of three different groups of Turkish immigrants during the adaptation process to new social and professional environments.

### **Role of Researcher**

#### **Researcher's Philosophy**

The present research is based upon a qualitative research methodology. In qualitative research, storytelling or narrative is one of the most appropriate manners in which data is collected. Jack (2010) argues, "The detail that telling a story enables puts the situation in context and provides insight into the event" (p. 5). Jack also discusses that storytelling might have a therapeutic value for the participant and in fact might result in personal flexibility. This is based on the idea that storytelling allows a cathartic, affirming and reflective side of disclosure in a safe and respectful scene (Jack, 2010).

It is necessary for researchers to get close enough to research participants to gain their confidence and obtain a deep understanding of the focus of the study from the perspective of the respondent. However, measuring the distance from participants is very difficult and the researcher could get personally involved, which could result in biased information. It is necessary for the researcher to keep a reasonable distance from participants; by not revealing private information and not getting involved in dangerous or very private businesses concerning to participants. This is a major issue for many researchers because there is no common way of "getting close enough" or "too close" (Maier & Monahan, 2009). As Gilbert has noted, "the

boundaries must be negotiated and renegotiated, an ongoing part of the research process, as a balance is sought between the dangers and benefits of being too far in or too far out of the lives of the researched'' (2001:12). Furthermore, difficulties may arise when interviewing a respondent who may have information the respondent is scared to share with the interviewer.

In order to attempt to control for potential personal biases, a second coder who was colleague of the researcher also worked with the data set. The second coder was also a native Turkish speaker and had a doctoral degree in Sociology with expertise in Criminal Justice major. This allowed the team to analyze the data in the original Turkish in which it was collected, rather than risk losing nuance in translation. The second coder coded and analyzed a subset of the interviews: 7 interviews from working class immigrants, 5 interviews from professional immigrants, and 3 interviews from student immigrants, or 15 of the 42 interviews. The results of the two coders were then compared for consistency of the results. Since they were in different countries (the second coder is in Turkey), the researcher and the second coder had to do comparisons of their analysis through video-conferencing and communicated regularly through electronic communications. The analytical approach implemented during the course of this research was to understand the daily lives and the meaning of Turkish immigrants on their adaptation to the U.S. culture, as a way to contribute to the existing knowledge associated with understanding immigrants' adaptation process.

### **Pilot Test of Interview Guide**

A pilot test was conducted as a small-scale version of a larger study. It last shorter amount of time compare to the original interview with a smaller number of sample size. The researcher conducted 3 pilot interviews from each group, to 9 total refine the approach and the interview guide. This pilot study can be seen as an achievability study. Questions for the pilot test were created by considering the corollary questions for each paper. Total of six main categories were created for the pilot test with some probe questions. After the completion of the pilot test, probe questions were expanded and diverted parallel with the corollary questions. The results from the pilot test were used to revise the interview guide. Question regarding to the specific visa status was removed and instead probe questions were added to obtain self-identify information about participants'' visa status.

There was at least one key person from each group to conduct interviews and through the snowball sampling other interviewees were recruited.

### **Innovation**

As noted earlier, there are a number of general studies on the adaptation of immigrants. However, the adaptation process of professional and working class Turkish immigrants in the United States is not well understood, although this is not the case in Europe. Since there is a high migration flow from Turkey to Germany, there is a clearer understanding of the term of "Turkish immigrant" in the literature in the context of Europe (Eryilmaz, 2002). But the migration from

Turkey to the U.S. is conceptually different from what occurs in Europe. While European researchers have more recently taken up the challenge to develop a comprehensive interdisciplinary and comparative research program focusing on Europe's migration and integration challenges (Penninx, Berger & Kraal, 2006), a comprehensive, comparative analysis that includes non-European, traditional immigration societies such as the United States, should be offered to provide additional and perhaps different insights. The discussion on the adaptation of the Turkish immigrants in the U.S. is innovative since there is a gap in the literature specifically about this group of immigrants.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Article 1**

#### **Occupational Adaptations of Turkish Immigrants Residing in Massachusetts**

**Target Journal: International Social Work (Word Limit: 7,000)**

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#### **Abstract**

For many immigrants, the adaptation process to a different culture is often difficult. Using qualitative data, this article explores the effects of education, class, legal status, and new working environments on both professional and unprofessional Turkish immigrants in the Greater Boston area. From a sociological perspective, findings revealed a higher adaptation achievement for professional immigrants, while highlighting the difference education can make to the adaptation process. This is the reverse of what is found in Europe. The study findings suggest new areas of inquiry to better understand these immigrant groups' adaptive strategies.

#### **Key words**

Turkish, professional immigrants, unauthorized immigrants, working class, adaptation, qualitative data

## **Introduction**

Most of the time contexts of immigration to a host culture are very distinct depending on social, cultural and economical perspectives in the home country. Because of the different cultural settings and expectations, immigrants experience significant adaptation problems (Sohn & Ozcan, 2006). Researchers have documented that the adaptation to a new culture is an important psychological process given its effects on daily performance and functioning of the individual (Robie & Ryan, 1996). These studies have identified cross-cultural adaptation problems including adapting to new status such as: changes in the school, business and social environment, academic challenges, language barriers, financial difficulties, difficulties to profess religious culture due to the lack of time dedicated to religion, and homesickness (Robie & Ryan, 1996).

This study explores the characteristics of the new host culture (U.S.) and how they interact with personal characteristics of two groups of Turkish immigrants--professional and working class immigrants--to facilitate or hinder their adaptation. The paper examines differences and similarities between the two groups of immigrants; and more specifically examined how the new cultural, employment, and educational environments affect the adaptation processes of Turkish professional immigrants and working class immigrants. This research seeks a better understanding of the daily life experiences of different groups of Turkish immigrants during the adaptation process. Using concepts from Occupational Adaptation Theory (Schkade &

Schultz, 1992), the aim of this research is to examine the differences and similarities between professional immigrants and working class (most of whom are unauthorized) immigrants in the process of adaptation to a new environment. It also explores the role of education on adaptation in the U.S.

### **Literature Review**

Throughout its history, the U.S. has had a unique position amongst other countries, being that it is a country defined by and comprised mainly of immigrants who have come to the U.S. in waves, from all corners of the globe, seeking amongst other goals: refuge, opportunity, education, or employment.

Unauthorized immigration has been an ongoing issue in the United States (U.S.), particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. On April 23, 2010 Governor Jan Brewer of Arizona, signed SB 1070 into law, which among other aspects makes it a punishable offense to harbor or employ someone without legal authorization to live or work in the U.S. (Arizona Capitol Times, 2010). Since then, nationwide discussion of immigration issues has focused on the nature of illegal immigration. This discussion, and much of the anti-immigrant sentiments expressed throughout the years since, has focused on specific immigrant groups such as low-skill Latin American workers employed in the agricultural, construction and industrial sectors. Meanwhile, a significant number of high-skill immigrants from other countries have also been living in the U.S. unauthorized, even though less attention has been given to the experiences of

this group. This study attempts to fill this gap by focusing on two groups: high-skill professional Turkish immigrants, and working class Turkish immigrants all of whom were unauthorized.

The 2000 U.S. Census reported 117,619 people who identified themselves as Muslim-Americans (Kaya, 2009). In 2010, the number of Muslim-Americans was 2.6 million (Distribution of Muslim Population in the United States, 2010). Research from the last several decades has also documented large population movements from Turkey to the United States. In fact, the estimated number of Turkish immigrants to the United States had increased by 35% in 2008 (Migration Policy Institute, 2011). As a result of this influx, the U.S. Census Bureau created an organization to count people of Turkish origin. The organization, "Census 2010 SayTurk" was expected to identify the estimated 500,000 Turks living in the US (Mediander, 2014).

Turkish immigrants primarily settle around large urban areas such as New York City and adjacent portions of most parts of New Jersey, Boston, as well as Chicago, and Los Angeles. One third of all Turkish immigrants live in the Northeast (Kaya, 2009). Working class Turkish immigrants mainly settle in parts of New Jersey that provide lower-cost housing and easy access to labor market opportunities available in New York City. As an international hub, New York City provides direct flights to Turkey, an important consideration for immigrants of all classes. Many professional immigrants tend to settle in Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles for work or

educational opportunities. These cities are all major hubs for air travel with direct flights to and from Turkey.

The Greater Boston area is one of the most important geographical areas for Turkish immigrants, according to the Boston-based Consulate General of Turkey. As of 2014, the consulate reports there are approximately 10,278 Turkish nationals living in the Greater Boston area, or roughly 2% of the total U.S. Turkish population.

Based on the previous literature, both professional and unauthorized Turkish immigrants settle in Boston for, among other reasons, access to better health care services, and diverse educational as well as employment opportunities. Most professional Turks choose to immigrate to the U.S. in order to pursue postgraduate education (Sohn & Ozcan, 2006), having completed undergraduate degrees in Turkey.

Despite making conscious decisions to study and live in the U.S., many Turkish immigrants encounter difficulties adapting, especially in the first couple of years. Haddad and Smith (2002) noted, “There are important generational, political and class differences in Turkish immigrants in the U.S.” (p. 306). The adaptation of professional Turkish immigrants in the United States should be studied in-depth in order to understand the differences in their social, professional, and religious experiences.

Immigrants from Turkey share many characteristics with immigrants from other countries. They differ in terms of demographics such as age, socio-economic status, and come to



the U.S. for different reasons, most specifically for education. However, there are several characteristics that make Turkish immigrants unique compared to other immigrant groups. For example, the majority of Turkish immigrants do not actually go to the U.S., rather they settle in Europe, especially in Germany. The first wave of modern times' Turkish immigration to Europe began in the 1960's and has been strong since (Sohn & Ozcan, 2006). As a result, there is a significant amount of information and research regarding Turkish immigration specific to Europe. Though most Turkish immigrants settle in Europe, the history of Turkish immigration to the U.S. is not insignificant, with waves of immigrants dating back to the 19th century (Senyurekli & Menjuvar, 2012). However, compared with the research conducted in Europe, there is a dearth of information available regarding Turkish immigration specific to the US.

For many immigrants, the process of adapting to a new culture is difficult, and can pose many challenges in terms of education, physical and mental health, and finding adequate places of employment and housing. Successful adaptation to a new culture is an important psychological process for immigrants (Robie & Ryan, 1996). Adaptation may cause various cross-cultural challenges, in terms of adapting to new roles, different cultural expectations, difficulties with language and academics, financial problems, and religious difficulties. All of these factors can contribute to problems with mental and physical health.

Given these factors, it is no surprise that many immigrants experience emotional and mental health issues during their adaptation period, stress being the primary issue (Tahir &

Ismail, 2007). Given that Turkish immigrants in the U.S. come primarily for educational and economic opportunities (Akcapar, 2009), they may be more susceptible to the stress and psychological effects of adaptation than other immigrant groups. Though the immigrant Turkish population is diverse in terms of social class, comprising working class, students, and professionals, they seem to be relatively disconnected from one another compared to other immigrant groups. However, due to the lack of research on Turkish immigrants in the U.S., this cannot be confirmed.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This qualitative research was guided by the Occupational Adaptation Theory (Schkade & Schultz, 1992), which was used to attempt to understand the adaptation process of Turkish immigrants who are living in the Greater Boston area. Using the Occupational Adaptation Theory, the section will review the importance of education and new working environment in the host culture as key factors contributing to successful adaptability.

Occupational Adaptation Theory is used to explain individual habits, beliefs, and hopes that originate during the process of entering an occupation in an unknown setting in a host country as an immigrant. This theory lays out the success of the professional immigration in the adaptation period (Schkade & Schultz, 1992). Occupational adaptation is a personal and inner practice that originates during the process of entering a new occupation in a host country. There are many researchers who have studied various factors of occupation and how those factors

influence personal life (George et al., 2004, Kielhofner, 2002; Mallinson et al, 1998; Schkade & Schultz, 1992). The major, common finding among these researchers is that obtaining a meaningful job is indispensable to the adaptation period (Parsons& Stanley, 2008).

A person's occupational environment is another factor that was used by Boutelop and Beltran (2007) to examine occupational adaptation. They defined "occupational environment" as "the context in which an occupational role is performed, that is work/school, leisure/play and self-care contexts" (p. 231). Therefore, occupational adaptation is generally defined as an individual process that covers adaptation to a new business culture in the host country. This process is part of an individuals' ability to cope with occupational functioning.

Using a theoretical framework that includes the occupational adaptation theory, the researcher will review the importance of the individuals' interaction with the new work environment as inputs for adaptability. The investigative approach of this research sought to understand the daily lives and the meaning of professional immigrant in the U.S., as a way to contribute to the existing knowledge associated with understanding the specific adaptation process of these immigrants.

Though these immigrants, both professional and working class, come from the same culture, the expectations, aims and the reasons for immigration might be similar or different. Where they may differ may be in the immigration process, such as different methods of coping, networking for employment, means of investing, or existing education level. The adaptation of

these two immigrant groups to a new work environment was examined according to Occupational Adaptation Theory.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The goal of the study was to examine the similarities and differences between professional immigrants and unauthorized working class immigrants who are from Turkey during their adaptation period to the U.S. This research is an exploratory study by means of a qualitative descriptive approach. The data collection process consisted of two parts. First, a face sheet was given to the interviewees in order to gather respondents' demographic information, since Warren and Karner (2005) stipulate that it is more effective to develop a face sheet instead of asking for demographic information during the interview process. This way the interviewee can complete the face sheet while the researcher sets up his or her recorder. Further, three pilot interviews from each group (total of six) were conducted in order to further refine the interview.

