REFLECTIONS OF SINGLE TURKISH INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS: STUDIES ON LIFE AT A MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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by

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REFLECTIONS OF SINGLE TURKISH INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS: STUDIES ON LIFE AT A MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY (175 pp.)

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The research was guided by the research question: How do full-time single Turkish international graduate students conceptualize their experiences as international students? Participants in the study included three doctoral students and three master's students who participated in a series of semi-structured interviews. The data was transcribed and analyzed using a modified version of Moustakas' (1994) method of analyzing phenomenological data. The participants collectively described these common and salient aspects of their experience: personal growth, decisions regarding participation in the Turkish community, interactions with Americans, future career opportunities, loss of time with family and significant others, the importance of English language skills, and the significance of Turkey's political history. Connections were made between these findings and previous research, and new findings were identified. Implications of the study were specifically applied to the practice of university administration and counselor educators. Limitations, delimitations, suggestions for future research, and the researcher's experience were provided.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In 2007, over 580,000 international students chose to study in institutions of higher education in the United States. Enrollment for international students increased 3% in 2007, the first statistically significant increase since the 2001-2002 school year. International students accounted for 3.9% of total university enrollment and contributed over 14.5 billion dollars to the United States economy through their spending on living expenses and tuition. Sending approximately 11,500 students, Turkey ranked eighth in place of origin for students, one of only four non-Asian countries in the top 10 sending countries. Prior to 9/11, the presence of Turkish students studying in the United States had steadily increased. Since that time, growth rates have fluctuated widely including both the highest growth rate among the top 10 sending countries in the 2004-2005 school year and four years of decline (Institute for International Education, 2007).

Often representing the best educated of their home country (Mori, 2000), international students bring many benefits to their campuses (Lee & Rice, 2007). They have unique strengths including bilingualism, biculturalism, and diverse cultural backgrounds (Yoon & Portman, 2004) that benefit U.S. education. In addition, they add to the "intellectual capital" of the United States (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 381) and often return home promoting positive relations with their country and the United States, ultimately benefiting U.S. foreign policy and leadership (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2006). International students are often highly recruited in higher education as they provide high economic return due to paying higher tuition fees than

domestic students and requiring less national government investment in their education (de Wit, 2002).

Despite the benefits of international study, the literature indicates international students often face barriers such as racial discrimination, language difficulties, cultural shock, cultural misunderstanding, and financial hardship (Jacob, 2001; Komiya & Eells, 2001; Mori, 2000; Yi, Lin, & Kishimoto, 2003; Yoon & Portman, 2004). Time spent in the United States may be characterized by depression and loneliness (Jacob, 2001). They often face high expectations from those at home and are pushed by a strong fear of failure (Mori, 2000). Despite this, international students consistently utilize less counseling services than their American counterparts (Yi et al., 2003). The purpose of this study is to describe how Turkish graduate students in America conceptualize their experiences as international students and what has typically influenced their experiences as international students.

This study may add to the knowledge base on Turkish international students that could further inform counselor practice. The counseling profession has placed particular emphasis on culture, diversity, and social justice in their code of ethics (Glosoff & Kocet, 2005), mandating the inclusion of international students in the community that counselors serve. Counselors may have skills particularly suited to finding a solution for some of the challenges that international students are facing. To address those needs, counselors must increase their knowledge and understanding of specific cultural groups in addition to knowledge regarding international students in general (Jacob, 2001; Yoon & Portman, 2004).

Turkey: A Society in Transition

Turkey is at a unique place in its history, balancing modernization and tradition. Accession negotiations to join the European Union began in October of 2005, a monumental political achievement in Turkish history since applying for membership in 1959 (State Institute of Statistics, 2006). Many Turkish citizens are pushing for modern reform and democratization (Gorvett, 2005), while others are holding to the traditional Islamic and cultural values of Turkey. Geographically, Turkey spans two continents and has a long history of tension between Eastern and Western values. Despite the push to become more Western, Mocan-Aydin (2000) reported that on a continuum of collectivism versus individualism, most Turks would be closer to the collectivism end. Kilinc and Granello (2003) commented how the Turkish people exhibit a unique blend of spiritual, interdependent values, commonly associated with Eastern values, and materialistic, logical, individualistic values often associated with Western cultures. The family in Turkey also exhibits the features of both Western and Eastern society, but overall most families would be considered traditional, authoritarian, and patriarchal (Sunar & Fizsek, 2005). The country also has a very young population with approximately two-thirds being under the age of 35 (Sunar & Fizsek, 2005).

Over 90% of Turkey is Sunni Muslim (Raney & Çinarbaş, 2005), but the government is a secular democracy. In the most recent 2007 presidential election, Abdullah Gul was elected amidst significant attention and anticipation about the direction he would lead Turkey. He is the first head of state with an Islamic background to be elected since the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923. His wife will be the only

Turkish First Lady to wear the traditional Islamic headscarf (Akyol, 2007). In February 2008, Gul approved a change in the constitution that lifted the ban against women wearing headscarves at universities (The Associated Press, 2008).

Currently, there is strong pressure for Turkish educational reform. Membership into the European Union is dependent on the success of education reform (Simsek & Yildirim, 2004), but many obstacles exist to improving the education system. Turkey has the highest birthrate compared to other countries of a similar level of industrialization and development, and the education system must accommodate these numbers while increasing in quality. Due to a highly centralized education system, there has been an inefficient use of national resources. In addition, there is an increasing demand for higher education, far beyond what universities can accommodate. Simsek and Yildirim posited this situation has led to Turkey possibly having the world's worst college entrance exam anxiety. In response to the shortage of higher education institutions, in 1993 the Turkish government sponsored a program to create 23 new state universities to add to the already existing 29 universities (Mathews, 2007; Seferŏglu, 2001). As part of this program, they sponsored 7,000 students to pursue graduate studies in the United States to provide faculty for these universities. Thus, the shortage of educational resources in Turkey is directly tied to the growing number of Turkish international students in the United States. A needs analysis of these students revealed that these students were reporting concerns about academic issues and meeting language requirements for US graduate programs (Seferŏglu, 2001). The Turkish Higher Education Council responded by including higher language proficiency requirements to their program. While the higher language

proficiency was tied to higher academic success, it also resulted in reducing the amount of faculty to staff the new Turkish Universities (Mathews, 2007). This situation is compounded by the findings of Tansel and Güngör (2003), who explored the growing trend for Turkish students to begin their careers outside of Turkey at the conclusion of their international study. Reasons for this trend included political and economic instability in Turkey, lower salaries, and a lack of job opportunities.

Purpose and Rationale

It is the assumption of this researcher that Turkish students are using help-seeking methods to address the challenges of adjusting to international study. Exploring their challenges and help-seeking methods may illuminate new ways in which counselors can support international students. These help-seeking methods have not been thoroughly explored in previous studies as this researcher only encountered three quantitative studies discussing the experiences of Turkish international students (Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Kilinc & Granello, 2003; Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington, & Pisecco, 2001). One qualitative study exists on Turkish international students' participation in the American classroom (Tatar, 2005). A qualitative study focusing on the unique challenges and help-seeking behavior of Turkish international students may provide a fuller and richer description of their experiences.

Key Terms

Articulating foundational terms of the following literature review is important for clarity. The following terms were explored as they were presented in the literature: international students, adjustment, acculturation, assimilation, and social support.

International Students

International students are distinct from American racial and ethnic minority and majority group members. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (2008) defined an international student as

> An alien coming temporarily to the United States to pursue a full course of study in an approved program in either an academic (college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary school, other institution, or language training program) or a vocational or other recognized nonacademic institution. (¶ 1)

Lacina (2002) described international students as characterized by a state of transition. International students typically have to cope with language barriers and legal restrictions unlike American ethnic minorities (Yang, Harlow, Maddux, & Smaby, 2006). One study referred to international students as 'sojourners' (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002).

Adjustment

Al-Sherideh and Goe (1998) defined adjustment as the process by which international students overcome and/or avoid psychological distress as they operate in the social environment provided by American universities. They emphasized that positive adjustment includes the ability to maintain or achieve self-esteem in that process. Crano and Crano (1993) developed a scale to measure international students' adjustment strain. Their study suggested a high correlation between their measure of adjustment strain and

the construct of self-concept. Similarly, high self-efficacy has frequently been linked in the literature to patterns of adapting and overcoming (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002).

Acculturation

Acculturation refers to the process of taking on characteristics of a particular culture, often the dominant culture, while keeping elements of the culture of origin (Harper & McFadden, 2003). The acculturated person is sometimes referred to as 'bi-cultural' (Sue & Sue, 2008). Acculturation is seen as a dynamic bidirectional process that ranges on a continuum (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992). Crano and Crano (1993) critiqued the overuse of acculturation models to describe the particular problems faced by international students, as they tend to emphasize psychopathology within the international student.

Assimilation

Assimilation is the process of adopting the ways of another culture, most often the majority culture, while reducing the expression of one's original culture (Harper & McFadden, 2003; Smith, 2004). Assimilation has theoretically been conceptualized as unidirectional acculturation (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992).

Social Support

The concept of social support has been widely touted as a key component of psychological health. Unfortunately, there is a lack of consensus or clarity within the literature on the actual definition of social support. In their search for a definition for social support, Williams, Barclay and Schmied (2004) found these common elements: the ideas of time and timing, relationships and social ties, supportive resources, intentionality

of support, impact of support, recognition of support need, perception of support, actual support, satisfaction of support, characteristics of recipient, and characteristics of the provider. Ultimately, the authors deemed that definitions and interventions of social support must be determined contextually and qualitatively. One study reviewed (Al-Sheridah & Goe, 1998) found the concept of social networks helpful to quantify international students' social support.

Review of the Literature

This chapter presents a review of the literature on issues pertinent to the experiences of Turkish international students. Topics covered include the impact of internationalization on international students, challenges to international students, help-seeking behavior, and Turkish international students.

Internationalization and the International Student

Many articles have been written on the importance of the internationalization of higher education (Lambert, 1995). Enders (2004) stated internationalization is a "process of rethinking the social, cultural, and economic roles of higher education and their configuration in national systems of higher education" (p. 362). International students are key stakeholders and contributors in the process of internationalization of higher education. Their strategic value to the development and sustaining of positive international relationships has caught the eye of the most influential world leaders, evidenced by Tony Blair's 2006 announcement that he was putting an incentive package together to make Great Britain more attractive to international students (Pandit, 2007).

Teichler (2004) asserted that internationalization is giving way to the process of globalization. Globalization is understood in terms of global markets and the interdependence of national economies (Allen & Ogilvie, 2004). De Wit (2002) noted that higher education has become an "export commodity" and the income it generates has become the dominant force behind internationalization. Scott (1998) noted earlier that not all universities are particularly international, but all are contingent on the process of globalization. Altbach (2005) critiqued that internationalization efforts in education are no longer concerned with the common good, but rather with the bottom line. Frequently international students are recruited more for the financial benefits they bring than the international exchange they promote. Lambert (1995) even earlier had highlighted how American higher education institutions most often recruit students who can pay their own way and recruit more from wealthy countries than developing countries. He noted the inconsistency between international students' reported value to internationalization but typical isolation from most other aspects of internationalizing the campus.

The NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2006) described the United States as being engaged in a "global competition" for the "sought after commodity" of international students (p. 1). The United States had seen a steady increase since 1986 of the number of incoming international students each year until 2002. Since that time, only in 2007 has there been a significant increase in numbers of international students coming to America. Hypothesized reasons for the decline include strict visa guidelines following 9/11 and the perception that the United States was no longer a welcoming place to international students (Pandit, 2007).

The United States has the largest system of higher education and therefore has had the largest share of the international student market since the late 1940s (Institute for International Education, 2007; NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2006). However since the 2002-2003 school year, that market share has declined as a result of three changes to the international student market. First, U.S. traditional competitors for international students, including Great Britain in 1999, have adopted integrated and strategic plans for adopting more international students. Second, new competitors have joined together in the Bologna Process, also begun in 1999. This process unites 45 European countries and is focused on increasing the transferability of higher education credits. Finally, traditional sending countries such as China and India have worked to expand their higher education capacity and keep their students at home (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2006).

Enders (2004) illuminated the underlying power issues inherent in discussions of internationalization. Concurrent with the international competition for these students, "a series of horror stories on the quality of life of foreign students has been given prominent space in newspapers around the world" (Lambert, 1995, p. 23). Lee (2007) observed that more time is spent on recruiting and getting international students enrolled in American higher education institutions than on keeping them satisfied with their experience. She challenged institutions to move beyond recruiting and counting international student enrollments to improving the quality of their experiences.

International Student Challenges

Consistent throughout international student literature is the idea that their experience is characterized by challenge. Typically, acculturative stress is highest among refugee immigrants, but international students often rate acculturation stress as high (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004). This high level of stress may be a result of the combination of typical acculturation stressors and academic stressors. In addition, international students may not have access to or be familiar with many of the resources that domestic students use to cope with their academic pressures. The following section attempts to articulate the challenges international students face.

Social relationships. Upon arrival, most international students have clearly articulated academic goals, but are unprepared for the change in their social lives (Trice, 2004). Hayes and Lin (1994) identified social concerns as one of the biggest problems for international students and reviewed the adjustments to social networking on U.S. colleges for international students. Upon moving to the United States, large social losses, such as being separated from family and friends, can contribute to feelings of anxiety and loss of confidence. Included in this loss is the shared identity of their home community. International students also face the task of developing a new social network. The benefit of relationships with host nationals has been documented in the literature but international students often report relationships with American students to be shallow and superficial (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Yoon & Portman, 2004), increasing feelings of frustration and isolation (Trice, 2004). In contrast, it is common for international students to value and form strong in-group oriented ethnic communities (Hayes & Lin,

1994), but those communities can feel forced and tenuous (Mori, 2000) and further isolate international students.

Trice (2004) operated within the framework of previous research which identified a positive relationship between establishing relationships with host citizens and international students' satisfaction with their international study experience. Trice suggested one explanation for this positive relationship was that social relationships with national students open access to resources and opportunities that may be unevenly distributed among the student body. The author attempted to identify predictors of social interactions with national students. Trice surveyed 497 international students about their experiences in the classroom, relationships with faculty members, social life, satisfaction with campus offices, and post graduation employment concerns. She used hierarchical multiple regression data analysis to identify variables that were related to the frequency of interactions with American students. Approximately one third of the students reported having one or zero social interactions with American students within a semester. International students rated their concern about these interactions differently, dependent on country of origin. For example, students from Africa and the Middle East were considered isolated from American students, but did not report concern about these interactions. Those who socialized most with American students were those most similar to American students culturally. Characteristics included being single and communicating easily in English, having lived in the United States for several years, having interacted with students from other countries, participating in American cultural events, and having a comfort level operating in the American culture.

Similarly, Klomegah (2006) set out to understand social factors related to the alienation often experienced by international students. Klomegah surveyed 94 students, comprised of 51 international students and 43 American students. His survey included demographic information, questions to identify social contact, and the University Alienation Scale, a survey used to gather information regarding experiences of alienation. Contrary to previous studies, the author did not find a significant difference in the amount of alienation experienced by the two groups. In addition he found weak associations between alienation experience and country of origin, and a weak but negative relationship between length of stay and alienation. Klomegah found a strong negative relationship between social contact and feelings of alienation. Limitations to this study that may explain contrary findings include small sample size, homogeneity of sample and that the study took place at a small university that may not have been representative of the experiences of international students at mid-size and large universities.

Faculty are in a unique position to observe patterns in international student social relationships, specifically international student social isolation. Trice (2007) interviewed 27 faculty members, including 12 that were foreign born, chosen for the high international student enrollment in their classes. After using a semi-structured interview protocol, responses were coded and relationships identified. Most faculty believed that national and international students were poorly integrated and rarely interacted with each other. They identified these reasons for international student isolation: strong relationships with culturally similar students, English difficulty, limited opportunities to

work with host nationals, limited time available for social relationships, and host nationals' preferences and comfort level.

Racism and discrimination. Very often international students were members of the racial or ethnic majority in their home country. For this reason, racial discrimination and loss of status experienced may be especially shocking to international students (Yang et al., 2006). In addition, international students are continually confronting stereotypes of how they are "supposed" to be (Pedersen, 1991). International students have tended to perceive prejudice more, use English less, and be more tied to their own nationality group than permanent residents (those holding a green card) and naturalized citizens (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992). Lee and Rice (2007) explored international students' perceptions of discrimination as a possible underlying reason for many struggles in international study. Using a qualitative case study approach with 24 participants, discrimination was not found to be uniformly experienced as only non-White participants reported extensive discrimination. Lee and Rice found the most difficult hardships experienced are a result of their status as international students. Participants from the study experienced a range of discrimination from being ignored to direct confrontation and insults. In light of the many narrative descriptions that highlighted negative treatment by those in the educational community, the authors suggested their study highlights the accountability of higher education institutions in the satisfaction of international students. The authors challenged higher education institutions to pay more attention to the experiences of international students as opposed to using the numbers of international students as a marker for internationalization progress.

Lee and Rice's findings are consistent with a quantitative survey study done by Sodowsky and Plake (1992) who found Africans, Asians, and South Americans (in that order) perceived prejudice more than Europeans. In addition, they found that Muslim students reported more discrimination than any other religious group. As part of their study, Sodowsky and Plake grouped perceived prejudice with observance of cultural practices and social ties, and language usage to operationally define acculturation. In contrast to Lee and Rice, they focused on characteristics within the international student (acculturation level) as opposed to the university environment.

Hanassah (2007) attempted to study more specifically the differences and similarities of international students and their level of perceived discrimination as related to factors of geographical region of origin. The author surveyed 640 international students at UCLA. The instrument included a brief demographic questionnaire and five yes/no questions about their perception of discrimination. An additional open ended question was included to provide students an opportunity to explain an experience of discrimination. Chi-square analysis was used to compare students based on their region of origin. Topics explored included interactions with professors, university staff and classmates, potential employers, and prejudice in the community. Similar to previous studies (Lee & Rice, 2007; Sodowsky & Plake, 1992), they found that students from the Middle East and Africa reported the highest amount of discrimination. The authors suggested that differences may have been even more extreme had their survey been done after the events of 9/11.

Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) studied international students' level of perceived discrimination and homesickness in comparison to the experiences of American students. Using a sample size of 439 (198 international and 241 American students) they looked for correlations between demographic variables, student status, perceived discrimination, and homesickness. International students rated levels of homesickness and discrimination higher than American students. Older international students and those who had resided in America longer also rated discrimination higher. High levels of perceived discrimination were also correlated with higher levels of homesickness. Consistent with previous studies (Hanassah, 2007; Lee & Rice, 2007; Sodowsky & Plake, 1992), European students reported less perceived prejudice than non-European international students.

Frey and Roysircar (2006) explored the relationship of perceived prejudice and acculturation level with frequency of help resource utilization for South Asian and East Asian international students. They hypothesized that higher levels of perceived prejudice and the stress of acculturation could be significantly related to frequency of utilization of resources and that those effects would be different depending on cultural background and group membership. They developed their own checklist of help resources and correlated it to the American-International Relations Survey that measures adaptation to the United States along a continuum. Contrary to their hypothesis, they found that the predictor variable of perceived prejudice was not correlated to help resource utilization. But differences did exist based on group membership as South Asian acculturation was positively correlated for help resource utilization but was not for East Asians. Their

explanation for the lack of relationship between perceived prejudice and help resource utilization was that when oppression is experienced as out of one's control, the response can commonly be one of passivity and internalized powerlessness.

Summarizing the experiences of international students and discrimination, Lee (2007) asserted that international students' toleration of discrimination suggested they see experiencing discrimination as a part of earning an American degree. This ultimately limits all students' learning because it silences the international student and allows stereotypes to go unchallenged.

Language difficulties. Lacina (2002) emphasized that despite America's long history of bilingualism, many Americans have little patience in communicating with someone whose language and accent is different than their own. Mori (2000) stated that language difficulties might be the largest challenge for international students as it impacts both academic performance and relationships with professors and students. Language barriers increase the amount of time necessary for assignments, increase difficulty understanding lectures and discussions, and cause problems communicating viewpoints and concerns in class (Pedersen, 1991). These challenges may be particularly trying for international students who are excellent students at home but feel unable to express their academic ability in the United States. Language difficulties even impact those international students coming from English-speaking countries due to accents and different expressions. Challenges due to language are complicated by the importance of language proficiency in the international student's adjustment. Throughout international

student literature, English proficiency and social support are the only consistent predictors of variance in acculturative stress (Poyrazli et al., 2004; Yeh & Inose, 2003).

When international students switch to using English as their dominant language it has significant implications. Roth and Harama (2000) explored how the lived experience of learning English as a second language leads to changes in Self and the Other. Underlying their investigation is the belief that there is not a constant Self, but instead Self is continually changing and can be described in a multitude of different ways. The authors critiqued ESL (English as a Second Language) programs that simplify language to being a code, ignoring the impact on the person. The authors describe moving into a second language as "uprooting . . . Self-transforming, and, therefore, always a threat to the experience of identity" (p. 733) as the view of Self and Other is intimately related to the role of language and discourse in one's life. Similarly, Olivas and Li (2006) discussed the role that language usage and proficiency has on self-concept. Thus, language is one more significant area in which the international student's life is characterized by transition and change.

Despite getting sufficient scores for admission on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), many students do not feel confident in their English abilities as found by Huang (2006) in her study on Chinese international students. Pedersen (1991) reported that the TOEFL is not an accurate measure of oral communication and understanding as much as it is of reading skills. This test was revised in 2005 to have a more integrated approach and specifically to test spoken English skills (Bollag, 2005; Heitman, 2005), but the impact of those changes is not yet known.

Providing an alternative perspective, Baty (2007) highlighted faculty frustration with international students' language skills. Staff expressed that a focus on recruiting more international students because of the full fees they pay has led to having many international students with very basic English skills. Faculty expressed frustration with how this practice has compromised the learning experience for all students.

Research on international students and language difficulties has primarily paired English fluency with social support and acculturative stress. In similar studies Dao, Lee, and Chang (2007), Poyrazli et al. (2004), and Yeh and Inose (2003) all used demographic questionnaires and instruments measuring acculturation and social support. Dao et al. (2007) studied Taiwanese students specifically and included depression level in their study. They found that Taiwanese international students most at risk for depressive symptoms were most likely to be female, have perceived low English fluency, and have the perception of lower social support. Consistent with research highlighting the significance of language fluency, they found that self-perceived English fluency totally mediated effects of acculturation levels on depression for both genders. Similarly, Poyrazli et al. (2004) found that English proficiency and social support uniquely contributed to variance in acculturative stress. But they also found that level of English proficiency did not mediate the effects of social support on acculturative stress. Yeh and Inose (2003) found that those who are not fluent with spoken English reported significantly higher levels of acculturative stress than those who self-reported higher levels of English fluency. They noted that language is intimately tied to culture, potentially related to their additional results that European international students reported

less acculturative stress than those from Asia, Africa, and Latin/Central America. As was expected, social connectedness and support network satisfaction levels were significant predictors of acculturative stress.

Academic stressors. International students face the pressure of high expectations from family, friends, sponsoring agencies, and others regarding their academic success. The possibility of not meeting these expectations and returning home without their degree is seen as the worst type of fate for many international students (Pedersen, 1991). In addition to navigating a new educational system, international students often face added restrictions (such as GPA level) on their course of study put in place by their home governments, parents, or other financial sponsors that are frequently tied to financial support (Charles & Stewart, 1991). Yi et al. (2003) found that one of the top concerns prompting counseling center use by international students was academic issues and grades. They found undergraduate international students were more likely to seek counseling and exhibit worry about academics than international graduate students. Pedersen (1991) also highlighted the added academic stress that many graduate international students face in order to maintain scholarships from their home countries. Graduate international students often hold teaching assistantships which add the stress of performance anxiety about their English and student complaints because of their accents. Poyrazli and Kavanaugh (2006) suggested that it is likely the academic stress experienced by graduate international students is higher than that experienced by undergraduates.

Stoynoff (1997) used a mixed methods approach to identify factors that were predictive of international student academic success. In the first semester in the United

States of 77 international students' freshman year, he compiled participants' recent TOEFL scores, results of the LASSI (Learning and Study Strategies Inventory), and a self-report questionnaire regarding training in learning and study strategies. In the second semester, the author conducted interviews with the nine students with the highest GPA and the eight students with the lowest GPA. Stoynoff used an interview protocol specifically addressing self-regulated learning strategies. Consistent with previous literature, he found a modest positive relationship between English proficiency and academic achievement. Those who were successful academically often used self-regulated learning strategies (Stoynoff, 1996), but did not do so in the absence of anxiety, frustration, and significant extra effort. The highest achievers were those who could integrate social assistance into their learning. This finding is consistent with Boyer and Sedlacek (1989) who hypothesized that social support enables international students to overcome barriers encountered due to language or culture.

Poyrazli and Kavanaugh (2006) assessed the relationship of marital status, ethnicity, and academic achievement on the adjustment of graduate international students. They sampled 149 graduate international students of differing ethnicities, marital status, and types of graduate programs using a demographic questionnaire and the Inventory of Student Adjustment Strain (ISAS). Consistent with previous studies on language, they found language fluency significantly contributed to educational strain. In addition, English level and degree status were significantly correlated with academic achievement. Masters students reported more strain and lower grades than doctoral students. Those who were married reported a lower level of social adjustment strain, consistent with

previous social support research. Overall, Asian students reported more adjustment strain as related to academic issues and English fluency. A limitation to this study is that sample size prevented them from examining within group differences of large cultural groups, such as European and Asian students.

Hsieh (2007) used a narrative approach to understand why one female Chinese international student kept silent in her classes. The author triangulated her methods using multiple face-to-face interviews, informal interviews, field journal and interview notes, and the participant's own autobiography. As a result of the participant's personal family and cultural background, she described herself as introverted and quiet. Upon attending American university classes, the participant expressed feeling her classmates perceived her silence as a sign of stupidity and incompetence. She was often ignored so that she became almost "invisible" to classmates, increasing her likelihood of remaining silent when she had something to contribute in class. In addition, due to her lack of participation in group discussions, she felt "useless" in the group process. To prove she was not stupid, the participant put additional pressure on herself to get a high GPA. The author reported implications of this study should be that educators should be aware of the disempowering American higher education system and how it may be experienced by international students.

At the end of their study, international students often face the difficult decision of whether they will return home or stay in the United States. Mori (2000) emphasized the complexity of this decision as it is closely tied to not only their future career plans but changes in their self-concept. With regard to the "return home or stay" issues and to

increase the helpfulness of academic advisors to international students, Spencer-Rodgers (2000) explored whether the self-reported career development needs of international students were U.S. focused or reentry focused. She surveyed 227 international degree-seeking students on nonimmigrant F-1 student visas using her own self-developed needs assessment and demographic questionnaire. Her study included a higher percentage of graduate students compared to undergraduate students than is representative of international students at American universities. The primary needs identified by participants were work experience, job-search skills, and career-planning activities. Overall the majority of participants were oriented toward the American job market. Her findings were in contrast to Leong and Sedlacek (1989) who found that international students were focused more on reentry vocational assistance. A limitation of Spencer-Rodgers' study is that she did not assess for preference differences based on country of origin which may have had more specific implications.

Financial hardships. Despite the common misconception that international students are receiving large American scholarships, 62% of international students report funding the majority of their education through their own personal and family resources. Including other sources, 66% of international student education is funded by sources outside of the United States (Institute for International Education, 2007). Considering higher out of state/country tuition and lower incomes worldwide, education comes at great sacrifice to many international students. Student visas typically limit employment or financial aid restricting the options to alleviate financial difficulties. This increases the pressure to graduate quickly and subsequently increases academic pressures they may

face (Mori, 2000). These realities are logically consistent with Hyun, Quinn, Madon, and Lustig's (2007) findings that graduate students reporting higher financial confidence were less likely to use counseling services than those who lacked financial confidence. Everyday tasks such as opening a bank account, obtaining health and car insurance, securing housing, and setting up a household are frequently excessively complicated and expensive for international students (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007).

Mental health symptoms. Differences exist in how international students view mental health. Bhugra (2006) found that culture impacted identifying and explaining symptoms, as well as changing the course of the experience of the symptoms. Culture, a fluid construct, determines what is considered illness, how the sick role is understood, and what help is needed. Mori (2000) emphasized the variety of ways that international student adjustment stress may manifest itself in addition to mood changes—physiological distress, academic impairment, self-esteem issues, and mental exhaustion.

When one considers the many stresses and transitions that the average international student is facing, it is not surprising that international students would be at greater risk for the development of mental health symptoms. Pedersen (1991) asserted that international students are likely to experience more problems and have fewer resources available to them than national students. Cheng, Leong, and Geist (1993) compared psychological distress levels of American college students with Chinese international students using the Brief Symptom Inventory. As they hypothesized, results indicated that Chinese international students do experience significantly more personal and emotional issues than American college students. But further studies are needed on

this topic as controversy surrounds the tendency to overemphasize pathology in international students (Yoon & Portman, 2004). Some authors have described international students as high-risk with more problems, while others report this is an exaggeration (Pedersen, 1991). The following study reflects those contradictory findings.

Hyun et al. (2007) surveyed 3,121 graduate students (including 551 international students) to compare mental health needs between domestic and international students. Their instrument included the topics of mental health needs, knowledge about mental health services on campus, utilization and satisfaction with campus mental health services, factors affecting mental health including social support and department environment, and demographic characteristics. They found that domestic and international graduate students did not differ significantly in terms of stress or emotional related problems that impacted wellbeing or academic performance. In fact, their results indicated that domestic students scored higher on the depression index, indicating more negative emotional experiences than international graduate students. Consistent with these findings, significantly fewer international graduate students reported considering accessing mental health services. The only finding on which international students did score significantly higher was the likelihood to access mental health services when facing financial struggles.

Stories of strength. In contrast to international student challenges, a unique but significant article was encountered in the literature that highlighted international students' discourses of strength about themselves. Koehne (2006) highlighted how the "endlessly speaking" dominant discourses about the expertise of the West (most often America and

the UK) have contributed to the desire for the "imagined lives" frequently associated with being educated in the West (p. 244). Often international students believe stories that through studying in the United States they will have access to increased social mobility, knowledge, and power. In addition, there are powerful discourses that are speaking about the identity of international students. They are spoken of as ones who have deficiencies, are in need of pastoral care, and are passive learners. Many of these stories have been challenged in recent literature, but they continue. National students may see international students as "the other" and universities may see them as a "resource" (p. 246).

Koehne (2006) conducted hour-long interviews and follow-up interviews for clarification with 25 postgraduate and undergraduate international students. She found that international students resisted the idea of the West as experts, and frequently spoke of themselves as possessing knowledge and experience but having limited opportunities to voice them. They expressed a desire for dialogue that was reciprocal. Participants spoke of themselves as being "fighters" and "surmounting all the barriers" associated with the process of becoming an international student (p. 249). For example, one participant discussed saving five years for the money to become an international student. Participants expressed wanting to give up at times, but battling to stay. At times, she found that these storylines of strength coexisted with storylines of helplessness and a loss of confidence. Koehne's article highlights the importance of giving international students an opportunity to speak about themselves, both at the university and in the literature.