The demographic information face sheet consisted of a standard set of queries including: gender, date of birth, marital status, education, company, and health insurance information. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 professional Turkish immigrants and 14 working class (unauthorized) immigrants in different public venues. There was no set ratio based on gender.

The aim of the interview was to understand the participant's point of view regarding their adaptation. Open-ended questions were asked by the researcher that could be modified as needed during the interview process through follow-up queries. Timing and placement of questions were determined by the researcher. Even though wording of the questions can be modified for each participant (Sociological Research Skills, 2010), the purpose of the questions was consistent across interviews.

### **Sample and Participant Selection**

The recruitment goal was 30 participants and study completed with twenty-nine participants excluding pilot interviews. The study participants consisted of fifteen professional immigrants and fourteen working class (unauthorized) immigrants originally from Turkey who were living in the U.S. at least one year and no more than five years. The reason for having inclusion criteria in regards to being in the U.S. between one and five years is twofold. First, with a tourist visa visitor can stay legally in the U.S. up to six months. After six months if a visitor wants to stay longer in the U.S., then they need a change of visa status based on their position. Second, after five years immigrants can be considered as permanent residents if they are holding a green card. The age of the participants ranged from 28 to 55.

A snowball sampling method was used to recruit the study participants. The purpose of choosing this procedure was due to the fact that working class (unauthorized) immigrants were hard to reach because of their visa documentation. Eligible participants were approached at

meetings of the Turkish American Cultural Society of New England (TACS) and Turkish Cultural Center in Boston (TCC). Once eligibility was confirmed based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the aims and the objectives of the study were explained by the researcher and then informed consent forms were given to the participants. Participants were also informed that could end their participation at any point and could refuse to answer specific questions. Before the researcher started to interview guide, participants were asked to complete the demographic face sheet on their own. The study was approved by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Participants, the local IRB.

### **Interview Protocol**

After reviewing previous literature and instruments used in other related research fields, the researcher developed and conducted the interview guide and demographic face sheet in this study. The interview protocol was developed to elicit participants' immigration experiences. Given that some of the participants may move in some of the same circles as the researcher, conflict of interest may arise. Not surprisingly, it was difficult for some participants to answer personal questions because of a perceived pre-existing relationship. In order to prevent this possibility, snowball sampling was used. Even if the key person as an interviewee was known before, by using snowball sampling the next interviewees were unknown ones. Participants decided where to meet in order to let them feel comfortable throughout the interviews. Most of the time interviews took place in public venues. Each interview took between 60 and 90

minutes. The participants and researcher had an opportunity to review the interview questions before beginning the formal interview. Participants had the option to refuse to answer any question they did not wish to answer.

### **Interview Guide**

The researcher conducted three pilot interviews from each group (total of six) to refine the approach and the interview guide. Based on the pilot interviews, the guide has four sections that cover the following general themes: the role of education on adaptation, the role of interpersonal relationships and networking on adaptation, the role of employment on adaptation, and the role of age on adaptation. The interview guide consisted of 23 open-ended questions. Each section had several sub-sections with probing questions. The interview guide and the demographic face sheet were in Turkish. The responses were transcribed in Turkish, and exemplary quotes were translated to English by the researcher, whose native language is Turkish. For detailed information about the interview guide, please refer to Appendix I.

### **Data Analysis**

The aim of the study was to identify different experiences and perspectives in participants' immigration experiences as captured through the following question, "What are the differences and/or similarities between professional immigrants and working class Turkish immigrants in the process of adaptation to a new working environment?" For this study, qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interview techniques. Areas of interest and

discussion were expanded by asking additional questions and probes during the interviews. For this research there was a list of significant statements expressed by the participants about their immigration and adaptation experiences. The researcher analyzed these statements and described the real meaning of the phenomenon by using phenomenology approach. A researcher using a phenomenological approach looks to understand significant common life experiences as defined by the ones who experience them (Leedy, 1997). For this purpose, the researcher used the phenomenological research design for this study. Data was examined after each interview, transcribed, and analyzed by grouping it under thematic categories using NVivo<sup>®</sup> software.

According to the phenomenological approach, data analysis consists of three main steps: description, reduction, and interpretation (Lanigan, 1988). For this procedure, after the data was collected, names were changed to identification names to protect the anonymity of respondents. Interviews were then transcribed, and the next step was to categorize the data. The aim of this categorization is to identify patterns in order to classify common characteristics that were present during the interview. The data was organized under thematic categories. Specific codes were assigned to the identified themes in order to document specific experiences and perspectives under overarching themes which were later identified as thematic subcategories, as described by Hycner (1985). According to Suter (2006), “patterns, coherent themes, meaningful categories, and new ideas in general uncover better understanding of a phenomenon or process” (p.327).



Neuman (2003) explained the steps of data analysis as coding of patterns to describe the goal of the studied phenomena.

Two independent coders analyzed and coded the data following the process described by Mouter and Noordegraaf (2012) and explained above. The second coder was colleague of the primary researcher, also a native Turkish speaker, and had a doctoral degree in Sociology with expertise in Criminal Justice. The second coder did not code all the interviews, but 7 interviews from the working class immigrant group, and 5 interviews from the professional immigrant group. The results of the two coders were then compared for consistency. Since they were in different countries, the primary researcher and the second coder had to do comparisons of their analysis via online sources.

## **Results**

### **The role of education on adaptation**

During the adaptation period to the host culture, education plays an important role both for professional and working class unauthorized immigrant groups. Also education provides more prestige, better financial gain, and higher socio-economic status to individuals.

*Prior Educational Achievements in Country of Origin*

One important factor that emerged is that of the respondent's educational background prior to immigration, especially in the working class (unauthorized) immigrant group. In this sense unauthorized working class immigrants branched into two significant groups. Those who had at least a college degree from Turkey did not report facing significant impediments, while those without an educational degree from Turkey could not find a professional job in their new working environment and faced much greater adaptation challenges. One of the respondents underscored the importance of this distinction:

“.... I wish I had completed my university and got my bachelor's from Turkey...then most probably I would have a chance to continue my education here and maybe get hired...who knows!”

As one another participants approved his thoughts by saying:

“...I am glad I got my engineering degree from [University in Turkey] ... and at that time I was complaining about the English proficiency requirements of the school. Those prep classes were so hard for me...but now I am receiving the products of it...I had no problem to take TOEFL test and completed my master's degree within 2 years...and I am earning good money!”

One unauthorized working class immigrants expressed his feelings as well:

“After I graduated from technical high school my dad did not want me to continue my education and wanted me to start working with him. It was also easier for me since he was earning really good money as building contractor so I quit school...I came to the U.S. as a tourist and loved the life here and decided to stay...it was ok at the beginning since I was spending my savings but then I had to start working...I ended up as pizza delivery person...I wish I had completed my degree in Turkey so that I would have a chance to go to school here”

As the three quotes above reflect, not having completed higher education in Turkey prior to coming to the U.S. disadvantaged the working class (unauthorized) immigrants more than it did the professional immigrants. Another important theme that emerged involves the role of prestige, especially tied to educational achievement, in adaptation.

*Relationship between Holding Advanced Degrees and Prestige, and Impact on Adaptation*

Both of the immigrant group perspectives converged to the extent that both groups agreed on the fact that getting a degree provides not only money but also prestige in U.S. society, compared to their home country. The following quotes exemplify this theme:

“...I am earning under the table and getting paid relatively well... I have no family here and around \$4,000 (a month) is good money for me! However, when we get together with our friends no one mentions how much they earn. They talk more about their jobs and future plans for their careers.”

“...I experienced status, prestige and money [back in Turkey]. I had everything...came here and could not catch up with the system...it is too late to go back...nothing is going to be same again”.

Professional immigrants experienced more fully the benefits of education, especially of holding advanced degrees. As stated by a female participant:

“I got my Master of Science degree from [U.S. University] and right after I graduated I got hired by one of the companies that I met during the carrier fair. I am almost sure that, my degree brought me that opportunity!”

One of the participant comments relating to the relationship between holding advanced degrees and prestige was as follows:

“...having a professional title through your educational background in this country is more important than how much you earn, I do not know why? I was in the same sector but I was not feeling that much emotional support because of my position in my company back in Turkey.”

Both groups felt that in the U.S. prestige comes not from having money necessarily, but from having an advanced degree, and that this prestige can help them adapt more successfully. Of course, education is also related to finances, and this is explored in the next section.

*Relationship between Education and Financial Situation, and Impact on Adaptation*

In this study it was found that all participants believed that to have higher socio-economic status they must have degrees in higher education. This is in contrast with the way things are in Turkey, where socio-economic status can be achieved independent of educational gains. Generally, the purpose of coming to the U.S. was to seek educational opportunities. One immigrant with H1-B visa status asserted:

“...I am such a lucky person! I was told that having a degree from this country is something you must get if you are coming here with a visa. I got my Master’s degree in Computer Science...after I completed my degree I got hired by the company where I also finished my summer internship.”

This was exemplified by a male participant who was working in three different pizza shops as a delivery person:

“...yes I am earning pretty good right now since I am single and do not need to think about someone else, but when I start thinking about the future, I am kind of feeling scared. One day I will get married and have a family and I do not think that my income will not be enough at that time...I wish I had a schooling from here and would increase the number of employment opportunities for my future family...”

As it is mentioned by both immigrant groups, education is the first important key factor in order to have a higher socio-economic status in the U.S. The role of interpersonal relationships is also important, as seen in the next section.

### **Role of Interpersonal Relationships on Adaptation**

As an immigrant in a host culture needs a lot of information regarding to everything especially building relationships. Having a job in the new business environment, whether as an authorized or unauthorized employee, is significantly reliant on networking.

#### *Individual/Social Relationships and Adaptation*

Social networking plays an important role on finding employment, whether as a professional or a working class immigrant, and employment facilitates adaptation. Both groups mentioned the importance of social relationships on finding a job and adapting to the working environment. As stated by a male participant:

“Four years ago when I came to Boston my plans were definitely to stay here for the summer with my cousins, have fun and then go back to Turkey. At the end of the two months things changed and I decided to stay here...my visa expired but I stayed and started delivering pizza. I was earning good money... I saved money here and brought my savings from Turkey to my cousin’s bank account. We both worked at the pizza shop that I was working as a delivery driver. I do not have any work visa here but I have friends and my cousin is here...I am glad four years ago I spent my summer here.”

Another participant stated his feelings in an optimistic and positive way, even though he had too many problems starting with school when he first came to the U.S.:

“I am pretty a social person in my life and I am glad of being like that! When I started my masters here in [U.S. University], I was feeling really alone since I was a thousand miles away from my family. Then I decided to find some social clubs in the school and luckily I found the Turkish Student Association of [U.S. University], we started hanging out together and sharing most of our time together and those of my friends introduce me with my current mentor from outside of the campus in one of the private projects. You cannot imagine how lucky I am because I met with him!!!”

In order to adapt and succeed in the host culture it is accepted by both immigrant groups that social relationships are critical. They also emphasized the role of professional networking during the adaptation period to the host culture.

#### *Professional Networking*

The role of professional networking has more impact on professional immigrants than working class immigrants based on the analyzed data throughout the interviews. Most of the professional immigrants mentioned that they acquired their current positions through the professional networks that they build up either at their schools or professional meetings, organizations, and/or associations. One participant explained his experiences as:

“I was aware of the importance of networking; however, I could never imagine that it would open that many doors for me... I met with a group of engineers in one of the “young professional’s meetings” and that was the starting point of my professional carrier in the U.S.! I wish this was the case in Turkey as well”

Conversely one working class (unauthorized) immigrant mentioned as follows:

“What will change even I know a CEO of a company, I am not educated, who would hire me, do not be funny!”

Results show that even though social networking plays an important role for both immigrant groups, it is less advantageous for the working class (unauthorized) immigrants when they are less educated. The combination of having a higher level of education and being able to tap into professional networks confers distinctive advantages to those in the professional group. In Turkey, on the other hand, who you know matters more than what you know. The impact of employment on adaptation will be discussed in the following theme.

### **The role of employment on adaptation**

Most empirically-based studies of immigrants’ adaptation have paid attention to a whole or partial adjustment to a new culture; however, there is no research that investigates the complete adaptation process of immigrants to the culture of a new working environment (Tung, 1981). Moreover, existing research suggests that the adaptation period is similar for professional as well as working class immigrants. However, the biggest difference between those groups is



during the employment transition since physical working environments are significantly different from each other.

### *Employment Transition*

Neither group rejects the difficulties of adapting to the United States business culture. However, this transition is more challenging for professional immigrants. One working class respondent asserted:

“...we all know the rules of the game but to me even if I make a mistake I feel myself more comfortable in my current position here. The business environment is the same in some instances in Turkey and if I were working as a professional in the U.S. I believe with my mistakes I might lose more things than my job which is really important. But in my situation the only thing I am going to lose will be money; like I do not exist here!”

This respondent works as a delivery person, and if he loses his job he only loses his source of income, not his status or prestige. In the words of one of the participant who is working as a full time faculty member in [a university in the northeast]:

“...things are much more different here in professional settings in the U.S. At the beginning you are feeling yourself really free and independent in terms of your workloads but once you get deeper and analyze the system from bottom to top you start to realize that you are just a small piece of the system. If you fail in one point there

is no way to change it by yourself! I was not feeling that much restrictions back in Turkey!”