Help-Seeking Behavior

Consistent with the immediately preceding article, it is the assumption of this author that when international students face challenges they are also employing help-seeking methods to overcome those challenges. Frey and Roysircar (2006) noted that the majority of studies on international students have focused on the university counseling center and mental health services as opposed to the range of resources that may be used by international students. International students may use a range of help resources including but not limited to: information seeking, building relationships with fellow nationals rather than host nationals, seeking guidance from family members, using internal attributions such as self-responsibility to cope, using indirect methods to minimize conflict, separating self from stressors, practicing their religion, increasing efforts to socialize, increasing self-awareness through education about health issues, continuing preventative health practices such as yoga and medicines from home countries, visiting home, and making active efforts to change the situation. Reflecting the available literature on international student help seeking behavior, the following section discusses more specifically the use of social support and counseling services.

Social support. Pedersen (1991) reported that the most often used help-seeking method when facing personal problems by international students was a fellow national. The importance of social support is confirmed by previous research that identified social support and English proficiency as the only consistent predictors of variance in acculturative stress (Poyrazli et al., 2004). As discussed previously, social relationships are one of the biggest challenges faced by international students. While the consensus

throughout the literature is that social support is important for international students (Hayes & Lin, 1994), limited studies are available that describe *how* international students access social support.

Moore and Constantine (2005) developed a Collectivist Coping Styles Measure (CCSM) to measure how African, Asian, and Latin American international students used social support and forbearance to cope with their challenges. Their measure was based on previous research that suggested individuals from communal and interdependent cultures are more likely to prioritize interpersonal connectedness and relationships and see others as an extension of self. The authors suggested that social support for international students from collectivist cultures needs to include the concept of mutual reliance, providing an opportunity to meet the needs of all parties involved. Despite the importance of social support, the authors suggested that international students may employ forbearance first. They described forbearance as the likelihood to minimize or conceal problems so that others are not troubled or burdened. In addition to previous research informing their measure, the authors also used focus group discussions including African, Asian, and Latin American international students. Paired with a demographic questionnaire and other scales to provide evidence of validity, they administered their scale to 204 international students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. They used factor analysis to determine if the factors of social support and forbearance were supported. These factors were supported and evidenced good internal consistency in the subscales. To determine validity, the researchers correlated their results with the already established measures included in their participant packet and found their measure valid.

Finally, two weeks later 40 of the participants retook the measure and determined the measure possessed test-retest reliability. Their final results indicated that African, Asian, and Latin American international students do value the use of social support and forbearance when they deal with problems.

A strategy frequently used by international students to aid their adjustment process is developing strong social relationships with other persons of a similar cultural background and forming ethnic communities within the university (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998). These communities allow international students to increasingly maintain the cultural identities and mimic aspects of their home cultural environments. These communities often serve as a buffer from the problems related to interactions with American culture and the university. Al-Sharideh and Goe hypothesized that assimilation into the American culture and relationships with Americans only influence international student adjustment and self-esteem when these strong ties with others of a similar cultural background have not been established. By telephone, the authors surveyed 226 international students that represented 67 nations. Of those students, 175 were from nations that are highly represented among international students thus allowing them to form ties with others of a similar cultural background. Of the total sample, 12.4% of the students reported no strong ties with people of a common cultural background. Using multiple regression analysis to analyze their results, they found participation in common culture communities was an important influencer on the self-esteem (and thus adjustment) of international students. This relationship was curvilinear, in that strong ties in common cultural networks of up to 32 persons were positively correlated with

self-esteem, but beyond 32 persons the relationship was negatively tied to self-esteem. They did express some caution generalizing the results about larger communities as there were very few participants with large common cultural communities. International students are required to socialize with American students academically and to meet necessary personal needs (e.g., shopping) in the American culture. So, the authors suggested their findings imply that international students are balancing relationships with common culture communities and Americans, and the demands are best met when international students have a common cultural group that is small to medium size. Contrary to their expectations, the authors found that the relationship between strong ties with Americans and self-esteem was not conditional on strong ties with a common cultural group. This suggests that relationships with Americans have an independent impact on international student self-esteem and adjustment.

Another way that international students may access social support is through the use of electronic communication. In light of the temporariness of their educational stay, existing relationships may be a larger need for international students compared with groups such as immigrants or ethnic groups that are permanently settled in the U.S. This contact may also be important as a way of maintaining cultural values when studying outside of their home country. Electronic communication may be a valuable component of supporting those relationships (Cemalcilar, Falbo & Stapleton, 2005). Three studies exist on the role of electronic communication as a support to international student adaptation. Cemalcilar et al. were the first to explore the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) during the initial stages of international students' transition to

studying in America. They hypothesized that CMC use by international students provided an "enduring sense of social support" and positively affected the adaptation process (p. 93). They identified CMC as including direct online communication, such as e-mail or chatting, and passive use including accessing home country related websites. The authors proposed a structural equation model to hypothesize the relationships at play between adaptation and CMC use. Specifically the model suggests that continuous CMC contact has a positive effect on the maintenance of their home identity, perception of social support, and overall adjustment to studying in the United States. They provided 280 international students with various instruments that assessed CMC use, perceived social support, academic adaptation, acculturation level, psychological adaptation, and socio-cultural adaptation. The authors reported that their results supported their proposed model and international students do use CMC frequently to keep in contact with their home country. Differences were found in CMC use based on nationality. Those with relatives in the U.S. and who had been overseas longer were less likely to rely on CMC to contact those at home. Age was negatively correlated with identification with host culture and socio-cultural adaptation, but positively correlated with passive CMC use. Limits of this study included phones are still the primary means to communicate with home by international students and Internet access is not consistently available in all parts of the world.

Ye (2006) was the next to study the relationship between online support when she examined the relationship between use of online social groups, acculturative stress, and perceived emotional and informational support for Chinese international students. She

hypothesized that students less satisfied with their interpersonal support will be more actively involved in online ethnic social groups than those who are satisfied. She also predicted those students less satisfied with their interpersonal support will perceive higher levels of informational and emotional support from those groups than those satisfied with their interpersonal support. Including 112 Chinese international students who had been in the States for over two years, she surveyed their online activities, overall life satisfaction level on a Likert scale, acculturative stress using a scale specific to international students and social support as measured by the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ). Her hypotheses were partially supported as interpersonal support network satisfaction was negatively correlated with perceived online informational support, but not emotional support. Interpersonal support network satisfaction was not correlated with online activity level. Overall, higher levels of online activity were found to be positively correlated with perceived online emotional and informational support and lower acculturative stress levels.

Most recently, Smith and Shwalb (2007) explored the relationship between international student adjustment and loneliness as compared to use of electronic communication. He requested that 45 international students list their most helpful emotional supports, and complete the Multigroup Ethnic Identify Measure, Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale and an author developed measure of adjustment. Participants also provided demographic information and the percentages of time spent each week using the Internet, email, and socializing in person versus by computer. He found that computer use and time on the Internet and writing emails were not significantly

correlated to the measures of adjustment, loneliness, or ethnic identity. But, when used specifically to keep in contact with their home country, email and Internet usage were negatively associated with loneliness and positively correlated to adjustment and ethnic identity scores. Time spent socializing in person as opposed to via computer was positively correlated with adjustment, inversely associated with loneliness, and not correlated with ethnic identity. Particularly interesting were the most important sources of support reported by participants. In order of importance they are "friends, emotional/psychological coping strategies, e.g., positive thinking, assertiveness, beneficial aspects of the American lifestyle, e.g., access to resources, freedom of personal expression, family members, university teachers or personnel, and host or sponsor families in the USA" (p. 168). Not one participant included computer use or electronic communication. But, consistent with the previous two studies, electronic communication to home countries provided some social support to international student adjustment.

Counseling. In light of the challenges international students often face, campus counseling services may be helpful. But, counseling centers are actually one of the least used resources of international students (Yoon & Portman, 2004). International students have been found to use counseling services substantially less than national students and terminate services earlier (Mori, 2000). They often delay seeking services longer and have a higher no-show rate following the intake session (Yoon & Portman, 2004). Many researchers have sought to find the reasons behind these trends.

Yi et al. (2003) aimed to understand who seeks counseling, how they access services and why, among the international student population. The authors studied

existing data from a university counseling center of 562 international student clients over a six-year period. Top concerns prompting counseling for undergraduates were academics/grades, depression, and anxiety. Graduate students' top concerns were depression, time management issues, and partner relationship issues. Those who sought out the counseling center for academic problems were more likely to be younger, female, and undergraduate. Those seeking the center use for personal problems were more likely to be older, male, and graduate students. They did not find a significant relationship between country of origin and presenting concern. A high percentage of students were self-referred to the counseling center, which is in contrast to previous literature that suggested due to the mental health stigma international students are not likely to self-refer. This unique finding may have been impacted by the center offering a culturally specific psychoeducational group which many of the participants did attend, proactive university efforts to make international students aware of counseling services, and having a counselor with expertise in working with international students.

In a similar study, Komiya and Eells (2001) attempted to determine predictors of attitudes toward seeking counseling in international students. They surveyed 104 international students using a demographic questionnaire, the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Help Scale (ATSPPHS), Emotional Openness Scale, and the Hopkins Symptom Checklist. Using a stepwise multiple regression analysis, they found international students who were emotionally open, female, and who had experienced counseling previously most likely to seek counseling. Distress level and length of stay in

America were not found to have significant relationships with openness to counseling. Their small sample size did not allow for analyses by country of origin.

Boyer and Sedlacek (1989) hoped to determine non-cognitive predictors of counseling utilization. They administered the Noncognitive Questionnaire (NCQ) to 230 freshmen international students at orientation and then compared those results eight semesters later with their actual counseling center usage. Thirteen percent of those who had been originally sampled used campus counseling services. The authors used stepwise discriminant functional analysis to determine differences between the students who did and did not use counseling services. The authors determined that understanding and the ability to deal with racism, preferences for long-term goals over short-term goals, and non-traditional ways of acquiring knowledge were predictive of using counseling center services. As in the previous two studies, they did not analyze results based on country of origin.

Numerous barriers have been suggested for why international students consistently use counseling services less than domestic students. Boyer and Sedlacek (1989) suggested that reluctance to use counseling services may be tied to the minimal availability of and unfamiliarity with counseling services in their home country. This was supported partially in Hyun et al.'s work (2007) when they found that international graduate students were less familiar with on-campus mental health services than domestic graduate students but also reported less need for mental health services. Numerous authors cited the stigma attached to using mental health services as a barrier (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989; Mori, 2000) and this may indicate why certain cultures use physical

symptoms more than psychological symptoms to describe mental health concerns (Bhugra, 2006). Thus, utilization of counseling services by international students has been found to increase when centers are located near other non-psychological services (Mori, 2000). International students may see their difficulties as caused by external forces out of their control, and as a result not see counseling as relevant. This may be tied to a collectivist view of self as opposed to the individual assessment that occurs in counseling. This is consistent with Hayes and Lin's (1994) suggestion that international student reluctance in initiating services may be due to a commitment to use traditional family modes of support and assistance. Moore and Constantine (2005) suggested that a commitment to collectivist styles of coping such as using social support may decrease the likelihood that international students would seek counseling, even if they viewed counseling positively. International students are often unfamiliar with "the system" and they may fear if they use counseling services they will be sent home (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989).

Barriers to counseling may also be due to how counseling is offered. Pedersen (1991) highlighted how difficult it may be for international students facing stress regarding language difficulties to use counseling to address those challenges when the service is primarily conducted in the international student's foreign language. In addition, many counselors unfamiliar with the challenges of international students may hold biased beliefs or lack important skills that could negatively impact the international student's counseling experience (Mori, 2000). Sodowsky (1991) emphasized that knowledge of culture must be relevantly applied to the counseling process. He explored

the impact of culturally consistent counseling on American and international students' perception of counselor credibility using two simulated videotapes of counseling sessions that had been deemed culturally different by 18 psychologists and 50 counseling psychology students. The American participants reported no difference in trustworthiness and expertness between the two videotaped counselors. Asian-Indian participants found the culturally congruent counselor as possessing greater expertness and trustworthiness. Korean students did not find either counseling approach appropriate. His study supported the importance of having culturally aware and sensitive counselors as related to international students.

This section has detailed the multiple ways international students address their challenges adjusting to studying at an American university. The following section details the background and challenges specifically identified in the literature about Turkish international students.

Turkish International Students

Poyrazli et al. (2001) conducted the first study on Turkish international students. They surveyed 79 students with the Instrument of Student Adjustment Strain (ISAS) and a demographic questionnaire. They found that there were more adjustment issues based on the presence of a Turkish government scholarship. The authors suggested this may be due to the bureaucracy they need to deal with and academic pressure students feel to keep those scholarships. Those that were younger and had higher writing and reading English proficiency reported significantly less adjustment issues. As students progressed in the duration of their studies, GPAs rose. School, class, gender, marital status, major, SES,

and level of understanding and speaking English were not significantly related to adjustment level.

Providing the second study to explore Turkish international student adjustment, Duru and Poyrazli (2007) explored the relationship between acculturative stress, personality dimensions, English proficiency, and demographic variables. They surveyed 229 Turkish international students from 17 universities with high numbers of Turkish students. No information was provided about the nature of these universities. Researchers provided participants with a demographic questionnaire, a subscale of the Utrecht Homesickness scale, the Social Connectedness scale, the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students, and the Neuroticism and Openness to Experience subscales from the Big Five Inventory to measure personality characteristics. They found no differences in responses based on gender but did find significant differences based on marital status as married students reported higher levels of acculturative stress. The majority of the married students were graduate students on scholarships from the Turkish government. They were unable to accept additional assistantships or work and government scholarships did not provide extra support for family members. Thus, the authors suggested this increased stress could be due to financial pressures. Their assumption is consistent with the results of Poyrazli et al. (2001) who did find increased stress with governmental scholarships. Using regression analysis they found that marital status, English competency, social connectedness, adjustment difficulties, neuroticism, and openness to experience explained 36% of the variance in acculturative stress.

Tatar (2005) was interested in how Turkish graduate students perceived their participation in American classrooms, particularly in light of research that identified international student concern about oral classroom participation. Tatar highlighted that oral participation is not typically encouraged in Turkish educational culture. Tatar used a multi-case study approach and conducted 26 interviews. These interviews were conducted in Turkish to encourage participants to express their ideas openly, candidly, and comfortably. The study included four graduate students (two women and two men) majoring in elementary education. Tatar coded and summarized themes in the transcribed interviews. Contrary to studies on Asian students that focused on their silence, the participants did not all describe themselves as silent. They valued participation more as a way to increase their self-confidence than increase academic learning. They expressed a desire for more structure imposed by the instructor in classroom discussion. Three factors that influenced participation were identified: educational culture, environmental factors, and classroom dynamics.