Adaptation to a new employment environment is much more stressful for the professional immigrants, who feel they have much more to lose if they are unsuccessful. Working class (unauthorized) immigrants feel fewer obligations in their employment settings. On the other hand, both groups` expectations about what they would find in the U.S. employment environment have changed over time, as is discussed next.

#### *Expectations as an Employee*

Both working class immigrants and professional immigrants mentioned the changes in their expectations, either in a positive or negative direction, after becoming familiar with the working environment in the U.S. Almost all participants (twenty-six of twenty-nine) mentioned that the image in their mind regarding to the U.S. business culture before they came to the U.S. was significantly different than what they were experiencing currently. In the words of one professional immigrant whose expectations have shifted in a negative direction:

“...in terms of hierarchical structure you are both feeling the presence and the absence of it at the same time. The image drawn to us when we were in Turkey was really different... we were thinking that it was a totally free country... whereas after I start getting used to with the working environment, I understand that you are the only one who

is responsible for your actions up to a specific point and this is defined by really strict lines...there is no way to go beyond those lines!”

One working class respondent documents his experiences regarding the financial expectations he had prior to coming to the U.S., which have shifted in a positive direction:

“...I am really hardworking person. I work more than my regular job load... I am not criticizing myself since I love being like this, this is my choice. But here, in the U.S., if you work really hard whatever the sector is, it is worth it, they pay what you deserve. When I think about the old days even I really work hard for some months we were not getting paid. I never thought that this can be that much different here.”

In both groups expectations as an employee in the host culture changed a lot from the images regarding the U.S. they had prior to immigrating. They also mentioned that things would be much easier and expectations would not have changed as much if they had come at earlier ages. This perspective will be discussed in the following theme.

### **Role of Age on Adaptation**

Both high skill and working class immigrants reported that coming to a new working environment/culture would have been easier at an earlier age. One unauthorized respondent captured this very well:

“...I came to the U.S. at the age of 30, after I studied finance in Turkey. It was too late to complete another degree here...I started working here but I never had a chance to qualify a professional job since I have no degree from the U.S.”

Two of the professional immigrants' comments relating to this theme were as follows:

“Before I came to the U.S., I was working as a manager in one of the finance companies [in Turkey], and after I worked for five years I decided to continue my education in the U.S. since the situation in Turkey was not good...finally I got accepted and got my master's degree and found a job...now I am really happy where I am but this would have been way easier for me if I came to the U.S. five years younger.”

“Turkish folk wisdom states that individuals can learn at every age, whether at 1 or 100...this might be true to some extent, but I want to correct this with my own words: yes, you learn at every age, but it's way easier when you are younger...I learned English after I came to the U.S. since I only completed two years of college in Turkey, and I don't speak English very well... I am sure I would have been much more successful if I came here when I was younger.”

Overall the findings regarding the problems of adaptation to a new working environment show that both of the immigrant groups had similar issues during their initial adaptation time in the U.S., but they showed perseverance in the face of these issues, and worked really hard to overcome them.

### **Discussion/Summary of Results**

The purpose of the study was to examine the differences and similarities between professional immigrants and working class unauthorized immigrants in the process of adaptation to a new environment. The interview data suggests that professional immigrants show higher adaptation achievement compared to working class immigrants. Working class immigrants experienced disadvantages from having less than high school degrees from their country, during the adaptation to the new business culture. Parallel to this, professional immigrants benefit from advanced degrees.

The expectations about the host business culture partially changed in both groups, yet they still prefer to stay in the U.S., and want to continue to experience better employment opportunities in the U.S. Both groups support the idea of coming to the U.S. at an earlier age and state that it would have been easier in terms of adapting to a new working environment. Also, they both stated that educational background plays an important role in adapting to a new business culture. Professional immigrants state that, in order to have higher socio-economic status, they must have advanced degrees such as masters and/or doctorates since degrees provide not only money but also prestige in the U.S. society. Both groups mentioned that interpersonal relationships are important and having a job in the new business environment is significantly dependent on networking. However, the transition into a new work environment is more

challenging for professional immigrants due to higher expectations from the new business culture.

The majority of immigrants from Turkey comprise highly educated, highly professional workers drawn by the explosive growth in knowledge-intensive sectors of the economy. These workers are among the best-educated and most professional immigrant groups in the U.S. By comparison, previous waves of Turkish immigrants tended to be less educated and less professional than the current wave (Borjas & Trejo, 1993).

Well-educated and professional Turkish immigrants are mostly moving into the more popular sectors of the U.S. economy, in general, bypassing the traditional transgenerational modes of immigrant status mobility, in contrast with the context of Turkish immigration to Europe. Never in the history of immigration to the U.S. have so many Turkish immigrants done so well, so fast in terms of passing through the adaptation process (Borjas & Trejo, 1993). However, as seen in the current study, that adaptation is not without challenges.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This research examined adaptation to the U.S. culture of professional and working class Turkish immigrants as a function of education, work environment, networking, and age. Findings reveal high adaptation achievement but also consequences from differences in educational background. As defined in Occupational Adaptation Theory, personal and inner characteristics

play an important role when entering into a new business environment. Successfully networking could stem from personal characteristics in addition to a strong educational background.

Overall, findings suggest that the main purpose of coming to the United States is the pursuit of higher education. Immigrants believe that they have more opportunity in the United States, and the expectations of a U.S. education may improve their chances of getting better jobs and benefits, therefore they prefer to stay in the United States. Participants provided various types of information during interviews. Generally, they reported a level of achievement of their goals while working and living in the U.S., though they partially changed their expectations.

The study's findings also suggest that the mode of adaptation needs to be better understood. Many Turkish immigrants, whether professionals with legal status, or unauthorized working class immigrants, endure a painful process of adaptation, just one aspect of moving from a homogenous to a multicultural society. This has great implications for social work, since social workers are the front line workers who will likely provide services to these Turkish immigrants, either through community clinics or Employee Assistance Programs. As such, this research provides useful insights to social workers in a variety of fields, from unemployment applications to workforce development and delivery of supportive and mental health services. In order to respond to client needs, social workers and other social service providers need to be knowledgeable of cultural differences and of adaptation processes and challenges. This study provides some of this knowledge.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

There are some limitations that need to be mentioned. First, there is an unequal distribution of female and male respondents in the two groups. All fourteen working class immigrants were men, whereas in the professional immigrant group there were 8 males and 7 females. Similar to other immigrant groups, most unauthorized immigrants tend to be male, since females often have to remain back home with young children. It is possible that the adaptation processes for female working class immigrants are different than for men, and this needs to be further explored. Second, the study was purely qualitative. Our understanding of the adaptation process for these immigrant groups could be enhanced with quantitative and network analysis approaches. Third, the study only focused on occupational adaptation, and adaptation in other areas (e.g., social, family, economic) can impact and be impacted by occupational adaptation. Nevertheless, this research offers an original contribution to understanding the process of adaptation to a new environment for Turkish professional and working class immigrants.



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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Article 2**

#### **The Relationship between Family Members' Roles and Expectations and Post-Migration Adaptation Among Turkish Immigrants**

**Target Journal: Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services**

**(Page Limit: 22)**

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#### **Abstract**

This study explored the role of family relationships during the adaptation process to a host culture. A total of 29 Turkish immigrants residing in the Greater Boston area were interviewed. Qualitative data suggests a higher adaptation achievement (i.e., a more successful adaptation process) attained by immigrant families compared to single immigrants. Further, both families and individuals experienced changes in intergenerational relationships with family members who remained in Turkey. Possible implications for practice are presented.

#### **Key words**

Turkish immigrants, role of family, adaptation, qualitative, intergenerational relations

## **Introduction**

Like most people, immigrants spend their lives within a family environment, and this environment can become disrupted by immigration. A significant amount of research has been conducted regarding the process of immigrant family adaptation to a new host culture. Amongst other findings, it has been shown that family support and strong family ties play an important role during the immigration period (Botta & Dumlao, 2000). However, the roles of family adaptation and support are not understood enough to categorically explain how specifically family can affect the adaptation issues that immigrants and their spouses may experience (Botta & Dumlao, 2000).

In terms of adaptation, there are several differences between married and single immigrants. For instance, a married immigrant couple has to remain connected with and committed to each other; each partner shares responsibility for their own and their partner's gender and marital roles; each partner has to learn social meaning codes for both him/herself and for the other partner; and they are more fearful of making mistakes because they would impact their partner as well. In contrast, an immigrant who is single may experience more freedom to interact with the new host culture and make mistakes; is responsible only for him/herself; and has to learn social meaning codes just for themselves. These differences can impact the degree and quality of their adaptation. Shaffer & Harrison (2001) state that spouse participants is largely influenced by three important processes:

1. How well the spouse is able to build relationships with host country nationals;
2. How well the spouse becomes accustomed to local customs and the culture in general;
- and
3. The degree to which the spouse feels a sense of becoming part of or feeling at home in the host country.

As such, Shaffer and Harrison (2001) postulate that successful adaptation is related to how the spouse develops in a new society. The role of family support helps immigrants develop perspectives and strategies, build relationships, or find a job within the new culture. While the meaning codes of the new culture are shaping immigrant families, their own family patterns from their existing culture are also helpful in shaping cultural meaning codes of the host culture as well. The main concern at this point is how and why aspects of family and kinship change during this process. Further, how immigrant families maintain intergenerational relationships with their families and/or peers in their home country is also key. When we examine the family structure, especially in the adaptation process, it is not a simplistic mechanism; conversely the structure of the family plays a role in terms of dynamic interplay between family structure, culture, economy and policies (Foner, 1997).

Immigration is an important and ongoing contributor to the diversity of the United States. Many characteristics of the U.S. culture have been shaped by immigrants and their offspring (Hirshman, 2005). As mentioned earlier, maintaining intergenerational relationships between a

new and home culture may cause difficulties during the adaptation process. Most of the time, the immigration process is more difficult for those who immigrate with spouses or families, as opposed to those who come alone (Detzner & Senyurekli, 2008). The immigration context is usually perceived as an individual movement. However existing research reveals that an immigrant's choices, expectations and opportunities, such as where to emigrate, when to go, and how to go, are all decided not just by the individual, but as a family. Family members are the main source of support and motivation for new immigrants (Glick, 2010).

### **Turkish immigrants, their families and cultural background**

Turkish immigration in Europe has been researched for over a century. On the other hand, Turkish immigration to the U.S. is largely and unexplored phenomenon, as Turkish immigrants represents a relatively new and small population, albeit one with an ongoing process that started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Grabowski, 2005). Before World War II, Turkish immigration waves were significantly shorter, and more temporary than they are today. After World War II, immigrants from Turkey started to arrive more frequently and to stay for longer periods of time (Saatci, 2003). In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 117,619 people identified themselves as Muslim-Americans (Kaya, 2009), and 77,679 people who reported "Türkiye" (i.e., Turkey) as their country of birth (Senyurekli, 2006). Between 1820 and 2000, almost half a million (484,911) Turkish people officially emigrated from Turkey to the U.S. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007). Currently, the exact number of Turkish

immigrants living in the U.S. cannot be accurately estimated because most Turks are Muslim, and self-identifying as a Muslim is a sensitive topic after September 11, 2001. Additionally, there are a myriad of misconceptions associated with Turks because of stereotypes regarding Muslims.

It is clear that Turkish culture and background are not widely examined and understood from the perspective of research regarding immigration to the U.S. The main reason behind this is due to the under reported Muslim population in the U.S. Almost 99% of Turks are Muslim (U.S. Department of State, 2009). Even though the mindset about being a Muslim in Turkey has been predominantly moderate, Islam is a strong influence in all aspects of Turkish culture (McWilliams & Sohtorik, 2011). Immigrants and their families also carry this influence with them to the host culture as well.

While small, the size of the Turkish immigrant population in the U.S. is not insignificant. Nevertheless, there is no significant data on the family ties and supports of this population. Social, economic and religious differences between the two cultures may have reflective impacts during the examination of this group's adaptation process.

This study aims to address some of the gaps in research regarding Turkish immigration in the U.S. Its focus is on the cultural adaptation of Turkish immigrants in the Greater Boston area, which is one of the epicenters of Turkish immigration to the U.S. The researcher explored the adaptation of Turkish immigrants in terms of obtaining basic needs, and dealing with social and



family issues. Mental health issues such as depression, homesickness, and anxiety also explored. Additionally, the importance of technology and Internet use while adapting to a new culture is explored since technology is the most important aspect of this century in terms of maintaining ties with loved ones overseas. The overarching research question is: *What is the role of family/spouses in the process of adaptation to the host culture?*

### **Theoretical Framework**

This qualitative research is based on a theoretical framework informed by the Double ABCX Theory (Caliguiri et al, 1998), which focuses on the difficulties of the adaptation process for families, including spouses. This section will lay out the basis of family adaptation and its roles in the success of immigration. Using the Double ABCX Theory, the section will review the importance of family support and communication as inputs for adaptability.

### **Double ABCX Theory**

There are numerous reasons why immigrants experience failures during the immigration process, including: returning to their home country prior to finishing their education; experiencing serious mental health issues due to homesickness; and issues related to familial and financial responsibilities. Family issues in particular can adversely affect the immigration process, as family characteristics and dynamics have an important role to play in successful adaptation, as much or perhaps more so than success in one's professional life. The social networks created and the personal capabilities of the individual also define a successful

adaptation. Double ABCX Theory explains that family dynamics and the adjustment processes of other family members, such as spouses, are important contributors to the success or failure of the immigration process. Caligiuri and colleagues (1998) point out that those who prematurely and permanently left their host culture most frequently cited their spouse's inability to adjust to living in the host country as the reason for failure. Therefore, a key component of successful adaptation is the concurrent successful adaptation of one's spouse or family (Black & Gregersen, 1991b).

The Double ABCX Theory was developed by Hill in 1949 (Caligiuri et al, 1998) and has been used to explain the adjustment period for families of immigrants living in host countries. Its application to the study of families is based on the examination of family dynamics as they relate to family adaptation and to stressors, such as global relocation. They define this as the examination of familial dynamics in relation to the stresses associated with immigration.

Caligiuri and colleagues (1998) propose that three different determinants work together to impact a family's adaptation: stressors (A), the resources the family has to cope with stressors (B), and how the family perceives stressors (C). These work together and result in low or high levels of stress (X). Furthermore, Caligiuri posits that the major stressors in a host culture result from repositioning to the new location. During the adaptation process, the most common major stressors are, for instance, fear of physical and emotional contact with new people, excessive

personal grooming, feeling of helplessness, delay and outright refusal to learn the language of the host country, and homesickness for familiar people and places (Stewart & Leggat, 1998).

The effects of these stressors are made worse by “pile-up demands.” According to Wiggins-Frame and Shehan (1994), these are stressors that affect how a family is able to deal with crises and their aftermaths. Wiggins-Frame & Shehan (1994) explain that other than the stressor itself, the other two determinants of successful or unsuccessful adaptation are the family’s resources or characteristics to cope with the stressor; and the family’s perceptions of the stressor. The three major signs of family functioning identified in the model proposed by Olson, Russell, and Sprenkle (1984) include family communication, family adaptation, and family support.

Reviewing Double ABCX Theory will assist in determining how a spouses’ adjustment can determine success in immigration. It will also help to clarify the relationships between immigrants and their spouses in the context of immigration. Family is one of the most important institutions in society, and it is especially important when that family is living away from its own country and relying on the built-in levels of support they possess. As such, family support is a crucial factor during the adaptation process to a new culture.

### **Family Support**

Olson and colleagues (1984) define family support as “being together” with strong harmonic relationships. This strong and respectful relationship gives the feeling of emotional

support to members of a family unit. Emotional support allows family members to feel more independent and self-confident. However, this support should be balanced. If the family of an individual does not care about his/her needs and does not support him/her, it can cause problems for the individual in the form of stress. Conversely, too much support can cause problems, such as perceived oppression due to familial intervention in one's private or business matters. Such a situation can cause stress for the family as a whole. Caligiuri and colleagues (1998) elaborate that a healthy level of familial support can assist with the formation of relationships outside the family. There is a positive correlation between familial support and interaction, and the success of the immigration process, regardless of how that familial support is defined.

### **Family Adaptability**

The second construct, family adaptability, is essential for the stability of the family during dramatic changes (Minuchin, 1974). Caligiuri and colleagues (1998) explain that family adaptability can be discerned by how well a family can change its routines and habits in the face of stressors, for example those that result from the immigration process. Adaptability is defined by the assessing of stressors, and the positive steps that are taken to deal with those stressors.

According to Teresa and colleagues (2010) highly adaptable families are able to maintain better interactions with the host culture, such as more personal contacts with that culture, than those who have difficulty with adaptation. This is one of the many ways that familial support

affects the immigration process. However, in order to obtain good and effective adaptability to the host culture, there must be also strong communication between family members.

### **Family Communication**

Family communication is an important construct of the family system model (Olson et al., 1984). Caligiuri and colleagues (1998) note that a healthy level of communication between family members, such as being able to express opinions and resolve conflicts, is conducive to feeling supported and being better able to adapt. For instance, the family communication patterns, originally developed by McLeod and Chaffee (1972), assumed that communication patterns develop from experience in interactions rather than from personality characteristics. Family communication can establish the mental and social orientation to the new culture. Therefore, establishing a communication link between the immigrant family members could help them to adjust to a host culture (Dumlao & Botta 2000).

Being far away from the home country can affect family communication. For immigrant families, the amount of energy coping with anxiety reduces the energy available for dealing with behaviors associated with better adaptation (Feldman & Tomson, 1993; Wiggins-Frame & Shehan, 1994). Caligiuri and colleagues (1998) in their research on family and work adjustment found that although 75% of immigrants described their experiences as stressful, their perception of the experience had a large impact on how stressful the experience actually was.

Adaptation to the host culture can cause serious difficulties and conflicts during the immigration process. As explained in the Double ABCX Theory, the adjustment problems for immigrants and their families can be minimized by having strong family support, adaptability and communication.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The aim of the study was to define the role of the family and spouses of immigrants who are from Turkey, in their process of adaptation to the host culture. This research is an exploratory study by means of a qualitative descriptive approach. The data collection process consisted of two parts. First, a face sheet was given to the interviewees in order to gather respondents' demographic information, since Warren and Karner (2005) stipulate that it is more effective to develop a face sheet instead of asking for demographic information during the interview process. This way the interviewee can complete the face sheet while the researcher sets up his or her recorder. Further, three pilot interviews from each group (professional immigrants and working class immigrants; six pilot interviews in total) were conducted in order to fine tune the interview guide and determine the flow of the interview. After conducting the pilot interviews, the researcher reviewed the interview guide and changed some of the wording for the questions, and added some additional probing questions in order to gather more in-depth data regarding the aim of the research.

The demographic information face sheet consisted of a standard set of queries including: gender, date of birth, marital status, education, company, and health insurance information. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 professional immigrants (i.e., in the US with a work visa or permanent resident card) and 14 working class immigrants (most of whom turned out to be unauthorized). The interviews were conducted in different public venues. There was no set ratio based on gender; however, all the working class immigrants interviewed were male.

The aim of the interview was to elicit the participants' experiences adapting to a new host culture, and their perceptions of immigration to the U.S. in general. Open-ended questions were asked by the researcher, and the questions were modified as needed during the interview process through follow-up queries. Timing and placement of questions were determined by the researcher. Even though the wording of the questions could be modified for each participant (Sociological Research Skills, 2010), the purpose of the questions was consistent across interviews.

### **Sample and Participant Selection**

The recruitment goal was 30 participants and the final study sample 29 participants, excluding the 6 pilot interviews. The study participants consisted of fifteen professional immigrants and fourteen working class (unauthorized) immigrants originally from Turkey who had been living in the U.S. for at least one year and no more than five years. The reason for

having inclusion criteria in regards to being in the U.S. between one and five years is twofold. First, with a tourist visa visitor can stay legally in the U.S. up to six months. After six months if a visitor wants to stay longer in the U.S., then they need a change of visa status based on their position. Second, after five years immigrants can be considered as permanent residents if they are holding a green card. The age of the participants ranged from 28 to 55.

A snowball sampling method was used to recruit the study participants. This approach was used because working class (unauthorized) immigrants were hard to reach due to their documentation status. Eligible participants were approached by the researcher at meetings of The Turkish American Cultural Society of New England (TACS) and Turkish Cultural Center in Boston (TCC). Once eligibility was confirmed based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the aims and the objectives of the study were explained by the researcher and then informed consent forms were given to the participants. Participants were also informed that they could end their participation at any point and could refuse to answer specific questions. Before the researcher started to interview guide, participants were asked to complete the demographic face sheet on their own. The study was approved by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Participants, the local IRB.

### **Interview Protocol**

After reviewing previous literature and instruments used in other related research fields, the researcher developed and piloted the interview guide and demographic face sheet used in this



study. The interview protocol was developed to elicit participants' immigration experiences. Given that some of the participants may move in some of the same circles as the researcher, conflicts of interest may arise. Not surprisingly, it was difficult for some participants to answer personal questions because of a perceived pre-existing relationship. In order to prevent this possibility, snowball sampling was used. Even if the key person as an interviewee was known before, by using snowball sampling the next interviewees were unknown ones. Participants decided where to meet so they could feel comfortable throughout the interview. Most of the time interviews took place in public venues. Each interview took between 60 and 90 minutes. The participants and researcher had an opportunity to review the interview questions before beginning the formal interview. Participants had the option to refuse to answer any question they did not wish to answer.

### **Interview Guide**

The researcher conducted 3 pilot interviews from each group (6 total) to refine the approach and the interview guide. Based on the pilot interviews, the guide has four sections that cover the following general themes: changes in the family structure after immigration to the host country (e.g., changes in marital status); role of children in adaptation; roles of the Internet in adaptation; and role of close friends/peer relations. The interview guide consisted of 20 open-ended questions. Each section had several sub-sections with probing questions. The interview guide and the demographic face sheet were in Turkish. Responses were transcribed in Turkish,

and exemplary quotes were translated to English by the researcher, whose native language is Turkish. The interview guide can be found in Appendix I.

### **Data Analysis**

The aim of the study was to provide perspectives in an attempt to answer the question, “What is the role of family and spouses in the process of adaptation to the host culture?” For this study, qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interview techniques. Areas of interest and discussion were expanded by asking additional questions and probes during the interviews. For this research there was a list of significant statements made by participants about their immigration experiences, and the researcher determined the meaning of these statements and described the real meaning of the phenomenon by using phenomenology approach. A researcher using phenomenology approach looks to understand significant common life experiences as defined by the ones who experience them (Leedy, 1997). For this purpose, the researcher used the phenomenological research design for this study. Using NVivo® software, data was examined after each interview, transcribed, analyzed and interpreted into themes and meanings to form the foundation of coding.

According to the phenomenological approach data analysis consists of three main steps: description, reduction, and interpretation (Lanigan, 1988). For this procedure, after the data was collected, names were changed to fictitious identification names and then transcribed; the next step was to categorize the data. The aim of this section is to classify any patterns in order to

identify common characteristics that were present during the interview. The data was then added into the logical categories that summarize the meanings. Specific codes are given to the categorized data in order to clarify themes and develop subcategories, as described by Hycner (1985). These subcategories were coded so that this data can be applied to the results section. According to Suter (2006), “patterns, coherent themes, meaningful categories, and new ideas in general uncover better understanding of a phenomenon or process” (p.327). Neuman (2003) explained the steps of data analysis as coding of patterns to describe the goal of the studied phenomena.

The analysis consisted of identifying patterns/parallel categories related to the participants’ experiences with the immigration process. The last step of analysis was guided the writing of the report by presenting the interpretation of results. Two independent coders analyzed and coded the data following a process described by Mouter and Noordegraaf (2012). The second coder was also a native Turkish speaker and had a doctoral degree in Sociology with expertise in Criminal Justice. The second coder did not code and analyze all of the interviews, but 7 interviews from working class immigrants, and 5 interviews from the professional immigrants group (12 of 29). The results of the two coders were then compared for consistency. Since they were in different countries, the researcher and the second coder had to do comparisons of their analyses via online sources.

## **Results**

Immigration to another country can lead to extensive structural and functional changing in the dynamics of the family. Results on the process of successful family adaptation show that family support, communication, and strong family ties play an important role during this changing. Four major themes emerged from the analyses of the data in this study: the role of marital status (i.e., being single vs. married) on adaptation; the role of children; the role of the Internet; and the role of close friends and peer relations.

### **Role of Marital Status**

Even though all immigrants carry their feelings and experiences with them when migrating to a host culture, there seems to be a significant distinction in terms of maintaining those feelings in between single immigrants and immigrants who came to the host country with their families. The impact of marital status can be complex. On the one hand, as a result of being single in the host country, an immigrant may be more open to new beliefs, norms and societal expectations. On the other hand, immigrating alone may make the adaptation process more difficult than it would be otherwise. One participant who came to the U.S. by himself at the age of 25 noted:

“When I first came to the U.S., I was little shocked since things in my mind were not matching with the real life but still I was feeling happy, but as the time passes I feel more

and more depressed and alone since I have no one around me to share my loneliness...at this point friends are not enough...”

Another participant explained her feelings regarding being a single immigrant within the same alignment:

“I thought I could handle all the things that I had come across by myself, but real life is not like that. The first time I really felt myself alone when I had to go to the ER, even though it was a year after I came to Boston. They asked for an emergency contact and I could not think of any name in my life and started to cry...I will never forget it...”

As stated by another participant whose family is in Turkey:

“I had to leave my family—my wife and my three children—in Turkey. I thought it would be easier for me to come here first and set up a life here for us and then bring them here, but now I realize that this was a big mistake! Yes, maybe I would have more responsibilities with them, but I would also have more family support if they were here.”

As shown by the above exemplary quotes, even though being married brings more responsibilities during the adaptation period to the host culture, participants still pointed out that being together with your family is definitely a need and it is better to feel their support with you. This was true for both the professional immigrants and for the working class (unauthorized) immigrants. The importance of family support also extended to the children, as seen in the next section.

## **Role of children**

Immigrating with a family, especially the nuclear family—spouse and children—can have its own advantages and disadvantages. Lack of foreign language proficiency is one of the biggest problems, especially for mothers. Children adapt much more rapidly and can play active roles during the adaptation period for the entire family. Children build an important bridge between their family members and the host society. They learn the foreign language much faster and easier than their parents, and can serve as translators between the family members and the broader society. One professional immigrant who was highly accomplished professionally in Turkey and was in the U.S. legally but under-employed (that is, working at a job for which she was overly qualified but that didn't much English), expressed her feelings regarding being dependent on her children in the US because of her English proficiency:

“The times I go grocery shopping with my kids are the best ones for me. I tried to do shopping several times by myself, but every time it ended with failure! I was trying to use a translator app via my phone but it did not help. My last attempt ended with buying dog food instead of cereal...Learning English is not easy so I prefer waiting and being dependent to my kids.”