In regards to educational culture, participants expressed a difference between participation and meaningful participation. They did not feel comfortable expressing their ideas without adequate reflection and participation thus increasing the likelihood that their participation would be useful to classmates. Their periods of silence were not an indication of non-engagement. They placed a higher value on listening than speaking. They valued the instructor as the main source of knowledge. Some environmental factors that influenced participation were whether participation was a requirement of the course, whether the topic of discussion focused on perspectives outside of the U.S. perspective,

and whether they felt adequately prepared by reading materials available to all students as opposed to relying on experiences to which only U.S. students had access. Finally, the presence of other nonnative speakers, supportive American students (as opposed to dominating and patronizing American students), and other Turkish students increased the likelihood that they would participate in classroom discussions. Tatar's (2005) descriptions of Turkish international students' perceptions of American students are consistent with previous literature that found Turkish national students perceive the United States and Americans as self-interested, aggressive and dominating (Kelleher, Kuncek, & Kharaman, 2003). Turkish national students reported a large discrepancy between how they believe Americans see themselves and how the rest of the world views them. Tatar's study remains the only qualitative study currently available on Turkish international students.

The only study on the help-seeking behavior of Turkish international students was conducted by Kilinc and Granello (2003). They provided 120 Turkish international students with the Mental Health Information Questionnaire (MHIQ), the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH), The American-International Relations Scale (AIRS), and a background questionnaire. A limitation of this study was that help-seeking behavior seemed to be narrowly defined as seeking professional help. Consistent with the findings of Komiya and Eells (2001) for international students in general, being young and having experienced counseling was predictive of a positive help-seeking attitude. The authors found Turkish international students' knowledge of mental illness was largely dependent on the media and students

made few distinctions in levels of mental distress. This may support the belief that one must be severely impaired before seeking counseling services. As described by Pedersen (1991), the authors found Turkish students were more likely to seek out a friend for psychological help than a professional. Turkish students expressed a moderate to high level of life satisfaction. The lower levels of satisfaction, acculturation and help-seeking behaviors were found in those who rated themselves as more religious. This is likely to be related to prejudice against Islam in America. This is consistent with the findings of Sodowsky and Plake (1992) who found Muslim students reported experiencing more discrimination than any other religious group. The authors did report that their research was conducted prior to the events of September 11, 2001, and if conducted again they anticipated increased dissatisfaction with their religious/spiritual life in the United States.

Critiques of the Literature

Yoon and Portman (2004) identified five major critiques of the literature on international students. Overall, they found individual studies were isolated and lacked continuity. The researchers discovered that inappropriate sampling resulted in frequent overgeneralization of findings and an under emphases of within group differences. This is illustrated by the differing needs and behaviors of a degree seeking international student compared to one studying in the United States for six months, in spite of being from the same country. Secondly, they identified a disproportional focus on personal factors of the international student at the expense of environmental factors. Studies frequently ascribed adjustment difficulties to the international student when an unsupportive environment may have been the pivotal factor. This critique was echoed by

Lee and Rice (2007), who found many studies held an "underlying assumption host institutions are impartial and without fault" (p. 388). Similarly, a third pattern focused on pathology within the international student as opposed to taking a developmental approach to international student adjustment, resulting in studies frequently missing or minimizing international student strengths. Fourth, the authors challenged the counseling goals underpinning the studies. They suggested a shift from goals of assimilation into the new culture to aiding the student in developing bicultural competence in the new culture. Finally, Yoon and Portman (2004) critiqued methodological procedures in the international student literature including additional issues of sampling, extensive use of surveys, and the instruments used. Frequent use of convenience samples that lacked a solid rationale for the inclusion of specific subgroups often resulted in contradictory findings. Significant differences may exist between international student attitudes toward counseling in survey results and real life behaviors. The authors gave the example of multiple studies that report international students are very open to counseling but this is contradicted by their low utilization rates. Finally, the majority of instruments used in these studies were developed for national or minority students and their use may be inappropriate with international students.

Summary

The preceding review of the literature supported the argument that international students face many challenges in their international study and employ a variety of help-seeking behaviors to meet these challenges. International students often face challenges in the areas of social relationships, racism and discrimination, language, academic

achievement, finances, and mental health. To meet these challenges they may respond in a variety of ways, but the available literature has focused on social support and mental health services. The current literature is primarily quantitative, frequently using instruments normed for American students or American ethnic minority groups, and frequently using convenience sampling sometimes yielding contradictory results. As a result, these findings can not necessarily be generalized to Turkish international students. Due to the limited literature available on Turkish international students, a strong case is made for future research to understand the experiences of Turkish international students and how they adjust to international study.

A need has been identified to study specific cultural groups and sub-groups and their experiences as international students (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989; Jacob, 2001; Mori, 2000; Yi et al., 2003; Yoon & Portman, 2004). This phenomenological study will add to the body of knowledge on the under-researched cultural group of Turkish international students at a Midwestern university by providing a rich description of their experiences as international students. This study attempts to answer the following question: How do full-time single Turkish international graduate students conceptualize their experiences as international students? Subquestions are (a) What contexts have influenced their experiences as international students? (b) What assists their adjustment as international students? (c) What detracts from their adjustment as international students? (d) What implications do their experiences have for the ways that counselors and counselor educators can support international students? By further understanding the experiences of

Turkish international students, this study is a step in increasing the helpfulness of counselor educators to Turkish international students' adjustment.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

The preceding chapter provided a summary of the scholarly literature relevant to the experiences of international students and Turkish international students, in particular. The literature suggested that international students face many challenges and employ a variety of help-seeking behaviors. While a significant amount of research is available on international students as a whole, these findings cannot be appropriately applied to the specific experiences of Turkish international students. The purpose of this study is to describe the essential elements of the lived experiences of Turkish international students, as limited research is available on this population. This study was guided by the following research question: How do full-time single Turkish international graduate students conceptualize their experiences as international students? Subquestions are (a) What contexts have influenced their experiences as international students? (b) What assists their adjustment as international students? (c) What detracts from their adjustment as international students? (d) What implications do their experiences have for the ways that counselors and counselor educators can support international students? This chapter describes the methods used to address these questions.

Phenomenological Research

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design. Qualitative research creates an end product that "includes the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action" (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). This type

of research focuses on issues of process, context, meaning, and rich descriptions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). As discussed previously, the majority of research on international students and Turkish international students has used quantitative methodology. Due to the frequent use of convenience sampling and instruments not normed for international students, there are limits to how this research can be generalized and applied. There is a need for research that provides a foundational description of the complexities involved in Turkish international students' experiences. This is consistent with Creswell's assertion that qualitative research meets the need to hear "silenced voices" (p. 40).

A phenomenological form of inquiry was chosen to address the specific goals of this study. Phenomenology attempts to describe the meaning and essential structures of the lived experience of a phenomenon for several persons by uncovering what participants have in common in their experience (Creswell, 2007). Similarly, Polkinghorne (1989) wrote that the phenomenological researcher attempts to move beyond neutral description to uncover the "essential attributes of phenomena and then to express the results in verbal portraits" (p. 45). The primary focus of phenomenological research is the lived experience of the participants, and the researcher's goal is to translate that into a "textual expression of its essence" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). The phenomenologist has a two-fold concern: the concreteness of the object/experience as well as how consciousness is intentionally focused on that object (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). These two aspects of an experience can not be separated as the reality of an experience is only perceived by way of the meaning attached to that experience by the individual (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, this study focuses jointly on the concrete

experiences of Turkish international students and the meaning they have attached to their experiences, while attempting to refrain from any previously held frameworks of that experience by the researcher. Phenomenology is uniquely suited for this study as the researcher's goal is to understand the complexities of the experiences of Turkish international students and provide a foundation for further research.

The Researcher

Phenomenological research relies heavily on the intuition and reflection of the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Because of this, Moustakas (1994) recommended the practice of epoché or bracketing—the process whereby the researcher sets aside his or her own prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas to be able to have a new and naive perspective of the phenomena studied. Spinelli (1989) asserted this openness allows one's description of the phenomena to be more adequate. While recognizing that some entities are not bracketable, Moustakas emphasized that this process is one that requires sustained attention, concentration, and awareness. The primary challenge of bracketing is to be transparent within oneself and to clearly identify the biases one holds. The very act of recognizing bias lessens the impact of bias on one's experience (Spinelli, 1989).

Consistent with the practice of bracketing, the researcher will identify her own personal background and beliefs as related to Turkish international students. The researcher is a Caucasian female pursuing her doctorate in counselor education and supervision at Kent State University. She is licensed as a professional clinical counselor and works full time in a community mental health agency. Her native country is the United States and she had the opportunity to study as an international student for the

2000-2001 school year in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In 2005, she traveled to Turkey for 10 days as part of a collaborative program between counselors and educators in Kent, Ohio, and Istanbul. She believes that great benefits could result from international students having increasingly positive experiences in their study in the United States.

The researcher also holds beliefs based on her interaction with the current research related to international students. These beliefs include:

1. International students possess unique strengths and skills that are often not fully appreciated or recognized at the universities they attend.
2. International study is often characterized by transition, challenges, and isolation.
3. International students often face large social and financial losses in studying in the United States.
4. Factors such as language proficiency, marital status, similarity to host culture, and religion impact the level of challenge that international students face.
5. International students frequently face racism and discrimination based on their status as international students.
6. International students often lack familiarity or access to domestic resources that could further support their study experience in the United States.
7. International students use a wide range of coping and help-seeking behaviors to address their challenges.

Participants and Selection Procedures

Criterion sampling was used to identify individuals who have experienced the phenomena being studied and to aid the researcher in uncovering what is common in their lived experience as Turkish international students. In phenomenological research, participants or informants are used to create a bank of possible elements and connections that can be used to determine the essential elements of an experience (Polkinghorne, 1989). Participants had completed one year of study prior to the conduct of this research. It is the researcher's belief that at that point in their program, participants will have had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences as an international student and may have employed help-seeking behaviors to aid in that transition. Only degree-seeking students were considered for this study as it was assumed these students would be more invested in their study experience than non-degree seeking students. As the majority of Turkish international students are graduate students (Institute for International Education, 2007), all participants were graduate students. Since previous research (Duru & Poyrazli, 2007) found differences in the experience of students based on marital status, all participants were unmarried. Participants were attending a Midwestern state university. The university is relatively isolated and international students were unlikely to have access to ethnic communities outside of the university.

The number of participants was projected at the beginning of the study to be between 3 to 10 participants (Creswell, 2007), but was ultimately determined when data reached its saturation point. This point was reached when additional interviews yielded no new themes or structures describing the experience of being a Turkish international

student (Polkinghorne, 1989). Phenomenological research seeks to find richness and redundancy in multiple interviews so that patterns and meanings are more visible to the researcher (Benner, 1994). When redundancy, clarity, and confidence were achieved, recruitment of additional participants was discontinued.

Procedure

This research protocol was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Kent State University (see Appendix A). Names of potential participants were provided by the graduate fellow in the Center for International and Intercultural Education, who had previously obtained permission from individuals to be contacted. He had been provided with a recruitment script (see Appendix B) to answer initial questions potential participants may have had about this study. Persons were contacted by telephone by this researcher and given a description of the proposed study. The researcher asked screening questions to determine study eligibility. Questions included approximate date of arrival for study, description of degree they were seeking, and basic demographic information. Potential participants were also asked if they knew of other potential individuals who might be willing to participate. Interviewees were given an opportunity to ask questions about the study. From the individuals who inclusively met previously stated criteria, participants were chosen based on their willingness and ability to expend their energy in this study. Participants were also informed of compensation of a $25 gift card at the completion of the first and second interview. Initial interviews were scheduled at locations on campus that were most convenient for the participants. Prior to beginning interviews, verbal and written informed consent for participation and audio

taping was obtained from participants (see Appendix C). Participants were provided copies of the consent forms they had signed. Participants were informed of methods used to protect their confidentiality and that they could leave the study at any time.

The first semi-structured interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and was audio-taped. First, the interviewer asked the participants questions from the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D) for more detailed demographic information than obtained at initial screening. Second, the researcher reviewed the goals and purposes of this study. Finally, the researcher used a previously developed interview protocol (see Appendix E) to guide the rest of the interview. This interview protocol had been created by the researcher and then revised through informant discussions with a male Turkish graduate student and a graduated female Turkish student. This piloting work helped to develop the final form of the interview protocol. The informants provided feedback regarding word choice, issues of clarity, topics that were missing, and questions that were redundant. A review of the literature also provided the basis for question inclusion. Questioning began with general, broad questions and moved toward specific topics. The interview protocol is described more fully in the interview protocol section. Throughout the interviewing process the researcher took descriptive and reflective field notes as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003), but this act of reflection was primarily used to aid the researcher in continuing to bracket out the presuppositions and assumptions she brought to the investigation (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Data analysis took place throughout the data gathering process. Shortly after the first interview, the researcher transcribed the interviews and e-mailed a copy to the

matching participant to allow for corrections and/or additions prior to the next meeting. This also allowed the participants to identify information that they would like removed in the final report, so as to protect their confidentiality. The researcher also scheduled the second interview at this time. Prior to the second interview, the researcher analyzed the interviews, identified tentative themes, and created textual descriptions. The process of developing textual descriptions is described in the data analysis section. The researcher also sought the feedback of a Turkish outside expert and peer reviewer to verify the derived themes and descriptions.

The researcher used the derived themes from the first interview to guide the second interview. This interview provided participants the opportunity to elaborate more fully on themes present in the first interview. It served as a member check and increased the trustworthiness of the study. Time was spent reviewing the purpose of the study. This interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. These interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Compensation was provided at the end of this interview.

Following the second interview, the researcher returned to data analysis using the process described later in this chapter. The researcher sought the continued feedback of the peer reviewer to verify the modified themes and structures. Upon the completion of data analysis, a summary of the composite results and a request for brief feedback was e-mailed to participants for a final member check. Their feedback was incorporated into the final report.

Specific data storing methods were used to protect participant confidentiality. Upon obtaining consent for participation, each person was assigned a code. Identifying

information (name, contact information, etc.) was stored separately and securely from gathered data. All data was labeled with participant codes. Immediately following interviews, audio recordings were downloaded from the digital voice recorder to a compact disc and labeled with dates and participant codes.

Interview Protocols

Open-ended questions were used during interviews to aid the participants in articulating their experiences as international students. Initially the interview began with broad questions that focused on gathering data that would lead to a description of what is common and essential in the experience of being a Turkish international student (Creswell, 2007). Probes and reflection of content were used to prompt further exploration and clarify details that were confusing. To keep the focus on the phenomena instead of rigidly focusing on the interview protocol, the researcher was attentive and responsive to disclosures of new and unexpected information in the participants' descriptions of their experience (Polkinghorne, 1989). Questions were provided to participants one week prior to the interview to encourage reflection on their experience. The following questions were used to assist participants in describing the complexities of their experiences:

1. Reflect on and describe an experience that has made an impression on you during your time as an international student.
2. What places and situations have influenced and affected your experiences as an international student?

3. How did you choose this university? Please describe what made those reasons important.
4. What were your expectations of this experience before coming to the United States? How has your experience differed from your expectations?
5. What are your thoughts on returning to Turkey? If they have changed, how have they changed?
6. How have your experiences affected you as a person? What specific changes have you noticed?
7. How has your time as an international student affected significant others (family, friends, etc.) in your life?
8. What has assisted your adjustment?
9. What has detracted from your adjustment? What do you think could have been done to improve this?
10. What aspects of being Turkish have impacted your international study experience (as compared to your observations of international students from other countries)?
11. What feelings characterize your experience?
12. What benefits do you think you have gained from your experience?
13. What losses have you incurred as a result of your experience?
14. What pieces of advice would you give to a peer contemplating studying at this university and/or in the U.S.?
15. What else would you like to share about your experience?

The second interview fulfilled the role of a member check and provided an opportunity for participants to clarify their comments from the first interview. All participants were asked the following questions:

1. Is the transcription you received an accurate representation of our first meeting? If not, why?
2. Are there any corrections that need to be made to the transcript? If yes, please describe.
3. As you read through the transcript, were there any sections that you would like to explain more fully or clarify? If so, please describe.
4. What feelings did you experience as you read through the transcription and reflected on our meeting?

At this point, the researcher provided the participant with a textual description of the initial interview. As recommended by Polkinghorne (1989), the following questions were then asked:

1. How do my descriptions compare with your experiences?
2. What elements have been left out?

Following this interview, the researcher continued data analysis with the assistance of the outside expert and peer reviewer. After the final composite descriptions were developed, each participant was sent a copy and a summary of the goals of the study via e-mail. A brief feedback on the description was requested.

Data Analysis

This study used a modified version of Moustakas' (1994) method of analyzing phenomenological data. This process included the following steps for each participant: recording relevant statements, identifying invariant constituents or meaning units, clustering meaning units into themes, synthesizing meaning units and themes into textual descriptions, creating individual structural descriptions, and constructing textual-structural descriptions of the essence of the experience. From the individual textual-structural descriptions and clustered themes, a composite integrative textual-structural description was created that described what was common in the experiences of all of the participants (See Figure 1).

Significant Statements and Meaning Units

Following transcribing the interviews, the researcher repeatedly read through the transcribed documents consciously bracketing her biases. She identified every statement relevant to the phenomena and regarded them as having equal value. Each of these statements was viewed as adding meaning and a clearer picture of the experience of being a Turkish international student. These statements were listed and redundant; overlapping statements were removed. The remaining units, called invariant constituents or meaning units, signaled unique aspects of being a Turkish international student (Moustakas, 1994).

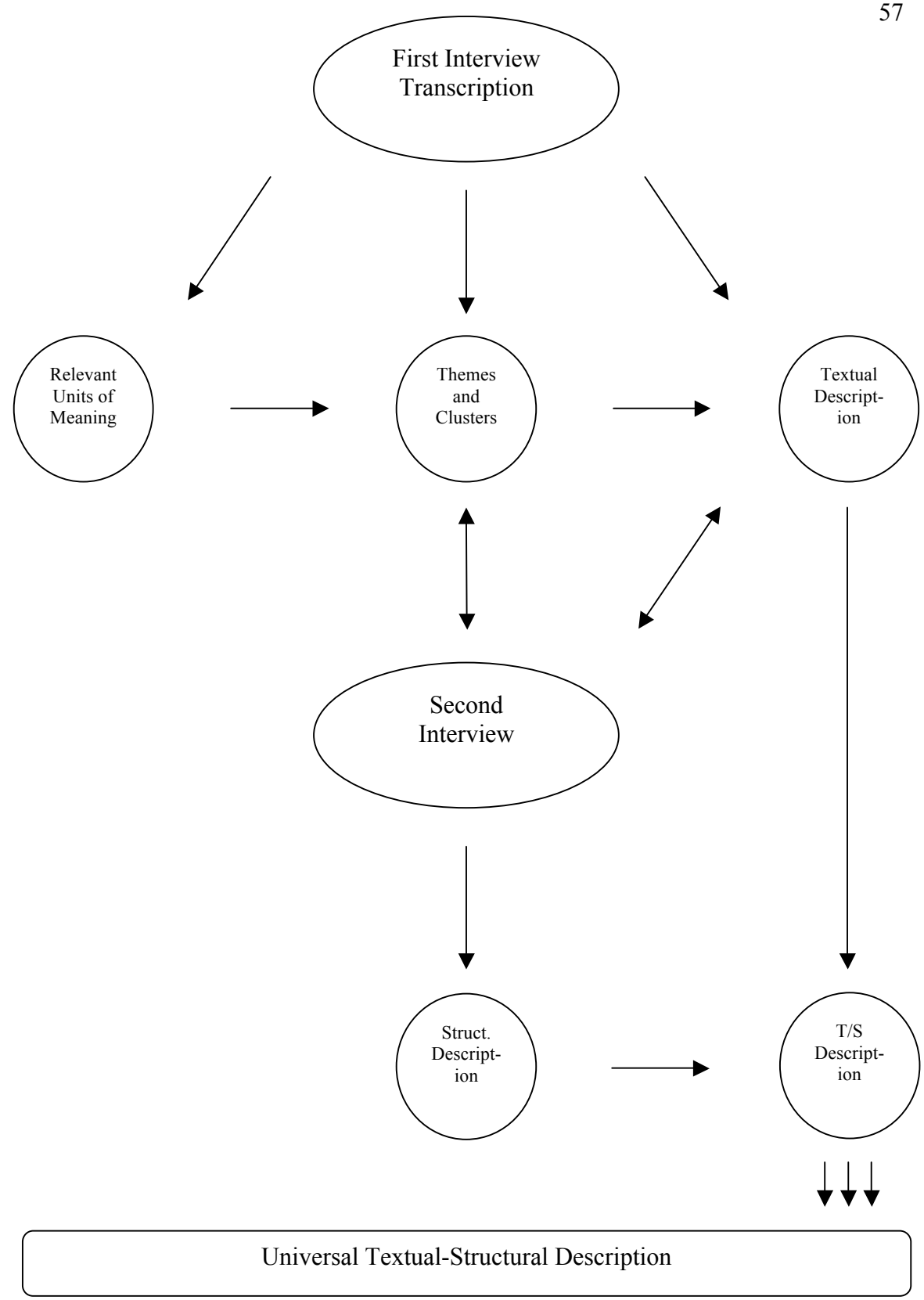

Figure 1. Data analysis procedure

Clustering and Thematizing

From the invariant constituents, the researcher clustered the meaning units into larger data units or themes. The researcher did this by relating meaning units to each other and combining interrelated meaning units (Colazzi, 1973). Polkinghorne (1989) described developing themes as a "zigzag" process whereby the researcher moves back and forth between meaning units and a hypothetical list of themes until the resulting list of themes incorporates all meaning units. Therefore since all meaning units were included, derived themes encompassed what was both common among and unique to the individual experience of being an international student. Groenewald (2004) noted that there is often overlap in the meaning clusters, but that is the nature of human experience. This step is impossible to be done according to an algorithm, but instead requires an artistic skill on the part of the researcher.

Individual Textual Descriptions

Creswell (2007) labeled the textual descriptions as the "what" of the phenomena. The researcher developed these summaries by synthesizing meaning units and themes combined with verbatim excerpts from participant interviews. In developing these descriptions, the researcher closely interacted with the interview transcripts. These summaries attempted to capture the situation, feelings, conditions, and relationships involved in the studied phenomena (Moustakas, 1994) and were the first time that the participants' words were translated into the researcher's words. The researcher attempted to do this as simply as possible by retaining the "situated character" of the participants' original descriptions and heavily relying on the participants' own words (Polkinghorne,

1989, p. 54). These descriptions were provided to the participants via e-mail before the second interview.

Individual Structural Descriptions

Creswell (2007) conceptualized the structural descriptions as the "how" of the phenomena. These descriptions focused on the settings and contexts in which being a Turkish international student was experienced. The researcher attempted to identify the underlying structures connecting the experience and go beyond appearances to the meaning of the phenomena. This transformation of the participants' experiences reflected a move away from the participants' language and transformed their experiences into expressions appropriate to the scientific discourse used in the relevant literature (Groenewald, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1989).

Individual Textual-Structural Descriptions

Textual-structural descriptions synthesize the "what" of the experience and "how" it was experienced to create the "essence" of each participant's experience as a Turkish international student. These descriptions attempted to capture the concreteness and specifics of the participants' experiences supported by verbatim quotes that reflect the feel of the participants' experiences.

Composite Textual-Structural Descriptions

The composite textual-structural descriptions were developed from the individual textual-structural descriptions and composite theme clusters. During this process, individual themes were reduced into general themes or theme clusters. Again, a "zigzag" process was used to move back and forth between individual themes and theme clusters

or the essential structures of the phenomena of being a Turkish international student (Polkinghorne, 1989). These theme clusters or essential structures were common to most or all of the participants. They were synthesized with the individual textual-structural descriptions which culminated into a description that captured the "essence" of the group's lived experiences as Turkish international students, the composite textual-structural description. This composite description and a summary of the goals of the study were e-mailed to all participants. Their feedback was requested and relevant new data were worked into the final revised composite textual-structural description.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Multiple measures were taken to ensure the credibility of this study. These measures served as a protection against events or processes that could lead to invalid conclusions (Maxwell, 2005). Strategies employed include: a clear audit trail, member checks, use of a peer reviewer, consultation with an outside expert, and rich descriptions.

Audit Trail

A test of the "correctness" of the meaning transformation performed in this study is whether one could work backward from the final descriptions to the original statements (Polkinghorne, 1989). This test was made possible by keeping written documentation of all steps of the data analysis process. At each meeting with advisors, the peer reviewer, and the outside expert, documentation of the data analysis process was available for their review. Audit checks (working from final findings to original statements) were performed throughout this study with both the researcher's advisors and peer reviewer.

Member Checks

Member checks allowed the researcher to solicit feedback from participants regarding the credibility and reliability of the researcher's interpretations and findings. They are considered the most important element of establishing credibility in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). The second interview served as a member check and allowed time for elaboration, correction, and clarifying of findings. In addition, participants were provided with transcriptions of their first interview, a textual description of their first interview, and the final composite textual-structural description of their experiences as international students. Their feedback was solicited on both what was presented and what was missing. Their reactions were incorporated into the appropriate data analyses.

Peer Reviewer

A doctoral graduate with phenomenological research experience in the counselor education and supervision department provided feedback on the data analysis process on three separate occasions. The peer reviewer recently completed her doctoral dissertation using a qualitative methodology and had taken two doctoral level qualitative research courses. The researcher met with the peer reviewer following the development of the textual descriptions but prior to the second interview with participants. Her comments were incorporated into the revised textual descriptions prior to them being provided to the participants. In addition, she met with the researcher following the development of the individual textual-structural descriptions and the final composite textual-structural descriptions. Finally, she verified the correctness of the audit trail by working backward

from the final composite textual-description to the first interview transcriptions. She completed this audit trail for two of the participants. The identities of the participants were not disclosed to the peer reviewer.

Outside Expert

The researcher met with the outside expert upon completing the individual textual descriptions. The outside expert was a Turkish national employed in the international student office. He worked directly with Turkish international students, providing support from the application process to graduation. He was in the process of completing his doctoral degree and was an expert on issues related to international study. He assessed whether the interpretations and conclusions of this study were supported by the data and his feedback was incorporated into the composite textual-structural description. This feedback provided a sense of interrater reliability to this study (Creswell, 2007). As with the peer reviewer, the identities of the participants were kept confidential from the outside expert.

Thick Descriptions

Thick, rich descriptions allow the reader to make his or her own decisions regarding the transferability of the study findings (Creswell, 2007). Due to the detail included in this report, the reader is able to apply the information to other settings and situations and decide whether findings are valid. Thorough descriptions provided a rich grounding for study conclusions (Maxwell, 2005).

Summary

This investigation aimed to answer the following research question: How do full-time single Turkish international graduate students conceptualize their experiences as international students? A qualitative phenomenological approach was deemed the most appropriate to meet this goal. This chapter detailed the methods employed to explore the lived experiences of Turkish international students. Methods for obtaining participants and conducting interviews were described. The researcher used a modified version of Moustakas' (1994) method of phenomenological data analysis. Measures used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study were explained. The following chapter presents the results of this research study.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

This chapter presents the collective results of the six participants' lived experiences as single Turkish international graduate students. The results presented are the researcher's best understanding of their perceptions, collected and analyzed using the previously described phenomenological methods. This chapter begins by first introducing the participants, their demographics and relevant background, then specifically describing the data analysis process with examples, and finally presenting the summative findings on the phenomenon of being a single graduate Turkish international student. The participants collectively described these common and salient aspects of their experience: personal growth, decisions regarding participation in the Turkish community, interactions with Americans, future career opportunities, loss of time with family and significant others, the importance of English language skills, and the significance of Turkey's political history.

Participants

The purposeful sample included six graduate students ranging in age from 24 to 38. Of the participants, one was female. All participants were from Turkey, were enrolled full-time in a graduate degree program at the same Midwestern university, were unmarried, and had completed one year of study. Table 1 presents introductory demographic information followed by a detailed profile for each participant.

Table 1

Demographic Data

Participant	Gender	Age	Degree	Academic years completed	Funding	Religious affiliation	Housing
One	Male	25	Masters	2	Personal	Muslim	Turkish Roommates—Off Campus
Two	Female	25	Doctoral	2	Assistantship	Muslim	Alone—Off Campus
Three	Male	38	Doctoral	6	Personal & Assistantship	Nonpracticing Muslim	Alone—Off Campus
Four	Male	24	Masters	2	Personal	Muslim	Alone—Dormitory
Five	Male	25	Masters	2	Personal	Muslim	Turkish Roommate—Off Campus & Other International Student Roommates—Off Campus
Six	Male	34	Doctoral	1	Turkish Scholarship	None	Alone—Dormitory & Turkish Roommate—Off Campus

Participant One

At the time of this research, participant one was a 25-year-old Turkish male nearing the end of his second and final year of his Masters. He came to study internationally through an "agreement" between his university in Turkey and the current American university. This agreement decreased the number of admission requirements and lowered tuition at the American university. He had previously lived in Germany for three years and felt this experience prepared him in some ways for the differences that he encountered in the United States.

Participant one was the first to be contacted and interviewed. Both interviews occurred in an academic classroom that the researcher reserved ahead of time. The participant was actively engaged throughout the interview and enthusiastic about the topic of the study. He was hopeful that partnerships between the United States and Turkey would continue as he felt they promised many benefits to both countries. He emphasized how the experience of being a Turkish international student is "not just about the education, but life here."

Participant one described being struck by how different the campus "environment" was compared to his university in Turkey. He provided an example of the "personal touch" he experienced through direct advising and contact with the dean. He expected "more troubles" than he experienced, and felt that if someone was "in trouble here, a Turkish person would be luckier than any other." He observed the Turkish community as having a strong support network compared to other international student

groups “because of the culture, we just hang out more.” He wondered at times if that might not be beneficial.

The participant expressed believing that Americans and Turks are “suitable to be very involved in many things, cooperate in many things” due to their relationship as political allies. He felt Turkish students had made a good “impression” at the university that would further improve that partnership. He had little contact with American students outside of class and said, “I wish I had more.” He frequently found them to be uninformed and “superstitious” about Turkey. He found himself having to correct American students on their knowledge of Turkey; particularly that Turkey is not an “Arab” country.

The participant acknowledged that he incurred some losses and took risks in coming to the United States. He sacrificed working in Turkey for two years, completing his military service and “the time” with family and friends. He described the missing of home as “a pain” that “you always have.” He took these risks with the expectation that it would pay off positively for him in terms of career opportunities in Turkey. As a result of these possibilities and his personal growth, he had no regrets.

The participant always envisioned returning to Turkey because “you miss your country.” He reported being open to “stay a little bit, at least after school,” but the aim remained to increase his cultural flexibility so he had more opportunities when he returned home to Turkey. He was intentional in traveling to different places within the United States and found it “amazing to see how a country is so many things.”

Participant Two

At the time of her interview, participant two was 25 years old in her second year of doctoral studies. She was the only female participant and also provided the longest interviews. Both interviews took place at her graduate student office, a place she reflected on as being pivotal in developing relationships during her studies. She was supportive of the research being done and volunteered names of potential participants.