While having a child may be an advantage in some areas, it might be a problem in other cases due to the conservative Turkish family structure. In Turkish families, members are more highly bonded and connected to each other, compared to other cultures. and that brings increased

responsibilities for each of the family members. A professional immigrant who is raising two daughters in Boston stated how hard it is for him to have a dialogue with his daughters and about his concerns for their safety:

“...I have 2 daughters, their ages close to each other, around almost 18. Whenever they want to go outside with their friends, since they are not sharing what and who they are hanging out with, I am kind of really scared of the outside world in the U.S.! I was feeling similar when we were in Turkey, but they were hanging out with their cousins and I was thinking they were more secure with them...here we have no one to take care of them from the outside world and I do not know who they are together with.”

Another respondent, a working class immigrant, made a choice to send his children back to Turkey during their teenage years, as explained in the following quote:

“Even though the education system is much more intense and better here compared to my country, the youth generation scared me and my wife, so we decided to raise our children for a period of time back in Turkey. I missed them [my kids and my wife] a lot but I am feeling more comfortable this way.”

Another working class immigrant discussed his children's role during the adaptation to the host culture, especially how they help the wife adjust, as follows:

“Throughout the day I am not at home, I am working outside and my wife is at home and she does not speak English...the kids learn everything at school and they are sharing and

teaching their experiences with their mom. This saves me a lot of time since I am not that much patient to help my wife.”

Familial support in general (i.e., spouses and children) plays a very important role during the adaptation period to the host culture. The Internet also play a role during the adaptation period, and the younger generation (i.e., the children) capture innovations in technology faster than their parents. We now discuss the role of technology and the Internet.

### **Role of the Internet**

It is inevitable that some aspects of family dynamics may change due to the immigration process. These changes can be evident when communication exists with family in the home country via telephone or the Internet. The role of the Internet and technology cannot be underestimated. Most parents of immigrants still reside in their home country, and both single immigrants and family units are united in their feelings of isolation from their parents and extended family in Turkey. Family patterns are changing, and maintaining family connections overseas, though aided by technology, is getting more difficult as more people begin to leave their home countries. In Turkey, even if a son or daughter lived in different city, they would typically visit their parents at least once a month, or even once a week if they lived in the same city. After immigrating to the U.S., this frequency is lost due to the time and expense of international travel. At this point the Internet plays an important role due to its lower cost, and with applications such as Skype and Face Time, a higher level of intimacy is possible, as



opposed to when using strictly audio-based interactions. One of the professional immigrants tried to express his bittersweet experiences staying connected to family back home only through his smart phone:

“It was hard to travel to Turkey when I was a student because of the high cost. Now I am working as a professional, but since I also got married, it costs even more now compared to before because I have to pay my family’s travel as well. I miss my country a lot...the last time I was there was two summers ago and most probably for this summer I will send only my son and my wife and I will have a chance to go maybe next year...instead I am using my iPhone [to stay connected] ...”

These difficulties staying connected were echoed and amplified by another single, working class participant who left his family behind in Turkey and discussed the cost and logistics involved in staying connected:

“I wish we had less of a time difference with Turkey. We have 7 hours difference in between Turkey and Boston, and it is sometimes so hard to catch the right timing with my family, but we have to! Airfare is so expensive so it is not to easy to fly frequently, you are really lucky if you go once a year! Instead, thank God we have Internet and Face Time so I can see my family via phone. Sometimes it is not enough just to hear their voices.”

Another respondent, a professional immigrant, described his feeling as follows:

“I got engaged and moved to the U.S. Now we are apart from each other and need to wait at least a year due to the visa requirements. She is working in Turkey so it is not easy for her also to come whenever she wants. So it is hard, but thanks to technology, it is making our lives much easier. I cannot imagine what people were doing before Internet!”

Most respondents in both groups--professional and working class immigrants alike--expressed wanting to visit their families and relatives in Turkey more frequently, but being unable to do it due to high cost of transportation. Those that are in the U.S. with their families prefer to stay here and travel inside the U.S. In general, technology, and in particular being able to stay connected with loved ones left behind, significantly aides in the adjustment process. Participants also discussed the role of peers and close friends in their adaptation, and we now turn to that discussion.

### **Role of close friends and peer relations**

For most immigrants who are living here apart from their families, friends and peer relations play a more critical role, compared to those who immigrated to the host country with their families intact. Immigrants who live here by themselves are feeling the loneliness and homesickness more acutely. They are trying to fill the gap created by their family's absence with their close friends. One of the participants, a professional immigrant, explained her feelings as follows:

“I was not really a social person back in Turkey and I used to have less friends in Turkey compared to here now ...you have to have friends here since you have no family members...sometimes you get sick and need someone to take care of you, at that point instead of calling your family members in Turkey, you are calling your close friends in the U.S.”

Another participant, a working class immigrant, described his thoughts as follows:

“Here [in the U.S.] we as Turks are a huge big family, maybe I would not need that much community support if I was in Turkey, but here it is a big need, I am glad we have lots of friends through Turkish associations and the TCC [Turkish Cultural Center] here, they are organizing cultural events and those make me really happy.”

In terms of how they spend their spare time, most respondents (n=21) stated that they prefer to spend their spare time with others from their own culture [i.e., other Turks]. They also emphasized that it does not mean they are isolating themselves from others, but that they feel more relaxed and comfortable with people who are from Turkey. One of the participants, a professional immigrant, stated his feelings as follows;

“...all through the day at work I have to speak English, I really miss speaking and hanging out with someone from Turkey. That is why most of the time on weekends and after work, if I have extra time, I am hanging out with someone from the Turkish community.”

As stated by another participant, a working class immigrant, hanging out with other members of the Turkish community is much more fun:

“I know that I have to practice more in order to succeed in this language. However, I am kind of feeling stressed when I am out with my roommates, maybe because I do not master English yet. So most of the time I prefer to have time with my Turkish friends.”

Both professional and working class immigrants discussed the key role that friends and peer relationships play in helping them adapt to the new host culture. Even though they are experiencing hard and painful times as immigrants in the U.S., whether single or as a family, most of them do not want to return to Turkey because of the better life opportunities in the U.S. Instead, they trying to find ways of bringing their families here, or marry someone from their own culture already in the U.S.

### **Discussion/ Summary of Results**

The experiences described by participants confirmed support the notion that family relations play an important role during the process of adaptation into a host culture for Turkish immigrants. There are significant differences in terms of maintaining feelings and expectations between single immigrants and immigrants who came with their families. Those who immigrated with their families describe an easier adaptation process because they are together with someone from their own culture, who understands and supports them and shares in their struggles. Also, children, who adapt much faster than their parents, play a key role as cultural and language

brokers, this aiding the adaptation process. This is different from previous literature, which describes immigrants coming with families as having a more difficult adaptation. Professional immigrants are more likely to come with their families, as opposed to working class immigrants, many of which are undocumented.

An immigrant having more interaction and adaptation with the host society is related to one's perceived level of familial support. However, immigrants who came to the U.S. with their families are not completely free of challenges. They have to attend not only to their individual needs, but also to the needs of their partners and children. This might make the adaptation process more challenging. Individual immigrants are having less responsibilities and workload during the adaptation process.

The findings of the study suggest that single immigrants are more open to new beliefs. Also there are some advantages and disadvantages for nuclear families. Children play an important role at this point. Families who came to the U.S. with young children show better adaptation. Children are also helpful to their families in terms of adaptation since young children are getting adapted to the host culture much easier than their parents. This case is slightly different with older children since they are likely to show more resistance to the host culture compared to younger children, given that older children will have more familiarity with Turkish culture and more limited English proficiency while younger children are more "Americanized" in every way.

Single immigrants face similar issues, as they also use technology to connect with family (George, 2005). Given the high cost of traveling to the country of origin, there is a decrease in direct contact with family members. The Internet and technology play an important role for maintaining the intergenerational relationships between family members who are overseas.

The results suggested that most of the participants who are single (n=15) prefer getting married within their own culture. Also, even though it is so hard for the families who are raising their children in the U.S. they still prefer to remain in the U.S. permanently due to better opportunities.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

It is crucial for immigrants of any social status or nationality, economic or educational background, or reasons for immigration, to find a place where they can meet and interact with people of their same cultural background and expectations. Historically, immigrant groups tend to concentrate in neighborhoods or develop networks in which they can share their respective culture and experiences. Turkish immigrants to the U.S. have adapted to American culture by keeping their religious, moral and social values and adapting some new norms and features to their social and professional life. In this attempt they navigate between two cultures and try to integrate both without interfering with each other.

As predicted by the Double ABCX Theory, family adaptability and support is the most crucial factor in the process of adaptation to a new culture. According to the Family adaptation

theory, whether in the U.S. or overseas, by having good family communication skills the adaptation period can be less painful.

As a part of helping immigrants and their families in the adaptation process to the new country, family service providers can help them to plan in advance to prevent any of the maladaptive consequences for immigrants and families. For example, family service providers can assist families with improving communication between parents and their children across generational and cultural gaps; help families leverage the cultural and linguistic brokering ability of their children without parentifying the children or placing too much responsibility on them; orient families to the existence and use of technologies that can close the gap between them and loved ones left behind; and help families connect with resources that can provide a supportive role, like cultural centers and peer networks. These approaches can all decrease suffering and enhance the adaptation process.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The study was not without its challenges or limitations. This qualitative research included only twenty-nine Turkish immigrants and only eight of them were married. Given the small sample, much more qualitative data is needed, in addition to quantitative studies into Turkish immigration and adaptation in the U.S. No major differences emerged between married immigrants here with their families and married immigrants whose family members are in Turkey. This could be due to the size or nature of the sample. Also, the interviews were

conducted adults, and the perspective of the children in immigrant families is missing to better understand the role children play during the adaptation process.

Nevertheless, this study makes an important contribution to our understanding of the experiences of Turkish immigrants to the U.S., a group that is increasing and sorely understudied. Further research is needed to better understand the role of family dynamics and relations on Turkish immigrants in both the host culture and the country of origin.



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## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Article 3**

#### **The Role of Push and Pull Factors in the Turkish Immigration Experience in the United States**

**Target Journal: Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies (Word Limit: 7,500)**

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#### **Abstract**

This study explored the effects of push and pull factors during the adaptation process to a host culture among Turkish immigrants in the United States. A total of forty-two Turkish immigrants residing in the Greater Boston area were interviewed. Findings revealed a higher adaptation achievement in professional and social life attained by immigrants with permanent visa status compared to those with working or student visas. Implications for practice and policy are discussed.

#### **Key words**

Turkish immigrants, migration, push and pull factors, adaptation

## **Introduction**

It is crucial for immigrants and their families from any social status or nationality, economic and educational background, or reasons for migration to find a place where they can meet and interact with people from a similar cultural background and expectations. Historically, immigrant groups tend to concentrate in ethnic neighborhoods or develop networks in which they can share their respective culture and experiences (Senyurekli & Menjivar, 2012). While adapting to the host culture, immigrants navigate between two cultures and try to integrate to both without interfering with each other (Senyurekli & Menjivar, 2012). Even though an immigrant in a host culture experiences difficulties, why do they still prefer to live in the host culture? The reason for this is can mainly be described by the economical advantages of the host countries as defined by pull factors (Portes & Borocz, 1989). Some of the immigrants may also believe that interacting with different cultures makes them more open minded so that, if there are problems related to their social or professional life, it will be easier for them to cope with those issues (Khuwaja, A., Selwyn, J., Mgbere, S., Kapadia, E., McCurdy, A., Hsu, K.H., 2012).

## **Literature Review**

Throughout its history, the U.S. has had a unique position amongst other countries, being that it is a country defined by and comprised mainly of immigrants who have come to the U.S. in waves, from all corners of the globe, seeking amongst other goals: refuge, opportunity, education, or employment (Glick, 2010).