Upon exploring American universities, participant two initially considered the geographical area where her long-term boyfriend was living. She then chose her university based on her familiarity and respect for the research of the professors in her department. She reflected back positively on that decision and eventually developed friendships with those professors. Of the participants, participant two was the most emphatic about the importance of developing relationships outside of the international community and emphasized that in coming to the United States "you have to be an adult and you have to be a part of this culture to survive."

Participant two was intentional in "making friendships" with American students, "separating" herself from the social patterns of most international students. She acknowledged that this decision at times caused her to feel "like I am alone," but she desired to experience and be a part of American student culture. These choices allowed her to develop a close friendship with a fellow doctoral student whom she credits for her becoming "a part of the American community." The participant emphasized that these choices were critical to improving her English and increasing her own cultural growth, ultimately improving her future career as a professor.

Participant two's relationships with friends and family at home were significantly impacted by her decision to study in the United States. She described a loss of time with family and friends and acknowledged new worries about close family members dying while she lived so far away. She surrounded herself with "family pictures" in her room to see them "all the time." In contrast, her relationship with her boyfriend improved as they were now in the same geographical area and had the shared experience of adjusting to life in the United States.

Participant two's expectations closely matched her experience and she attributed this to having visited the United States and the campus multiple times before her studies. She emphasized that seeing where you are going to live is important for new international students, particularly when the university is in a small city. She did expect things "to work perfectly in an American university," but was surprised that in many ways things were "similar to what we had in Turkey."

Despite characterizing her experience as primarily beneficial, participant two experienced many difficult emotions. She described feeling "really alone" and "isolated." She was unsure whether to credit this to being an international student, a doctoral student, or a combination of the two. As a result, she did not feel there was one person who could fully "empathize" with her experience. The participant described increased "fears." She felt less confident in interpersonal situations and "anticipating" safety issues as she was not familiar with the United States in the same way she was with Turkey.

Through both the positive and negative experiences of being in the United States, the participant felt she had become an "adult." She felt that while she had changed in some habits as a result of being here, she did so "without losing my own culture, and my own values and my own ideas." She valued being able to critically observe Turkey "from a distance." She also felt that she gained a "bigger perspective" on both Turkey and the world as a result of her international study experience.

Participant Three

At the time of his interviews, participant three was 38 years old in his fifth year of doctoral studies. Participant three had been in the United States the longest of all the participants and more than any other participant emphasized the academic rigor involved in obtaining his doctoral degree. Both interviews took place at coffee shops the participant frequented. Participant three described his experience of being a Turkish international student as the fulfillment of a lifelong "dream to be an academician."

Participant three "created a criteria set" in choosing what university to attend. He explored "cost of living" and quality of life in the university area, the pass/fail rate for comprehensive exams, program concentrations, and the number of Turkish students at the university. A reasonable pass rate ensured that his time was neither wasted nor characterized by anxiety. He did not want "too many Turks" as it could potentially inhibit the development of his English language skills. When he arrived at campus, he was shortly after followed by a large "wave" of Turkish students. Many of his requirements were informed by feedback from his brother, who had come to the United States a few years earlier to get his doctorate at another university.

The participant desired and expected his doctoral studies to be "very hard." As a result he was "generally studying," and if he was not studying it meant he was preparing himself for more studying. Despite a high TOEFL score, he approximated that he spent "five times" what a national student spent on course work. He also experienced "degrading" comments on his English writing from one professor. The difficulty of his studies also meant that "you don't have enough time to build friendship or build necessary framework for the development of your social activities" resulting in being "isolated" for much of his international student experience.

The participant acknowledged that since his arrival, he has been "changing." He described himself as more "patient" and "softened," as well as having adjusted to Americans being more "planned." He stated that the longer he remains in the United States, the more he develops "habits" such as drinking "Starbucks" that make it more difficult to return to Turkey. The participant felt that as a result of his experience and education here, he could "teach anywhere in the world" and described himself as a "world citizen" with the freedom to "go wherever I want."

The participant's deliberations on when to return to Turkey were characterized by "fluctuations." He summarized that "rationally" he wanted to stay, but "emotionally" he wanted to go home. The most significant reason for staying was "it is easier to conduct studies here" that would further his career. But "socially, Turkey is good." He had experienced "heavy pressure" from his family to come home, get married and start a family. He also had his own fears of family members dying when he was far away. Many of his Turkish friends had moved on to a different life stage than him.

Participant Four

At the time of his interviews, participant four was 24 years old and nearing the end of his second and final year in his masters. He was the youngest of all the participants. Both interviews took place at the campus student center. His interviews were the shortest of all the participants, which he attributed to his difficulties with English. Participant four came to study internationally through the previously mentioned "agreement" that provided lower tuition and fewer requirements for admission. It was the primary reason for choosing his university. Participant four described himself as different than most Turkish international students as he was not conscientious about his studies and rarely experienced homesickness. He felt that he struggled more in relationships because his English skills were "a big problem."

The most significant part of participant four's experience in the United States was adjusting to differences in American culture. He provided stories of misunderstanding in social and romantic relationships with Americans. He found American relationships to be guided by many confusing "rules." He felt American and Turkish students approached their studies differently, stating that in Turkey they looked for the "easy way" and did "minimum work." The participant missed Turkish food and living in a large city, and took the opportunity to travel to many large cities in the United States. The participant felt his personality and ability to "understand people easily" aided him in "learning a different culture."

Participant four chose to study at an American university out of a desire for more independence and control over his life. He described feeling "free" and believing he

could “live everywhere in the world.” Participant four’s post graduation choices would not be influenced by family, in keeping with his goal of increased independence. He did plan to permanently reside in Turkey.

Participant four valued coming to the United States to learn English. Because he did not know English prior to coming, he felt he experienced more challenges in relationships and was unable to “explain myself clearly.” He attempted to improve his language skills by spending time with American students, but due to his challenges with English this was “not possible.” He ended up spending the majority of his time with Turkish students. Participant four shared how the Turkish community “helped” him in a wide variety of ways, including securing his housing. In retrospect, he felt he should have taken an “English class” prior to his arrival. This would have allowed him to spend more time with Americans which he described as the “best way.”

Participant four felt that obtaining his degree in the United States would allow him to “find a job easily” in Turkey. Despite his English not improving as he would have hoped, he stated he would still be attractive to Turkish employers, who would believe “I know English” and “I know American people.”

Participant Five

At the time of participant five’s interviews, he was 25 years old nearing the completion of his second and final year in his masters. Interviews took place at an off-campus coffee shop. Similar to three other participants, participant five came to study at his American university through an agreement with his Turkish university. Although he acknowledged challenges during his studies, participant five emphasized the

value of the Turkish community and how his experiences as an international student led to significant personal growth.

When he arrived in the United States, participant five described feeling "more comfortable" than he expected, as if he was not in "so foreign" of a place. He attributed this to having previously studied in Europe. This experience provided a foundation for his belief that many aspects of different cultures are the same. He also experienced the United States to be different from both Turkey and Europe in many ways. He described persons in the United States to be "more attentive," and possess very different "attitudes" from both Europe and Turkey. Since he had been prepared by a friend about the differences in the cultures, he reported that he knew what to expect.

Another benefit of his international study was the increased career opportunities due to improved "language skills" and the attractiveness of an American graduate degree to potential employers. He shared that in Turkey an American degree is thought to be the "best in the world." He felt the "opportunity" provided by the agreement with his Turkish university and this university was something he could not pass up.

The participant received support from other international students in a variety of ways, including housing and transportation. He was assisted by a Turkish student liaison whom he stated "helps all the Turkish students here." When he first arrived he spent the majority of his time with other international students, most of whom were Turkish. The participant observed the Turkish community to be "very strong here." But, he discouraged new Turkish students from spending all their time with other Turkish students, "at least for their English skills," so they can grow in their abilities to meet life

responsibilities. As he was here longer, he needed their help less and began to see his role as helping new students. The participant felt he benefited from being Turkish and observed Turkish international graduate students to be well prepared for their studies (with the exception of English preparation) in comparison to international students from other countries. He also felt Turkish students had a "good reputation" across campus.

As his academics became more difficult and he became engaged to a non-Turkish international student, he had less time available for socializing. His fiancé was a strong supporter of his experience. She provided help with his English on course work and encouraged him to continue when he was "discouraged." This was especially valuable in changing his perspective when he experienced negative feedback about his writing skills from a professor.

The participant had been prepared that he was coming to a small city and actually felt the smaller town enabled him to complete his degree quicker as there were "not so many things to do." When his studies allowed, he did make efforts to visit other areas in the United States, such as New York City.

The participant planned to permanently reside in Turkey, but was open to staying longer in the United States dependent on "finding a job." He shared that while an American master's degree is "good" in Turkey, having work experience is seen as "wonderful." He did feel it may be difficult to find a job due to the "economic crisis" and "security clearance" related to his jobs of interest.

The participant described a consistent feeling of "homesickness" being separated from family. He was cognizant of how his family sacrificed "financially," but mostly

"emotionally" for him to come to the United States. They desired for him to start his life, including "marriage . . . grandchildren" back in Turkey. Despite this sacrifice, the participant expressed having "no regret" over his decision to study in the United States. He expressed feeling a strong sense of "pride" over what he had accomplished.

Participant Six

At the time of his interviews, participant six was 34 having just completed his first year of doctoral studies. Of the participants, he had spent the shortest amount of time as an international student. All interviews took place in his dormitory study area. He provided one of the longest interviews and emphasized the role of culture in his study experience. He chose his university due to the previously mentioned arrangement between his home university and this university, and the presence of the Turkish community. The arrangement did not give him "special privileges" within his program, but did make the admission process smoother.

Participant six valued the support from other Turkish students in the beginning of his studies as initially "you cannot speak, you cannot understand." He found the Turkish community to provide deeper friendships than he was able to develop with American students, with the disclaimer that "being Turkish doesn't mean you understand each other." Like many other participants, he cautioned Turkish students against spending all of their time together outside of the "beginning period."

While the participant found Americans to be very "kind," he did not report many "deep" relationships with them due to "communication skills." Despite this obstacle, he was intentional in spending "much more" time with American students than Turkish

students. He found that some of his preconceptions of Americans were misinformed by television, and upon arrival experienced how people across cultures share many universal characteristics.

The participant regularly experienced Americans to be uninformed or hold prejudices against Turkish and/or Muslim persons. For example, many believed Turks to be "Arab," unaware of them as a "totally different society." Being mistaken as "Arab" was particularly upsetting to participant six due to the civil rights issues and ideology found in Arab states. He expressed frustration with how American foreign policy has negatively impacted Turkey and supported this ideology that he "hates."

One of the participant's goals in coming to the United States was to increase his understanding of other cultures. He had studied Western culture, but was particularly interested in how Americans perceived themselves. He visited a range of different religious services to learn more. The participant also sought to get to know other international students and learn more about their home cultures. The participant emphasized the "treasure" in "meeting your prejudice" through "contact" with people from other cultures and coming to "love" them. He shared how as a result of these relationships he "can't see them as an enemy" despite conflict between their countries. He expressed how "kindness does not belong to one nation" as "there are bad people, but there are not bad nations."

The participant was surprised by his "difficulties" adjusting to differences in food. He traveled to a Turkish grocery store in order to access some of the foods he regularly ate at home. For example, he shared missing breakfast which is the "most important

meal" and "is like a religious ritual each morning" in Turkey. He also struggled with the "extremely cold" winters in this area.

One of the participant's major career goals in coming to study in the United States was to observe and study how particular civil rights issues are handled and then to apply those methods in Turkey. He was "impressed" with some of the policies in place regarding civil rights, whereas at home in Turkey he felt they were "not enough." He hoped to "examine other countries, developed countries" and how they "fight" for those improved rights. The participant felt that his education in the United States provided an opportunity for him to increase his knowledge of a "scientific approach" for "data analysis" on which to base his arguments. In addition, he wanted to gain "an understanding of different state arrangements, state conceptions, and public policy conceptions" to further impact change in Turkey. He felt it was critical for him to attend a university where English was spoken for future career possibilities. He did plan to permanently reside in Turkey, but may travel around the United States before returning.

Data Analysis

While each of the above participants described unique aspects of their experience, significant elements were found to be common across the participants. As the goal of this research is to articulate what that common "essence" is, subsequent sections describe the proposed phenomenon of being a Turkish international graduate and show how those conclusions were reached. Examples of the data analysis process are provided.

Transcriptions

To promote accuracy, the researcher began transcribing immediately following the first interview. Upon completion, each participant was e-mailed a copy of his or her transcript to allow time to read and prepare for the second interview. At the second interview, all participants affirmed that their transcript was an accurate representation of the first meeting.

Individual Significant Statements and Invariant Constituents

The researcher repeatedly read through the transcripts to identify relevant statements to the phenomena being studied. These statements were placed into a Microsoft® Word document and redundant statements were removed, resulting in a list of invariant constituents for each participant. Table 2 provides an example of an invariant constituent for each participant related to their thoughts about returning to Turkey.

Table 2

Participant Invariant Constituents

Participant	Invariant constituent
One	You miss your country—that is the key thing.
Two	You are still an alien here.
Three	Recently, last month, I am moving towards going back.
Four	I would like to stay a little bit longer.
Five	But, end of my plans, absolutely, I will be in Turkey.
Six	I will go back.

Individual Themes and Clusters

By grouping related meaning units, the researcher developed an initial list of themes for each participant. Using a zigzag process (Polkinghorne, 1989), the researcher moved back and forth between the invariant constituent list and themes to ensure that all invariant constituents were represented in the themes list. In addition, the researcher continued to read through the transcript to remain faithful to the interview. This was the first step away from the exact wording of the participants. Table 3 provides examples of themes as related to thoughts on returning to Turkey.

Individual Textual Descriptions

The researcher composed textual descriptions to articulate the "what" of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007). The researcher used many verbatim quotes, referring frequently to the interview transcript. These descriptions were then e-mailed to the participants to prepare for the second interview. At the second interview, all participants verified that this was an accurate summary of the interview. One participant shared his intent to keep the description as a memento of his experience, saying it was "like a story—I loved it." Another shared how the description made his thoughts "real."

In the second interview, the participants elaborated on previously discussed topics. If new ideas or changes in meaning were introduced, that information was included in the revised individual textual description. Participant two gave feedback on how to clarify the description of discrimination she had experienced. She also provided further information on her relationships with her family and boyfriend, advice to new students coming in, cultural change, and observations of the Turkish community.

Table 3

Individual Participant Themes

Participant	Themes
One	The participant would like to stay for a few years upon graduation. Staying depends on finding a job. The participant misses his country and so plans to return.
Two	The decision to return to Turkey is a continued area of fluctuation for the participant. Prior to arriving, the participant intended to return to Turkey in as short a time as possible. Visiting Turkey and seeing the negative aspects of her culture from an outside perspective has prompted her to consider staying in the US longer. Participant has been making more long-term roots in the US. Participant feels she has more freedom and opportunities in the US. She recognizes that a negative part of staying in the US could be experiencing prejudicial attitudes and feeling like an alien.
Three	The participant's decision to return home to Turkey has changed many times. The most important reason the participant considers staying is that he feels it is easier to conduct research in the US. The participant's family is encouraging him to return home The participant feels that socially things are much better in Turkey.
Four	The participant's family would like him to return to Turkey upon finishing and join a family business. The participant is considering staying longer in the US and does not want to be in the family business. The participant plans to permanently live in Turkey
Five	Whether the participant stays longer in the US is dependent on finding a job. It is difficult for the participant to find a job due to his major and the current economic crisis. Working post graduation impacts the amount of military service the participant must do. Having US work experience is highly desirable for improving his career options in Turkey. The participant plans to permanently live in Turkey.

(*table continues*)

Table 3 (continued)

Individual Participant Themes

Participant	Themes
Six	The participant has a goal to go back to Turkey and advocate for improved civil rights. The participant would like to spend a brief time traveling in the US before returning home permanently.

Participant three provided further clarification on his relationships with both American and Turkish students. Participant five described more fully the continuum of cultural differences between Turkey, Europe, and the United States. Participant six shared his observations on how people are socialized by their home culture, and the political history between the United States and Turkey. To further show the transformation of data, selected excerpts from the revised textual descriptions of the participant are provided below.

Participant One on Personal Change

Prior to coming here, the participant had "never lived alone." Due to this change, he discussed having to "increase my responsibilities with life . . . developing myself in terms of many things." He described this as a "good" thing, as he was unsure he could have "gained that much experience" if he had remained in Turkey. As a result, he felt "if I have to go another place, I wouldn't have any fear."

Participant Two on Losses

The participant conceptualized her losses in terms of "missing time" with family and friends. Other than her closest friends and family, she shared how "you don't have communication." After a late class, she stated, "I just want to go home . . . and see my mom, my dad, or my sister." She felt an increased fear of someone in her family dying, as she suspected it would feel worse being far away. She had increasingly missed her aunt and grandparents who passed away before she moved, as compared to how she felt when she was still in Turkey. She wondered if this was due to "being alone" and "thinking about my family and the good times I've spent with them" and then

"remembering people that I lost." She stated, "I'm not losing them, but I'm afraid of losing them because of the distance." The participant did note that she felt she had "a lot of benefits and good things happening in my life, instead of bad things or losses."

Participant Three on Significant Feelings

Despite being very "tired" as a result of the demands of his studies, the participant was "happy" and felt "no regrets." Teaching confirmed to the participant the large amount that he had learned. He felt proud that he had obtained an "admirable" and "excellent" education.

Participant Four on Detractors to Experience

The participant reported, "I like it here except for the weather." He felt that his English skills prevented him from "explaining myself better." As a result of this, in interactions with Americans he felt that "something is missing" and he feared he made them "bored."

Participant Five on Expectations

The participant found that "daily life" was "better" than his expectations. This was particularly aided by being able to buy a car. While he acknowledged that the city he lived in was "small," he felt that this was beneficial to studying and finishing his "degree earlier" as there are "not so many things to do." He did note being surprised by the regularity of the student academic schedule as "final times, they are studying" and "free time, they are enjoying." He described things as "absolutely different" in Turkey, citing that "finals time" was not "so exact." The participant also noticed a difference in the "knowledge" and teaching approaches of the American professors. He shared that

Turkish professors are often more "knowledgeable" of "theory" including many difficult "calculations" and "formulas." He observed American professors to focus more on the "practical" and "how you understand."

Participant Six on Advice to Peers

The participant reported that already "every day" he is giving advice to friends considering studying in the United States. His biggest advice was to "improve your English" and "mathematical skills." He also offered feedback to universities about the need for more "international student activities" as he observed many international students to "feel alone." He cautioned Turkish students against spending all of their time with Turks, outside of the "beginning period" in adjusting. He stated that "education does not only consist of classes."

Individual Structural Descriptions

Using the transcripts, formulated themes, and the textual descriptions, the researcher composed structural descriptions to highlight the structures through which the participants experienced being an international student. In phenomenological literature, structural descriptions are frequently referred to as the "how" of the experience (Creswell, 2007). These descriptions also signified a departure from the participants' words (Groenewald, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1989). Selected excerpts are provided below to provide a sense of how the data were transformed.

Participant One and Relationships With International Students

The participant reported that the large majority of his social relationships were with other international students, both Turkish and non-Turkish. Turkish students were

critical in aiding the participant in finding housing, finding transportation, and getting acclimated to living in the States. He reported the Turkish community was very active in organizing regular social activities for themselves. He observed the Turkish community to have a strong support network as compared to other international student groups. After Turkish students, he was most likely to have contact with international students from other countries, as opposed to American students with whom he had little contact outside of class.

Participant Two and Relationships With Professors

The participant chose to come to this university in part due to knowledge of a specific professors' research. Upon coming, she was struck by the personal and collegial relationship that students had with their professors. She described being initially uncomfortable when they asked her to call them by their first name. She shared how they asked for her perspective on topics and encouraged her to look at issues critically.

Participant Three and Social Isolation

The participant described being socially isolated throughout his international student experience. He attributed this to the large amount of time his program required, English being his second language and the small city being a "small place." He chose to limit his time with other Turkish students, for the sake of his English language skills. He experienced Americans to be friendly, but not invested in developing friendships. He also encountered prejudice from Americans and found them generally to be uninformed about Turkey. He felt that this social isolation ultimately decreased his productivity in his academic work due to being overly tired and feeling alone.

Participant Four and the Turkish Community

The participant shared how the Turkish community was very helpful in getting him settled, particularly with finding housing. Although he felt it was advisable to spend more time with American students, he spent the majority of his time with other Turkish students. The majority of his time was spent on campus or going out to local bars. He also traveled to larger cities within the United States. The participant did feel he may be different than most Turkish students as he did not miss home.

Participant Five and Personal Change

As a result of living in a new culture, the participant felt he was significantly changed. By coming to another culture, he gained a better understanding of people. Being in the United States provided him an opportunity to meet not just Americans, but a large number of other international persons. He described this experience as requiring "bravery" and resulted in giving him a new worldview. He also felt he had grown in his ability to manage the details of his life.

Participant Six and Challenges Related to Independence

The participant came to study in the United States as an act of independence, as his family did not want him to come. He connected this to a pattern of overcoming in his life and was proud of his decision to come here. At the same time, due to not having a car and issues with language, he felt he experienced a loss of independence. He experienced disrespect from some Americans as a result of his accent. But as his English improved and he made plans to get a car, he believed this would improve in the next school year.

Individual Textual-Structural Descriptions

The final transformation of the individual data was the individual textual-structural description. This description represented the "essence" of each participant's experience (Creswell, 2007). Excerpts from the introduction of each participant's description are provided below, to show how the participants' own words were combined with the structures that permeated each participant's experience.

Participant One

The experience of being a Turkish international student is "not just about the education, but life here." This participant described his experience in the context of his relationships with the university "procedures" and "organization," his relationship with other "internationals," the "Turkish community," the process of "developing myself," potential risks and "opportunities" associated with his decision to study in the United States, and plans upon graduation.

Participant Two

The participant emphasized that in coming to the United States "you have to be an adult and you have to be a part of this culture to survive." She described her own experience in the context of her relationships with her professors, American students, Turkish students, significant others, her expectations prior to coming, "loneliness" and "fear," and how she "became an adult."

Participant Three

The participant described his experience of being a Turkish international student as "getting what I dreamed before" in an "excellent education." He explained this in the

context of his career expectations, "criteria set" in choosing a university, the "difficulties" of doctoral studies, feelings of "isolation," improving English skills, the process of "changing," and his decision on when he will return to Turkey.

Participant Four

In coming here to "write my own life" as a graduate Turkish international student, the participant described his experience in the context of adjusting to "cultural differences," his academic pursuits, increasing his independence, improving his English, relationships with other Turkish students, and hopes of "more jobs" upon returning to Turkey.

Participant Five

As a result of his international study, the participant shared that he is "absolutely different" and has "no regrets" over his decision to come to the United States. He described his experience in the context of his reaction to American culture, his own growth learning how to "manage my life" and a changed "worldview," increased career opportunities, living in a small college town, experiencing differences in the classroom, benefiting from the positive reputation of the Turkish community, his plans on returning, and feelings of "homesickness" and "pride" that have characterized his experience.

Participant Six

The participant's decision to study in the United States was "an important fight for me." He described his experience in the context of his relationship with the Turkish community, relationship with Americans, facing prejudice and misinformation about

Turkey, "difficulties" missing cultural aspects of home, his hopes for his future career in Turkey, and challenges related to his independence.

Composite Textual-Structural Description

A composite textual-structural description (Appendix F) was sent via e-mail (Appendix G) to the participants. E-mail responses to this summary description included: "I saw the points that I had raised during our meeting. So I would say it is consistent with my experience;" "Approved . . . good work;" "I think it is very well. I agree with the idea that every part, either concerning with my experience or others', is well stated;" "Impressed with your work [that] within these two pages you could summarize all aspects of our understanding. That is a great work. I should congratulate you." The participants suggested no revisions. No e-mail responses were received from participants one and four. It is suspected that as they were close to graduation, they had returned to Turkey and were no longer checking their university e-mail.

Themes

The identification of common themes was guided by the research question: How do full-time single Turkish international students conceptualize their experiences as international students? This section more fully elaborates on the themes identified in the composite textual-structural description, as well as provides support from the participants. The themes found to be common and salient aspects of the participants' experiences included: growth, decisions regarding participation in the Turkish community, interactions with Americans, future career opportunities, loss of time with

family and friends, the importance of English language skills, and the history and culture of Turkey.

Growth

The participants emphasized that as a result of their international study they experienced growth. The type of growth they articulated was specific to three main areas: growth through risk taking, growth in managing life tasks, and growth resulting from encountering other cultures.

Growth through risk taking. The decision to study overseas, far from family and friends, was one that the participants described as requiring "bravery" and "courage." The participants were aware that some loss would accompany their decision and many were prepared by other Turkish persons who had gone before them. In fact, participant one described overestimating the challenges and actually experienced "less troubles" than anticipated. The types of loss varied across participants. Examples of loss experienced included: finances, missed time with loved ones, delaying working, challenges adjusting to a new culture, difficult feelings of loneliness and fear, experiencing prejudice, decreased health, missing cultural aspects of home, and the fear that their high career expectations would not be met.

When each participant was asked about loss, they all stated without prompting that they had "no regrets" in light of what they were gaining. They explained the absence of regrets in different ways. Participant one explained it, "You have to take risks in life to gain something," but felt he had gained "more experiences than anyone could have." Similarly, participant two stated, "I can definitely say that I have a lot of benefits and

good things happening in my life, instead of bad things." Participant three stated, "I knew that it is very hard, but that is what I wanted." Participant four believed that risk "is life." Participant five expressed, "I mean I gained so many good things. If I one day come back to my country, I can't say negative things about this period in my life. It will always be good, helpful and I gained skills here. Everything." Finally, participant six shared that "of course it is difficult, but I can bear it." Their decisions to study in the United States were a deliberate weighing of costs and benefits, and they believed that taking the risk would ultimately pay off. The choice also left them feeling a sense of pride that they had done something very difficult. As they reflected, each one shared feeling proud of what they had achieved and expected to achieve.

It was also generally believed that the courage taken to endeavor to study overseas would be attractive to future employers. Participant five stated, "It will be easier to find a position in my country" because living in a "foreign place, I think it shows a person is brave." Participants one and four also described how studying overseas would increase the "trust" future employers would have in them as a result of the range of experiences they had.

Growth in managing life tasks. The participants described growth in managing their lives. Although most had lived independently in Turkey, the proximity of family and friends was still a consistent support when needed. Through being at such a geographical distance from their support network, they experienced truly being on their own and solely responsible for managing their life tasks. Some described this process as moving them into a true adulthood, while others described it as a quest for more

independence. Table 4 provides excerpts describing this growth process. Participant three did not articulate this theme in the same way, but did describe the experience of being "isolated." Possible reasons for this may be that he was the oldest of the participants and had already lived at a distance from family for an extended period of time, and as a result had already experienced this type of growth. This possible explanation is based on his report that

> Before coming here from late 1998 to 2003—four, five years I was in the professional life of the university away from my family. I was in Istanbul and they were in Ankara. I was visiting them [once] in [a] month or in two months. So in here, once in a year, but we are talking on telephone once in a week, sometimes two, sometimes twice in a week.

Growth resulting from encountering other cultures. The participants shared that they experienced growth as a result of "contact" with other cultures. Their growth was not just a result of interacting with North American culture, but also international students from all over the world. Multiple participants described the American university as a very "international" place and observed that the university frequently did not take advantage of that resource. The participants described three aspects of cultural growth: observing their own culture from a distance, seeing universals and differences in people across cultures, and growing in cultural competence. Not all three types of cultural growth were reported by each of the participants. Table 5 illustrates the type of cultural growth experienced by each participant.

Table 4

Description of Managing Life Tasks

Participant	Narrative description
One	Well, I think I had great experience with life. I never lived alone before, without my family. I'm having lots of experiences staying alone. Responsibilities in a house. We have to deal with lots of things, unlike dorms. There are many things to deal with and a house and procedures. So I have my own car, which I did not have before—to take care of these things. Because I'm living alone, I have to increase my responsibilities with life—looking for a job, developing myself in terms of many things. That's been good.
Two	Because I live alone, I handled everything by myself, in ****** at least. It was still good to experience being alone.
Four	Yes, I changed. Actually, I didn't live with my family long. And I would like to come here because in life things are up to me. I would like to arrange my life.
Five	But also I gained how, how to manage my life. All by myself. Especially economically, financially. Even though my family supports me, I have to do, I have to lose something. Yes, I have to budget. In my country, it's not like that. I have, for example, pocket money and if I finish it I can go home. I don't eat out. But, here is not that [way]. I learned to, of course here, if I need money I can call my parents and they will send [it]. But, it's not good to ask. I don't want to.
Six	My family didn't want me to come here, because they thought that I am ****** and I can't stay alone and that's really difficult. Yes, that's a very important fight for me.

Note. Asterisks were used to replace identifying information.

Table 5

Cultural Growth by Type

Participant	Seeing from a Distance	Facing Cultural Universals/Difference	Growing Competence
One		X	X
Two	X	X	X
Three	X	X	X
Four		X	X
Five	X	X	
Six	X	X	

The experience of seeing Turkey "from a distance" was both valuable and difficult. Participant five stated:

> There is a word, a saying in Turkey that "who sees more places, knows better than who reads more." I believe that is absolutely right and I see when I go to my country, when I talk to other friends who haven't been outside, abroad before, I can see, I can feel how I am different. Then in that sense, it gave me very positive things.

Participant two shared the experience of being challenged by professors to critically evaluate the political history of Turkey, and described this opportunity as a "freedom" as in American classrooms "you are supposed to challenge, critically think." She also expressed that in returning home for visits, "I'm an outsider going, I'm just

visiting my country and just a visitor." Often this experience caused the participants to only see negatives when they returned home. Participant three expressed, "I visit Turkey and I remember the good things here and I compare here and there." But as participant one observed, "Some things are better, some things are worse in terms of behavior, in terms of culture."

Participant one's statement reflects the shared experience of comparing cultures. Participant six valued this "contact" with other cultures and emphasized the value of having one's preconceptions challenged. The participants noted many cultural differences, but also experienced how across nations there are universal characteristics. Participant four expressed that "sometimes it was really hard for me to understand American relationships." Participant five expressed how people are both "the same," and "absolutely different." Participant six anticipated this experience and stated, "I had some idea about different cultures. I enforced it. I know that people are the same in certain things."

This development translated to four of the participants reporting they would be comfortable going "anywhere in the world." Participant three described seeing himself as a "world citizen." Their experiences provided them increased cultural flexibility and "freedom" in future plans.

Decisions Regarding Participation in Turkish Community

Every participant discussed making a decision regarding their level of participation in the Turkish community. Decisions were most frequently based on English language skills and whether to access more diverse cultural experiences,

frequently conceptualized as part of their educational experience. Because the campus had a sizeable Turkish community, multiple levels of involvement were possible. The participants' decisions ranged on a continuum, and are discussed in descending order of involvement.