Immigrants from Turkey share many characteristics with immigrants from other countries. The primary characteristic of the Turkish population around the world is that the majority are Muslim. After changes in the U.S. Immigration Law Act of 1965 (Camarota, 2002), there was an increase in the population of Muslim immigrants to the US (Kaya, 2009). According to the report from Global Religious Landscape in 2012, there are about 1.6 billion (23%) Muslims around the world, making Islam the second-largest religious tradition after Christianity (Desilver, 2013). Almost 62% of this population is concentrated around the Asia-Pacific region, 20% around Middle East- North Africa region, and 1.8% around North America. This number is significantly less compared to the other regions of the world, considering that self identifying as being a Muslim is a sensitive choice, especially after September 11, 2001. Also, since the U.S. Census does not track religious affiliation officially, the size of the Muslim-American population has been difficult to measure. What is clear about the estimated numbers-- 2 million to 7 million--is that due to immigration, high birth rate, and conversions, the Muslim-American population in the U.S. has been growing rapidly (US Department of State Booklet, 2009). Mayton (2013) also mentions that more than ten years after the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, Muslim women in the U.S. still experience suspicion and discrimination and many of these women mention that they have difficulties to express their identity, facing verbal attacks because of their ethnic and religious point of view. Mayton (2013) also states that according to the U.S. Government, 65% of Muslim -Americans are first-generation immigrants; of these, 61% arrived

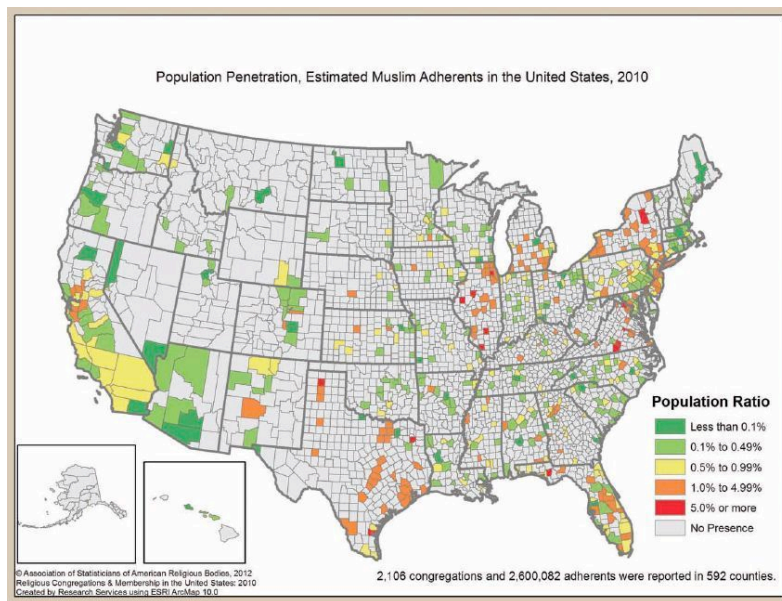
in the 1990s. Currently, 77% of Muslim Americans are citizens and 65% of the foreign-born being naturalized citizens. Comparatively, 58% of foreign-born Chinese living in the U.S. are naturalized citizens. In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 117,619 people identified themselves as Muslim-Americans (Kaya, 2009). As seen in the Figure-1, in 2010, the number of Muslim-American reached to 2,602,188 (Distribution of Muslim Population in the United States, 2010). Although there is not a significant difference in terms of the numbers, Muslim-Americans--and especially women--experience more discrimination because of the pervasive stereotypes in society. And yet, before the events of September 11, 2001, there was little research devoted to this population despite Muslims in the U.S. being a remarkably diverse population in terms of their cultural practices, political views, and national identities (Kaya, 2009). Since Turkish immigrants comprise a portion of the population that researchers refer to as Muslim Americans, there is a risk that the unique Turkish experience of immigration is washed over in favor of a broader view that is limited to religious affiliation. As Haddad and Smith (2002) noted, "There are important generational, political and class differences in Turkish immigrants in the U.S." (p. 306). The adaptation of professional Turkish immigrants in the United States should be studied in depth in order to understand the differences in their social, professional, and religious experiences.

This need for further research is evidenced by the fact that Turkish immigrants are a growing minority population in the U.S. (Micallef, 2004). The estimated number of Turkish



immigrants coming to the U.S. for the purpose of education or employment increased by 35% between the years 2000 and 2008 (Migration Policy Institute, 2011). The Greater Boston area is one of the single most important cities for Turkish immigrants in the U.S., according to the Turkish consulate. As of 2012, the consulate reports there are approximately 10,278 Turkish nationals living in Boston, or roughly 2% of the total U.S. Turkish population.

Figure-1 Distribution of Muslim Population in the United States, 2010



To date, there have been three significant waves of immigration from Turkey to the U.S. The first wave began in the mid-19th century, from the area that was the Ottoman Empire, reached its peak around the year 1900, and tapered off after the end of the First World War (Kaya, 2004). This wave, which was comprised mostly of male agrarian workers, experienced inevitable cultural assimilation, as they frequently intermarried and did not possess strong bonds

to a national identity outside the U.S. As a result, very few historical accounts exist from this era of the immigrants who comprised the first wave. Turkish immigration had almost ground to a halt during the interwar period and after the Second World War. However, on October 17, 1951 Turkey was accepted into NATO (The North Atlantic Treaty Organization), and almost immediately the second major wave of immigration began. Like the first wave, most of the immigrants during the second wave were men. However, this wave saw more professional people immigrating than before, such as doctors and engineers. They proved less likely to assimilate than their forbears, preferring to marry within their own populations. Further, they created and actively participated in the first Turkish cultural and religious organizations.

There were changes to U.S. immigration law. This act not only allowed more immigrants from third world countries to enter the U.S., but also entailed a separate quota for refugees. Another important aspect of this act was that future immigrants were to be considered more on the basis of their skills or professions, rather than their countries of origin (Web Chron, 2003). In 1965 that gave more mobility and leeway to Turkish immigrants than before (Halman, 1980). These changes directly contributed to the third major wave that began in the 1980's and lasted until the end of 1990's (Kaya, 2004). Furthermore, the wave of immigration was encouraged by the changes made to Turkish law by the government of Turgut Ozal, 8<sup>th</sup> president of the Republic of Turkey. As a result, the third wave saw the most diverse collection of immigrants yet – male and female, rich and poor, professional and working class, religious and secular.

Today, U.S. Turkish immigrants primarily settle around large urban areas such as New York City and adjacent portions of most parts of New Jersey, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles. One third of all Turkish immigrants live in the Northeast area (Kaya, 2009). Working class immigrants mainly settle in parts of New Jersey that provide easy access to the labor market available in New York City, while taking advantage of the less expensive housing opportunities in New Jersey. New York City also has a number of international flights that travel to Turkey, no small consideration for many immigrants. Therefore, most professional immigrants and students tend to settle in Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

The goal of this study was to address a gap in research regarding the Turkish immigrant experience in the U.S., with a focus on immigrants with professional qualifications who are employed in a professional field, working class immigrants, and graduate level students. This research seeks a better understanding of the daily life experiences of these different groups of Turkish immigrants during the adaptation process to new social and professional environments.

This study sheds light on the physical and mental health consequences of adaptation among a small sample of Turkish immigrants in the U.S. Conducting qualitative interviews to collect data related to their life experiences in the host country provided the opportunity to formulate an explicit description of their migratory and settlement experiences that could guide future studies designed to better understand the experiences of this immigrant population.

A phenomenological framework was used to in order to understand a specific common experience as explained by the participants who experience it. The main goal of this approach is to explain the “lived experience” of a phenomenon (Waters, 2014). Phenomenology begins with an experience or condition and while interviewees describe their “lived experiences,” the researcher looks into the effects and the perception of that experience. Basically, the phenomenological approach interprets an experience or phenomenon while interviewing the participants to get their different life histories. The phenomenological method describes phenomena from the subjective perspectives of the participants (Willis, 2007). In the phenomenological approach most of the time the researcher looks for common characteristics across participants instead of just concentrating on what is distinctive to a single participant. Primary data collection for this method involves in-depth interviews and data analysis to identify significant statements that allow us to extract the meaning of phenomenon in question (Lester, 1999).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This qualitative research is based on a theoretical framework informed by New Migration Theory (Portes & Borocz, 1989), which identifies the stages of the migration process under the concept of push and pull factors.

The effects of globalization, particularly its association with international migration, have become an important concern for both researchers and public officials (Sanderson, 2009).

According to Castles & Miller (1993), globalization has directly influenced immigration, as the increased internationalization of business has led to an increase in the movement of people.

A central question for researchers concerning immigration is the social environment of the immigrants in their new location (Freedman & Hawley, 1949). In this sense, there is a significant difference between the terms ‘migration’ and ‘mobility’. Freedman & Hawley (1949), clarify that while migration is related to the physical movement of people, mobility refers to a person’s change from one social system to another.

### **Push and Pull Model**

The most common explanations for international migration are economic and social. For instance, people may decide to migrate to another country because of economic and social difficulties in their country of origin. The difficult circumstances that encourage people to leave their home country, such as unemployment, poverty, and lack of opportunities, are known as “push factors.” Conversely, “pull factors” such as jobs, education, and freedom of religion attract people to migrate to a new country (Portes & Borocz, 1989). This push-pull model of international migration as outlined by Constantinou and Diamantides (1985, p. 353) includes six main components:

1. A pool of potential emigrants is created at the origin because of the perceived degree of difference between one’s home and intended place of movement;

2. Once a certain portion of this pool settles in the receiving society, an information flow begins between the receiving and sending societies and chain migration is set in motion;
3. The emigration laws of the country of origin and immigration laws at the country of destination influence the flow of migrants between the two;
4. Circumstances external to both the sending and receiving societies (e.g., extraordinary events such as wars) may either facilitate or inhibit the migratory flow;
5. Operating between the sending and receiving societies is the mediating factor that expresses the composite impact of the emigration and immigration laws and of the extraordinary events; and,
6. There exists a base emigration component that is propelled by reasons other than those of the pool and therefore operates outside the principal loop.

However, the Push and Pull model has been discussed intensely due to its limitations. Portes & Rumbaut (1990) state that the push and pull model explains the attractive factors of international migration partially instead of considering this issue as a whole.

By looking from theoretical perspective of New Migration Theory it can be said that, it is crucial for immigrants of any social status or nationality, economic or educational background, or reasons for migration, to find a place where they can meet and interact with people of their same cultural background and expectations. Historically, immigrant groups tend to concentrate

in neighborhoods or develop networks in which they can share their respective culture and experiences. Most Turkish immigrants to the U.S. have adapted to American culture by keeping their religious, moral and social values and adapting some new norms and features into their social and professional lives. In this attempt they navigate between two cultures and try to integrate both without interfering with each other.

In the light of New Migration Theory, this research examined the relationship between the effects of adaptation to American culture including educational background, health conditions and family interactions, on the professional and social integration of Turkish immigrants. As it is stated in New Migration Theory (Portes & Borocz, 1989), use of social and business networks not only encourages migration but also contributes to this process on a continuing basis. Ways of maintaining intergenerational relationships and the reasons for returning to a home country as explained by New Migration Theory will be discussed further in discussion section.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The intent of the study was to seek a better understanding of the daily life experiences of these different groups of Turkish immigrants during the adaptation process to new social and professional environments. This research is an exploratory study by means of a qualitative descriptive approach. The data collection process consists of two parts. First, a face sheet was

given to the interviewees in order to gather respondents' demographic information, since Warren and Karner (2005) stipulate that it is more effective to develop a face sheet instead of asking for demographic information during the interview process. This way the interviewee can complete the face sheet while the researcher sets up his or her recorder. The demographic information face sheet consisted of a standard set of queries including: gender, date of birth, marital status, education, company, and health insurance information. Further, 3 pilot interviews from each group (9 total; professional, working class [unauthorized], and graduate student immigrants) were conducted in order to determine clarification and flow of the interview.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews in different public venues with 15 professional, 14 working class (unauthorized), and 13 graduate student immigrants who were pursuing masters or doctoral degrees. There was no set ratio based on gender.

The aim of the interview was to understand the participant's point of view regarding their adaptation. Open-ended questions were asked by the researcher that could be modified as needed during the interview process through follow-up queries. Timing and placement of questions were determined by the researcher. Even though the wording of the questions could be modified for each participant (Sociological Research Skills, 2010), the purpose of the questions was consistent across interviews.



### **Sample and Participant Selection**

Forty-two participants were interviewed (excluding the 9 pilot interviews). The study participants consisted of fifteen professional, fourteen working class (all unauthorized), and thirteen graduate student immigrants. All were originally from Turkey and had been living in the U.S. at least one year and no more than five years. The reason for having inclusion criteria in regards to being in the U.S. between one and five years is twofold. First, with a tourist visa visitor can stay legally in the U.S. up to six months. After six months if a visitor wants to stay longer in the U.S., then they need a change of visa status based on their position. Second, after five years immigrants can be considered as permanent residents if they are holding a green card. The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 55.

A snowball sampling method was used to recruit the study participants. The purpose of choosing this procedure was due to the fact that working class (unauthorized) immigrants were hard to reach because of their visa documentation. Eligible participants were approached at meetings of The Turkish American Cultural Society of New England (TACS) and Turkish Cultural Center in Boston (TCC). Once eligibility was confirmed based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the aims and the objectives of the study were explained by the researcher and then informed consent forms were given to the participants. Participants were also informed that they could end their participation at any point and could refuse to answer specific questions. Before the researcher started the interview, participants were asked to complete the demographic

face sheet on their own. The study was approved by the University of Houston Committee for the Protection of Human Participants, the local IRB.

### **Interview Protocol**

After reviewing previous literature and instruments used in other related research fields, the researcher developed and conducted the interview guide and demographic face sheet in this study. The interview protocol was developed to elicit participants' immigration experiences. Given that some of the participants may move in some of the same circles as the researcher, conflicts of interest may arise. Not surprisingly, it was difficult for some participants to answer personal questions because of a perceived pre-existing relationship. In order to prevent this possibility, snowball sampling was used. Even if the key person as an interviewee was known before, by using snowball sampling the next interviewees were unknown ones. Participants decided where to meet in order to let them feel comfortable throughout the interviews. Most of the time interviews took place in public venues. Each interview took between 60 and 90 minutes. The participants and researcher had an opportunity to review the interview questions before beginning the formal interview. Participants had the option to refuse to answer any question they did not wish to answer.

### **Interview Guide**

The researcher conducted 3 pilot interviews from each group (9 total) to refine the approach and the interview guide. Based on the pilot interviews, the guide has four sections that

cover the following general themes: the role of education on adaptation, the role of interpersonal relationships and networking on adaptation, the role of employment on adaptation, and the role of age on adaptation. The interview guide consisted of 31 open-ended questions. Each section had several sub-sections with probing questions. The interview guide and the demographic face sheet were in Turkish. The responses were transcribed in Turkish, and exemplary quotes were translated to English by the researcher, whose native language is Turkish. For detailed information about the interview guide, please refer to Appendix I.

### **Data Analysis**

The aim of the study was to provide perspectives in an attempt to answer the question, “What are the daily life experiences of three different groups of Turkish immigrants during the adaptation process to new social and professional environments in the U.S.?” For this study, qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interview techniques. Areas of interest and discussion were expanded by asking additional questions and probes during the interviews. For this research there was a list of significant statements made by participants about their immigration experiences, and the researcher determined the meaning of these statements and described the real meaning of the phenomenon by using a phenomenology approach. A researcher using a phenomenology approach looks to understand significant common life experiences as defined by the ones who experience them (Leedy, 1997). For this purpose, the researcher used the phenomenological research design for this study. Data was examined after

each interview, transcribed, analyzed and interpreted into themes and meanings to form the foundation of coding by using NVivo® software.

According to the phenomenological approach, data analysis consists of three main steps: description, reduction, and interpretation (Lanigan, 1988). For this procedure, after the data was collected, names were changed to fictitious identification names and then transcribed; the next step was to categorize the data. The aim of this section is to classify any patterns in order to identify common characteristics that were present during the interview. The data was then added into the logical categories that summarize the meanings. Specific codes are given to the categorized data in order to clarify themes and develop subcategories, as described by Hycner (1985). These subcategories were coded so that this data can be applied to the results section. According to Suter (2006), “patterns, coherent themes, meaningful categories, and new ideas in general uncover better understanding of a phenomenon or process” (p.327). Neuman (2003) explained the steps of data analysis as coding of patterns to describe the goal of the studied phenomena.

Interview narratives were coded and analyzed using NVivo® software. The analysis consisted of identifying patterns/parallel categories related to the participants’ experiences with the immigration process. Two independent coders analyzed and coded the data following a process described by Mouter and Noordegraaf (2012). For this purpose, a second coder also worked with the data. The second coder was also a native Turkish speaker and had a doctoral

degree in Sociology. The second coder coded and analyzed 7 interviews from working class immigrant, 5 interviews from professional immigrant, and 3 interviews from the student immigrant group. The results of the two coders were then compared for consistency of the results. Since they were in different countries, the primary researcher and the second coder compared their analyses via videoconferences.

## **Results**

### **Pull factors**

The main immigration movement from Turkey to the U.S. is mostly by highly educated, professional immigrants. These well-educated and professional immigrants are moving into the more popular sectors of the U.S. economy, in general, bypassing the traditional transgenerational modes of immigrant status mobility, to receive better opportunities such as health, education, financial benefits, employment, and easy access of technology use. Besides that, there are groups of working class (unauthorized) immigrants also coming to the U.S. for better opportunities.

### *Educational opportunities*

In this study it was found that most of the immigrants in all three groups believe that to have higher socio-economic status they must have higher education degrees. Generally, the purpose of coming to the U.S. was to seek opportunities to further their educational attainments.

All of the respondents believed that it is better to get undergraduate degrees from Turkey and graduate degrees from the U.S. One of the participants stated:

“My expectation was actually met after I came to the U.S. My goal was to obtain a graduate degree in a nice well-known university; I got accepted into [U.S. University] and then found a perfect job that I can never imagine in Turkey. I feel myself really lucky by being here.”

As stated by another participant:

“In the U.S. if you want to find a well paid, good prestige job you have to be qualified for it and then your networking works. But in Turkey this is not the case; as long as you have good connections, especially if you know someone from the current government, then you are good to go.”

Although the participants made a distinction in terms of getting undergraduate degrees from Turkey and advanced degrees from U.S., still they support the idea of having better educational opportunities in the U.S. Also they know that a better education degree provides and gives the opportunity of a proper visa by employer.

#### *Proper visa status*

In the case of respondents that held permanent resident status at the time of the interview, most of them came to the United States with an F-1 student visa and then after they finished their education and found a job, most of them got their permanent residents status. An analysis of the

data shows that during this period, many of the respondents have changed their visa status to J-1, H1-B or a green card through their employers. There are some difficulties in one's professional and/or social life because of holding F-1 / H1-B / J-1 visas--including but not limited to-- having fewer opportunities compared to permanent residents or American citizens when job searching, or the different benefits in a business career. As stated by a male participant:

“When I was a student, I was on the F-1 visa. This visa is being given to any foreign student who wants to study in the U.S. With this visa, I did not have a chance to work outside the campus and was only able to work 19 hours within the campus. My major is computer engineering and thank god there is a huge gap in the job market regarding to my major and I got hired with an H1-B visa and now I am going through the green card application... Now I will have a chance to get lower APR for my purchases since your visa status affects your purchase rates as well.”

Another participant related to this issue:

“Basically if you are on F-1 / H1-B / J-1, your status is valid as long as you continue to work or study in this country. Once you complete your degree or job you have to leave the country within a specific time. That causes a lot of stress in our lives here as immigrants; you cannot feel yourself belong to this country here under these circumstances.”

All the participants are aware that in order to have a similar life with regular U.S. citizens for some cases even your education is not enough since they have to find a sponsorship by an employer in order to get hired. This situation affects pretty much all their social and professional life. But they are also aware that once they are hired by an employer or get an acceptance from a school, one's personal success carries them to upper levels of their position. However, this situation is significantly reversed in their country of origin.

#### *Personal Success*

Many immigrants feel religious or political persecution in their countries of origin as push factors, but for Turkish immigrants the common motivation is economic or educational opportunities. Participants also believe that when you succeed on your assignments in a way that the company or school is looking for, they will be aware of this success and will compensate to keep employees motivated. As stated by two participants:

“If you are working hard and doing well with your job, your employers will see and recognize your success and will appreciate you for this. Most likely at the end of the year they will promote you financially. I was working in Turkey as well but never ever experienced such a thing there.”

“When people told me about the U.S. as a country of opportunities it did not make sense at all...after I started working in my company I obviously see that, if you



work hard regardless of the time...not considering how much you work but, how good is your product...you will definitely receive a bonus or so at the end of the year or in my company in each April.”

All the participants realized that if they work really hard and succeed, besides their salaries somehow they will see it reflected in the future of their carrier and that makes them more motivated to keep working hard. They also stated that, if the system were similar even in some ways in Turkey, their country would have developed more than it is right know. But they still love their country and want to keep their ties close with their relatives and friends in Turkey.

### **Maintaining intergenerational relationships**

Coming to the new culture affects to a significant degree, the social and professional roles of immigrants and their families. In terms of maintaining intergenerational relationships, all three groups show significant differences. Students require more effort to maintain connections with their home country, compared to working class (unauthorized) immigrants or professional immigrants due high costs. Immigrants who came here for education are more individualistic than those who remain in their home country. They travel more frequently compared to immigrants with spouses or family. As stated by a 28-year-old female student participant:

“I kind of feel myself obligated to go to Turkey at least every summer holiday. Even though there are lots of things to do here in the summer, my family is there, so I prefer to

be with them over there in my country, see my friends, visit my relatives and come back with more motivation and support.”

As stated by another student participant:

“Sometimes I am so jealous of my American friends...I want to stay here with them for the summer but I am missing my family as well, so I am going to Turkey every summer holiday... but still it is good since I am subleasing my room, getting extra money from there so I can pay for my flight ticket.”

Although being a student is hard in terms of maintaining intergenerational relationships with the home country also due to high costs, most of the time if they are short in their expenses their families are helping, but this situation is different for other immigrant groups. This perspective will discuss in the following theme.

#### *Financial cost*

In contrast to students’ perspectives regarding summer vacations, almost all of the professional and working class (unauthorized) immigrants (n=19) who stay here with their families’ state that it is better to stay here during the holidays and summer time. The main reason of it is air fare cost increases when traveling with all the family. This was supported by a male participant who works at a Boston-area University as mid-level faculty member:

“We would love to go to Turkey and get together with our families. However, it costs a lot, especially for the summer time. Just the flight tickets for me, my wife and my two

kids cost me about \$5,250 which is a lot. Instead we prefer to stay here and go to Turkey maybe every 2 years or so. I cannot afford that much money since there will also be additional costs when we go to Turkey.”

As stated by another two participants:

“Legally I am not authorized to leave the country; if I do I will not be able to come back...but I am ok with that since all my family is here and it will cost a lot for us to go to Turkey... I do not want to make my kids upset but I have a good excuse for not going to Turkey.”

“I wish airfares were as cheap as in the winter time so that we could go to Turkey every summer. Two years ago there was a summer deal for the flight tickets and we all went to Turkey with my family. This summer I will send only them and I will stay here...I want my kids to learn about our country of origin and not forget Turkish so I have to send them.”

When they are having difficulties in terms of high costs to maintain the intergenerational relationships, technology and the internet allow them to keep the relations with their families and relatives in their home country.

#### *Role of technology*

In terms of the role of technology in an immigrant’s intergenerational relationships, there are significant parallels for all three groups. They all use common internet technologies and tools

to maintain intergenerational relationships. All stated that this technology is much cheaper in the U.S. compared to Turkey, which makes life a little easier in the U.S. For example, one of the female participants who is working for a finance company stated:

“I came to the U.S. two years ago and that was the time I first bought my smart phone. There were two reasons that I did not buy it when I was in Turkey; once it is almost four times more expensive compared to here to own it, also to have an internet on your one is expensive...in your life over there you do not need to have smart phone or internet that much urgently, so it did not make sense for me to buy one when I was there.”

Another two participants exemplified this idea as follows:

“If you are living away from your family here in the U.S., you have to get familiar with the internet, it is the only way to communicate with them, and thanks god to technology it helps us to see each other...even though my parents are too old in terms of internet generation, they keep up with the technology so we can see each other via skype.”

“I just got engaged last winter and due to visa purposes we will not be able to come together for another 6 months, during this period the internet helps us a lot...for sure it is better to be together but this better than nothing.”

The role of the internet and technology is significantly important in immigrants' life in the host country to keep the connections and relations with their relatives and families. In the

following section health context will be examined regarding to the immigrants' life in the host country.

## **Health**

Psychological issues represent some of the most significant problems that immigrants come across during their adaptation period. The level of stress related with initial adjustment to the host country is a major problem for working class and student immigrants, as they spend the most time apart from their families and friends. The mental health and good health condition of immigrants in a complicated professional or social environment can be described as an effect of risk, panic, and stress related to the task that they need to succeed. As stated by male participants:

“Here as an immigrant you are totally alone! Turkish people like to be close to their friends and families. On top of that you are having also language problems...whether you are so clever, sometimes you are having issues to express yourself...it makes me so stressful! When I was a student, my grades were less than they have to be! This happens still sometimes in my job; it is something really difficult to argue about the thing that you are definitely sure about just because of your language.”

When they are experiencing any types of health issues, regardless of type of the immigrant group, most of the time especially for the first couple of years, they prefer to

find a solution by themselves. Most of participants (n=23) mentioned that, even though they have health insurance, getting a health check from someone else who spoke a different language is something they do not prefer. Two of the participants stated as follows:

“Whenever I need to go to doctor, I need to do a term search in advance which makes me crazy, instead if it is a minor problem [headache, stress, flu], I prefer to use my own pills which I brought from Turkey.”

“The health service system is way different than in Turkey. Plus, you have to deal with too many unknown medical terms. Even though I know English, most of the time I prefer to call a translator in advance. Otherwise I am not going to the doctor if it is not something so serious.”

Most of the participants, even though they are receiving health insurance either from the government or private insurances, they are aware of specific benefits of their insurances [especially government wise], and they are not going to the doctor so frequently even if they are in need of it since they prefer to see a doctor who speaks their own language. Just because of that some of them searched for the doctor from Turkey. Next section will talk about the perception regarding to the concept of home country.

### **Meaning of the “Home country”**

It is clear that, when comparing push and pull factors with their levels of impact on immigrants, there are good reasons to consider being an immigrant in a host culture like the U.S. Expectations of immigrants coming to the United States vary by age. For instance, the ones coming in their twenties most of the time think about going back when they retire, in order to live in their home country for the rest of their life. Because of this sentiment, some never become fully integrated into the American way of life. They are comfortable, earn a good living, and have ties to their homeland that are not severed in younger age range. In the summer they are trying to spend their vacations in Turkey as much as possible and they still have families there. If they do not have a chance to go to Turkey all together, at least children are being sent to their grandparents to spend their summer in their home country. As stated by a female professional immigrant participant:

“I have been living in the U.S. for four years and I still consider Turkey as my home country. I cannot change the fact that I grew up in Turkey. However, I do not visit Turkey very frequently and I am missing it. But when I take a look at my past four years here, I think, even though maybe one day I might go back to Turkey, right now I am happy being here and experiencing the better opportunities here.”

Another exemplified this theme as follows:

“When my friends in Turkey ask me about ‘now are you an American?’, I am just laughing at them, of course I am Turkish and my home country will be Turkey even though I spent 20 years here [as unauthorized] in the U.S., nothing can change my mind about it!”

A few participants also stated that, sometimes they are thinking about going back to Turkey at least for the retirement age but then by recalling the better opportunities and system here, they continue to think about staying here permanently.

### **Discussion / Summary of Results**

The major immigration flow from Turkey comprises highly educated, highly skilled workers drawn by the explosive growth in the knowledge-intensive sectors of the economy (Borjas & Trejo, 1993). These immigrants succeed, and are among the best-educated and most professional people in the United States. Whereas immigrants in the past tended to be more poorly educated and relatively unprofessional than they are today (Borjas & Trejo, 1993). These well-educated and professional immigrants are moving into the more popular sectors of the U.S. economy, in general, bypassing the traditional transgenerational modes of immigrant status mobility, to receive better opportunities such as health, education, financial benefits, employment, and easy access of technology use.

In terms of maintaining intergenerational relationships, the three groups showed significant differences, it is much harder for student immigrants who do not have their families



here with them. Students require more effort to maintain connections with their home country. Their economic situation plays an important role to plan summer vacations and visits to Turkey. The ones who stay here with their families' state that, it is better to stay here during the holidays and summer time. Although the cost of the technology is much more expensive in Turkey, the role of technology is a big tool in maintaining intergenerational relationships with the home country for all of the three groups.

In terms of education level findings suggest that most successful immigrants are those with high levels of education. Immigrants in all three groups believe that to have higher socio-economic status they must have higher education degrees. They all also support the it is much better getting undergraduate degrees from Turkey and graduate degrees from U.S. Specifically professional and working class immigrants mentioned the importance of visa status in order to have better opportunities. Once they are hired through a proper visa status, personal success is valuable and it pays back your effort in your field as either a bonus or a psychological support which makes one motivated.

Vega and Rumbaut (1991) state the term mental health “was originally intended to reflect psychological well-being and resilience; in essence, a satisfactory if not optimal state of being” (p: 355). Although there is not a significant major physiological disorder in the immigrant groups, since they are being apart from their families most of the time single and student immigrants are experiencing more homesickness, loneliness and anxiety in the host country.

However, none of them ever tried to get professional help since they are not feeling comfortable going to the doctor in the host culture, especially for those kind of psychological problems.

Instead they prefer to share more times with their close friends.

Expectations of immigrants coming to the United States vary by age in terms of staying or going back to home country. However, their final decision is staying in the U.S. permanently since they are going to build up their families and lives here.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Over all, Turkish immigrants interviewed for this study came to the United States with the purpose of obtaining graduate degrees and high work positions. During the adaptation period, they face serious problems related to language, health issues, and economic and cultural differences. After living in this country for some time, they appeared to becoming integrated to American culture. Further, many realized that they have more occupational opportunities and benefits here than in Turkey. This is the reason why many decided to raise their family in the U.S. Those immigrants whose families remain in the home country mostly tend to live the rest of their lives in the U.S. In addition, as is explained in the New Economics of Labor Migration Theory, usage of social and business networks not only encourage the migration but also contribute to this process on a continuing basis.

Overall, findings show that the main purpose of coming to the United States is aspirations of higher education. Immigrants believe that they have more opportunity in the United States,

and the expectations of a U.S. education may improve their chances of getting better benefits in their jobs, thus many prefer to stay in the United States.

There are approximately 80 million immigrants in the U.S. (New York Post, 2014). While giving more attention to the population of Latinos, Asians and Indians, relatively less research has been made on Muslim Turks. This fact suggests a need to promote the researcher to emphasize this gap more in the literature and suggests that the perspective of the Turkish immigrants' experiences needs to be better understood.

The researcher will disseminate relevant findings through peer-reviewed publications and conferences within the social work and sociology journals, such as Society for Social Work and Research. Findings will be shared with the Turkish Consulate-General in Boston. Professional presentation will be given to the Turkish and American Society in the residence of consulate. The findings of the literature review will provide justification and fill the gaps for future research about Turkish Immigrants in the U.S.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although this research seeks a better understanding of the daily life experiences of three different immigrant groups of Turkish immigrants, there are some limitations identified in the current research that warrant mentioning. For instance, the number of unequal distribution of age range and gender between student, professional, and working class immigrant groups. Age range for student group is 20-35 whereas it is 29-55 for other two immigrant groups. Also all of the

working class (unauthorized) immigrants are male where as there is an equal distribution of gender for other two immigrant groups.

The findings of the literature review will provide justification and fill the gaps for future research about Turkish immigrants in the U.S.

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## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS**

This study confirms what other migration studies have documented: immigrants make significant adaptations in their host country, and moving from one country and culture to another causes significant stress for individuals and their spouses. It is because of this stress that it is crucial for all immigrants, regardless of social status, economic and educational background, or reasons for migration to find a peer group or social activity where they can meet and interact with people from their own cultural background and expectations. Historically, immigrant groups tended to converge in ethnically homogenous neighborhoods, or develop networks in which they shared their respective culture and experiences. Turkish immigrants to the U.S. have adapted to American culture by maintaining religious, moral and social values from their home country while at the same time adapting to new mores and features of their social and professional lives. Therefore, they attempt to navigate and integrate two cultures without compromising either.

This research has examined the relationship between the effects of adaptation to American culture, including: educational background, health conditions, and familial interaction as regards the professional and social integration of Turkish immigrants and their spouses. As a researcher, findings revealed high professional achievement but as well as social and health consequences such as: stress, language barriers, and the social adaptation of families to new cultural contexts. As demonstrated with the Double ABCX Theory, family adaptability and

support are the most crucial factors in the process of adapting to a new culture among the participants interviewed for this study. According to the Family adaptation theory, being in the U.S. and having good family communication skills during the adaptation period can help relieve or prevent some of the pain and stress of adaptation. As defined by Occupational theory, personal and inner characteristics play an important role when entering into a new business environment, particularly one in a foreign country. Successfully networking can also be provided by personal characteristics. Further, as is explained in the New Migration Theory, the utilization of social and business networks not only encourages migration initially but also can contribute to it on an ongoing basis.

Overall, findings show that the main purpose of coming to the United States is the pursuit of higher education. Immigrants believe that they have more opportunity in the United States, and that a U.S. education may improve their career outcomes, and therefore they prefer to stay in the United States.

### **Process of Adaptation**

Participants provided various types of information during the interview process. In general, throughout years of living and working in the United States, to a certain extent they have achieved their goals, while at the same time have partially changed their expectations as immigrants. These immigrants have experienced profound changes in their lives as well as their families, such as obtaining degrees in higher education, marrying and/or having children, and

making the decision to either permanently reside in the U.S., or at least for a longer period of time. Those younger participants at the beginning of their careers intend to return to Turkey, or at least retire there due to close familial ties. However, older participants nearing retirement age made the decision to retire in the U.S. and not return to Turkey, as they've already lived in the U.S. for many years and have settled with their families. In general, there is a clear distinction between their initial plans and expectations of the future due to the professional positions and age of the immigrants interviewed. Therefore, it may be likely for the younger generation that if the participants have closer ties in Turkey, they would want to go back to their home country.

### **Potential Limitations**

In qualitative research, it is necessary for researchers to get close enough to research participants in order to gain their confidence and obtain a deeper understanding of the focus of the study from the participant's perspective. However, measuring the distance from the participant is very difficult and the researcher could get personally involved, which may result in skewed results. Not knowing each other prior to the interview may prevent issues related to subjectivity. As stated before, snowball sampling was used to prevent the potential for bias. It is necessary for the researcher to keep a reasonable distance from the participants by not revealing private information and by not getting involved in the private affairs of the participants. This is a major issue for many researchers because there is no common way of "getting close enough" or "too close" (Maier & Monahan, 2009). As Gilbert (2001) noted: "The boundaries must be

negotiated and renegotiated, an ongoing part of the research process, as a balance is sought between the dangers and benefits of being too far in or too far out of the lives of the researched” (p.12). Furthermore, difficulties had arisen when interviewing a subject whom the interviewer knows from a previous or pre-existing relationship. Due to the fact that researcher knew some of the participants before participating in the study, those interviews were excluded during the data analysis section.

The analytical approach implemented during the course of this research helped understand the daily lives and the meaning of professional immigrant’s place in their new environment, as a way to contribute to the existing knowledge associated with understanding immigrant adaptation process.

### **Implications for Social Work and Future Directions**

This study would be more generalizable if it was conducted with other immigrant groups in the United States in addition to the Turkish groups that were this study’s focus. It would be useful to examine factors associated with adaptation of immigrants in other cities of the United States as well as other nations in order to be able to compare it to the Turkish immigrants and their experience. In doing so such studies could clarify whether these findings are unique to the Greater Boston area or if there are similar transnational factors in other regions. These and other emerging issues can be the focus of future research in this area.

The study's findings suggest that the mode of adaptation and inclusion needs to be better understood. Here many Turkish immigrants need to go through a painful process of readapting. They adapt from a homogenous national identity to a new multicultural society. The value of social and professional adaptation allows for this. This in turn might help the process of adapting among those Turkish immigrants who are left behind to a new circular migration phenomenon in which they see how their relatives live abroad and return home.

Results from the research study may also provide a different and new perspective regarding to this significant immigrant population for social service providers who are seeking a help for the process of adaptation.

Results from the research study may be used as a key study in order to inform future research, that which is sorely needed due to the gap in literature about Turkish immigrants in the U.S. The perspectives from this research and its data may be used as a foundation for future studies. The Turkish Consulate-General in Boston, MA, had closed due to an armed attack in May, 1982. However, it was re-established in January, 2012 (Ermenisoykirimyalani, 2013). An additional goal for this study is it may be helpful to the Turkish consulate and the USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service) regarding immigration flow and the unique characteristics/experiences of this group. Findings of the research will also be shared with Turkish Consulate- General in Boston. Professional presentation will be given to the Turkish and American Society in the residence of consulate and also in Turkish Cultural Center (TCC). The

findings of the literature review will provide justification and fill gaps for future research in the field social work policy about the immigration perspective, especially regarding Turkish Immigrants in the U.S. Also the researcher will disseminate relevant findings through peer-reviewed publications within the social work and sociology journals such as Journal of International Social Work, Immigration and Refugee Studies and Families in Society.

## **Appendix I.**

### **Turkish Immigrants in the United States**

#### **Interview Guide**

Thank you for taking part in the research study about Turkish Immigrants adaptation process in the United States. The purpose of the research is to better understand the experiences of Turkish immigrants as they adjust to a new living situation. This study includes two parts; demographic information and interview questions. Demographic information part includes questions about your general background information, and in the interview question part I will ask you questions about you and your family, related with your experiences as an immigrant. The interview will take approximately one hour to ninety minutes of your time and will be tape recorded for accuracy. If you do not agree to be audio recording, you can still participate in the interview. In such a case PI will take notes. You will not have the option of reviewing the transcripts of this interview. Transcripts will be reviewed only by researcher and the supervisor. The audio recordings of the interviews will be deleted after the completion of the research. The transcribed interview and demographic data will be kept electronically and will remain in secure computer.

Please remember that, your participation in the interview is completely voluntary, so you can leave anytime or refuse any question that you do not want to answer.

Do you have any questions/ concerns before we begin?

Thank you, please fill out the demographic face sheet, then we will continue with interview questions.



**Participant ID:**

Demographic Face Sheet for Turkish Immigrants	
Gender:	Date of birth:
Home country:	
When did you first come to the Greater Boston Area?	
Which region of the Greater Boston Area are you living?	
Current marital status:	
Number of children, sexes and ages.  Do any of them live with you?	
Education – Highest level attained:	
Occupation & Company name:	
Ethnicity - Race:	

## **Turkish Immigrants in the United States**

### **Interview Guide**

- In the first section I am going to ask you some questions about your expectations from U.S. and previous/current employment situation.
  - When and how did you decide to come to the U.S.? What was your expectation/s when you were thinking about migrating to the U.S?
  - Please tell me about your current/ former employment here in Boston. How did you acquire those jobs?
  - Please tell me more about how education helps you as an immigrant employee.
  - Please tell me about with what type of requirements you had to deal with while seeking for a job? (For instance; degree, age, working permit, etc)
  - Do you see any differences in terms of working environment between here and your country?
    - If so, to what degree?
    - If not, what are the main similarities that help you to adapt to your new work environment?
  - How would you describe your finances right now?
    - Would you say that you are financially stable (for example, you are able to pay your expenses every month, you have a safety nest in the form of a

savings account or investments, etc.), or would you say that you are struggling financially?

- Next we are going to talk about the role of your family/spouses and peers during the adaptation period.
  - Please tell me a little about your current family arrangements/situations. Who do you currently live with?
  - When you came to the U.S., did you come initially with or without your family?
  - How would you say your coming to the U.S. has affected your family? How has it affected you?
  
- Now we let's talk about your intergenerational relationships. As an immigrant in the host country how are you maintaining the relationship between the host culture and your new culture?
  - Please tell me a little about your friends/close peer relations?
  - With whom you mostly prefer to share your spare time?
    - With whom do you mostly hang out with? Are your friends mostly Turkish or do have friends from other countries as well?

- Where do you consider your “home” country? How frequently do you visit your home country? Are you seeing too many differences from your view of perspective each time you go back and forth in your country?
  - In your experience, do other Turkish immigrants have access to different kinds of social services or programs here? If so, are they accessing these services?
- Now I want to ask you about the personal/general health care/utilization in U.S?
  - Do you have a health insurance? What kind of benefits or disadvantages does it have for you and your family?
  - How frequently do you see your doctor? What are some of your reasons for going to the doctor?
    - How would you feel getting a health check from someone who spoke a different language?
  - Comparing your feelings about your life in here with back in Turkey do you think they changed? If so in what ways?
    - What is the experience of being an immigrant in a host country? (including emotions, cognitions and perceptions)
    - What fears do you have when you think about the future, how does it look? What do you usually do when you feel like that?

- Can you recall a time that you felt alone and had difficulties to find someone to share something? Tell me about it.
- What are your thoughts/feelings about being an immigrant in the host country?
- What are the some advises to want to give to other new comers to this country?
- Is there anything else you would like to add or share about this topic that you feel it is important for me to know? Besides what we talked about?

Thank you for your participation!