Participant four. Despite believing that spending time with Americans was preferable, participant four reported it was "not possible" for him to spend the majority of his time with Americans due to his limited English skills. He reported some American student relationships, but most of his time was spent with other Turkish students. The Turkish community was helpful in securing housing and getting settled into the United States.

Participant one. Participant one described the Turkish community as the "biggest supporter" of his adjustment and experience. He reported that they "helped with everything you can imagine." He felt Turkish relationships were more natural because "even if you make very good friends here, you can't just, for example, express your feelings and everything." Participant two described the Turkish community as very active in organizing regular social activities such as "picnics" and soccer "tournaments." The majority of his friends were Turkish graduate students, but there were many other Turkish students on campus that he did not know. He also reported relationships with other international students as a result of his involvement with the International Student Office, but observed Turkish students to spend more time together than other cultures.

Participant five. Upon arrival, the Turkish community was instrumental in helping participant five get settled, helping him secure housing and transportation. He

described the Turkish community as "very strong here." But, his involvement with the community was concentrated at the earlier part of his studies. As he was here longer, he needed less support, his studies demanded more time, and he entered a romantic relationship with another international student. He transitioned to spending time with the Turkish community on "special days." He asserted, "I don't want to hear Turkish" due to the possibility of impeding his English language development, an important reason for coming to the United States.

Participant six. The presence of a large Turkish community on campus was influential when participant six chose what university to attend. He described them as helpful in getting acclimated on campus, particularly as he needed time to begin to develop his English skills. Due to the common language, it was easier to develop deeper relationships with Turkish students. Participant six also shared observations that those relationships were not without conflict and found that Turkish students could be "proud" when they had particularly good English skills. Despite his initial involvement with the Turkish community, participant six was intentional in getting to know individuals from many different cultures. He described plans to immerse himself in other cultures in future semesters.

Participant three. In contrast to participant six, participant three was concerned that there not be "too many Turks" as "it is not good for your improvements in your English language." He was initially told there were only a moderate number of Turkish students, so when a large number of Turkish students arrived behind him this was a "bad memory" for him. Initially he did spend more time with other Turkish students, but then

made an intentional choice to not spend extensive time with other Turkish students as it was not "desirable" for his language development, which was critical to his future career as an academician and ability to conduct research. He also described multiple subcultures within the Turkish community that made friendships more challenging.

Participant two. Participant two chose to limit her contact with other Turkish international students and stated, "I don't want a Turkish group." She believed by isolating oneself to just Turkish international students, one missed many important aspects of the international experience and ultimately increased one's difficulty with "daily life." Despite this, the participant reported that she was always available if another Turkish student needed assistance. She also had close contact with her boyfriend, who had moved here from Turkey six years ago as an international student. He helped her significantly in "everything" adjusting to the United States, such as taxes and buying a car.

Commonalities. While each of the participants came to different conclusions regarding participation in the Turkish community, commonalities were present. Each participant reported they would advise new students to limit time with other Turkish students as it could be detrimental to English skills. Even participant four, who was highest on the continuum of involvement, stated, "they shouldn't hang out with Turkish guys." All the participants identified at least one other significant Turkish person who was helpful in "mentoring" them as they adjusted to American culture. Four identified a Turkish student employed in the international student office, whereas participant two identified her boyfriend and participant three his older brother. Regardless of

involvement in the community, the participants described a willingness to help new students get adjusted.

Patterns in the responses also were noted. The three participants least involved in the Turkish community were the doctoral students. There could be multiple reasons for this, including the demanding nature of doctoral studies, increased maturity among doctoral students, longer program length, and a greater need of English skills related to their research. In addition, the participant least involved in the community was the only female participant. No reasons were suggested for this by the participant, but it is possible gender impacted relationship patterns.

Interactions With Americans

Whereas the participants consistently described Americans to be "kind" or "friendly," only participant two described a close relationship with an American student. Although this may seem to be in conflict with above statements that emphasized the importance of spending time with nationals or English speaking persons, the participants encountered barriers to those relationships. Barriers encountered included lack of contact out of the classroom, cultural differences, difficulty communicating and understanding at a deeper level, time commitments related to academics, and American students' lack of knowledge related to Turkey. One participant shared the extreme example of being asked whether Turkish persons still rode "camels." The most frequent misconception mentioned was being referred to as "Arab" or "Middle Eastern." This was particularly upsetting as it showed that American students were unaware that Turkey was democratic and secular. In addition, the participants also experienced prejudicial references to

"terrorists" or "Al-Qaeda." These experiences were reminders to the participants that they were "aliens" and possibly contributed to all of the participants expecting to live permanently in Turkey, even if they chose to remain for a period of time after graduation for work experience. Table 6 provides some of the participants' descriptions of their interactions with Americans to illuminate the patterns in those relationships.

In addition to relationships with individuals, the participants also spoke to their experience in coming to their particular American city. They frequently commented that it was "small," but emphasized that one needed to understand they are not just coming to this city, but the United States as a whole. The participants were intentional in traveling to other parts of the United States, most often large cities.

Future Career Opportunities

The most frequently identified reason for studying in the United States was "increased job opportunities." There were multiple reasons that studying in the United States was "effective" at increasing job potential. Across all the participants two major reasons were identified: the prestige associated with American universities and improved English skills. The doctoral students also discussed the productive research environment.

The participants shared how American universities are perceived to be the best in the world by many Turkish citizens. Participant three stated, "in my country to get a degree from the USA is very prestigious. It is not only prestigious, but also the content. I know that education is the best here, so because of these two reasons—content and shape." Because of this perception by Turkish persons, the American university attended did not have to be a "top" university in the United States. Participant five explained this:

Table 6

Description of Relationships With Americans

Participant	Narrative description
One	I wasn't spending lots of time with them. If I talk to an American, I mean, I'm sure the same thing is for everybody, there is a way of talking about a particular topic, in English, you can't express it, the way it is, because of the culture and feelings, telling something, you can't feel the same, as you talking to a Turkish person.
Two	We became best friends in the very beginning of the semester, and he helped me a lot in the process, and I can say he is the one that helped me, and who, you know listened to me and made me not an international student, but part of the American community here. He's an American student. Even though I don't have a physical difference, people understand when I start talking, right, because I have an accent, and you can see that change. That's interesting.
Three	They (some classmates he encountered) don't like Middle Easterners. We are not defining ourselves as Middle Easterners, but because of your skin color and sometimes they think you are Arab, so anyways, these sorts of negative feelings from locals. In Mediterranean culture, even if you are on a bus, you can start a friendship immediately. In here, you need maybe one month to be a friend of an American guy, or a semester.
Four	Sometimes it is really hard for me to understand American relationships. In Turkey, we say, "tomorrow we will meet at 5 or something." In Turkey, everyone comes. This is set. In here people say, "Okay we can meet." Tomorrow, there's no one there. Sometimes, I don't understand why. For example, give me a phone number and don't answer?
Five	People are more attentive to each other here. People say, "Hi, good morning, goodbye" or smile to each other. Because of orientation, I was mostly with the international group . . . We went somewhere to meet with Americans.
Six	Americans are kind, much more than I expected. They are friendly, but I don't have very deep, deep friends. But that is normal, because it is related to your communication skills. Without good communication skills, you cannot make a deep friend. Some Americans ask me weird questions about my society and country. They suppose us Arab. They don't know the differences, how we are a totally different society.

> People don't ask which university in the United States. They ask, they think directly, oh United States, you have master's degree from United States . . . In world rankings, for universities, even the best Turkish universities are not in the first five hundred. So this university, maybe it's not so big, not so good university in the United States comparable to others. Average. It's in the first five hundred, like two hundred fifty/sixty. So even if they ask, they can't say any bad things about the university, because it is in the United States and all the best universities in this world are in the United States. Then I thought, "It will be very effective after I go back to my country."

English skills were also directly linked to obtaining jobs and success in those jobs. Participant two shared how improved English skills are important for her future career as a university professor. She stated:

> I want my English to be perfect when I go back home. Because that's what happens when, for example, we have professors in Turkey. They all get their education in the US, but don't speak English. I don't want to be that professor. I want my English to be perfect, as much as possible, you know? When I go back to Turkey, I have to teach my students how to speak, how to write in English.

Similarly, participant six stated:

> I always wanted to finish a PhD program in the United States or England. I just want a place where English language is the native language. I wanted to improve my English skills because my true prospects, my future projections are related to

> skills, English skills. That's the main reason. Not life of United States or I didn't have any dream.

Participant three had a different approach, but still emphasized the importance of perceived English skills in obtaining a job. He stated, "When I go back to Turkey, I can find a job easily. They think that I know English."

The doctoral students emphasized the research opportunities in the United States. Participant two shared that how to meet her career goals she had to go outside of Turkey. She stated, "If you want to be a professor in a university, you have to go outside of Turkey. This is something that all my professors told me back in Turkey." As mentioned earlier, she then chose her program based on the research of the professors at her university. Participant three shed light on this by discussing the difference in research environments between the American and Turkish universities, as related to his decision on whether to stay longer:

> The most critical point of why I think to stay is it is easier to conduct studies here—materially and in terms of environments. Environment makes you, stimulates you to study. In Turkey, you are turning into a lazy person because nobody works as is the case in here. Because everybody is relaxed, so you are not getting in the mood for study. Yes, research availability and environment—your research chances are good here. That is the reason.

Participant six spoke to his specific research and why he wanted to do it in the United States. He stated:

> I'm going to gain an understanding about different state arrangements, state conceptions and public policy conceptions. And another thing is that what I really want to gain is the education is more factual in United States, not your opinions . . . Let's say I'm going to gain a scientific approach. More scientific approach in the United States.

Because of these high expectations for their careers, there is a possibility those expectations will not be met. Participant one expressed it in this way:

> Well, I sacrificed. I could have started working in Turkey. I sacrificed that. I took some risks to come over here. I could be working for two years. You know we have to serve in the military. I could have done that. Now it's just not clear if I'm going to make it up. So that's a big risk. If I don't make it up, it will be bad. Of course, I think it will be an advantage to still have a Masters degree in the United States, but if I still can't reach the expectations I've imagined it will be a loss for me.

Some participants also hoped for post-graduate work experience in the United States and this desire played a role in the participants' decisions on when to return to Turkey. They believed work experience to be very desirable to future employers, but due to the current job market were unsure about their ability to obtain employment. Many described their plans as "fluctuating" and dependent on whether they were able to "find a job" here. But, the pressure from family to return home, "get married," and start a family was a motivator for returning home sooner.

Loss of Time With Family and Significant Others

When asked about the losses they had experienced, the participants were acutely aware of the lost time with family and friends. When those relationships were not with family, this lost time could result in lost relationships. Some linked this lost time to a fear that significant others would die while they were overseas. For others, it was a "pain" that "you always have." Only participant four specifically stated that he did not experience missing home, but identified himself as being different than other Turkish international students in this regard. Table 7 provides specific comments from the participants related to this theme.

The participants used various methods of coping to address these feelings, including putting up pictures of family, phone calls, time with other Turkish students, engaging in Turkish cultural activities, and visits from family. Consistent across all the participants that experienced "missing the time," they emphasized that they did not have "regrets" as they expected the benefits of their decision to outweigh these losses.

The Importance of English Language Skills

As seen in all the previous themes, English language skills were a salient factor for many aspects of the participants' experiences. As a result, the theme of English language skills had the most overlap with other themes. Across time, English language skills played a determining role in past decisions regarding whether to study in the United States, the current experiences socially and in the classroom, and future career expectations.

Table 7

Description of Loss of Time With Family and Significant Others

Participant	Narrative description
One	Because you are getting older and you are out of your country, you have the feeling that you are missing something, because you are abroad. That is a feeling you always have. I think all of the people have this kind of feeling. You miss some things, I mean, not only your family, you just miss the time. It's something that got stolen from you.
Two	I am losing my friends . . . Another thing could be missing my time that I can spend with my family. I fear that if I lose my mom or dad or sister, you know, I don't know. It's really bad being here then, because my friend here lost her dad. And I saw her pain. It was so bad. I don't know whether it will be less if you are living with them. It's a little bit different.
Three	We are talking on the phone once a week, sometimes twice in a week. So maybe I am a little far, sometimes, yes, that makes me unhappy because they are now early sixties. So sometimes, I am thinking what if they die when I am here? That makes me sad.
Four	I'm not like the other people. For example, I don't miss my country much.
Five	It's hard, kind of homesick sometimes. I mean, you only have friends here. You don't have family. You know, family is different. Maybe some people don't care so much about their family. I mean they can live separate for a long time, but for me it's hard. I mean I don't think every day about them, but it's kind of like sports for me. If they are near me, I have a better mood. And you don't have to worry about them, you are near. But, when you are far from them, they are sometimes hiding something. You are asking, "What happened?" They don't want to say so they don't make you sad.
Six	Broken up. My relationship is finished. I compensated by thinking, "If it's real, it lasts."

Table 8 organizes the aspects of the experiences as related to English language skills for each participant. Participants identified how the reputation of attending a university in the United States was compounded by the benefit of improved English language skills. For many, this was the determining factor in choosing to study in the United States. Upon arrival, the participants found that having English as a second language increased the time needed for coursework as much as "five times" that of native

Table 8

Impact of English Language Skills by Category

Participant	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six
University Choice	X	X	X	X	X	X
Social Relationships	X	X	X	X	X	X
Academic Experience		X	X	X	X	X
Disrespect			X		X	X
Career Expectations		X	X	X	X	X

language speakers. As highlighted earlier, English skills were frequently the deciding factor in whether participants spent time with American or Turkish students, the level of depth in those relationships or whether studies even allowed time for socialization. Some participants were treated with disrespect related to language skills, such as professors being highly "critical" and "degrading," or service providers being "rude" due to language difficulties. Finally, the participants anticipated that their improved English skills would manifest in increased career opportunities in Turkey.

The Context of Turkish History and Culture

Although not present for all participants, four of the participants framed their experiences in the context of Turkish history and culture. These participants repeatedly described their experiences and then cited support from a historical event or cultural practice in Turkey. Many participants cited being "proud" of being Turkish and their

"strong cultural history," believing it to be a strong supporter of their experiences. These contextual descriptions are discussed as related to three of the previous themes.

G**rowth.** Participants one, three, and six all cited the immigration of Turkish citizens to Germany as background for understanding growth through experiencing another culture. Participant one described how his experience living in Germany prepared him for some of the change he experienced studying in another country. For participant six, his experience in Germany was where he first experienced that "every people around the world are the same—their expectations, their hope, their fear—the same." These beliefs were confirmed again in his experience in the United States. Participant three described it this way:

> This is also known for most Turks because Turkey sent many immigrants to Germany or other parts of Europe, during late fifties, sixties or seventies . . . .So, in every village, every city, every town, everybody knows at least one immigrant Turk who is in Germany or Europe. So everybody knows that after some time, 5 or 10 years, actually they visit every year, but after some time they got more Europeanized or something like that . . . Anyway, the point was Turks have an observation about other Turks having been abroad, Europe or other countries, and the difference, how they change. So because of this earlier experience, if you are abroad you are going to change, I know that I changed.

For participant three, being in a different cultural environment increased "freedom" to talk and think differently about sensitive issues like the Turkish Armenian conflict. Although there were "venues" where she could have this conversation in

Turkey, she observed differences in the classroom as "you are supposed to challenge" and engage in "critical thinking." She contrasted this with the past where "I was writing reaction papers . . . but I wasn't that critical before."

Relationships with Americans. Referring to the Turkish immigration of citizens to Germany, participant one shared how many Germans who encountered Turkish persons there did not truly understand "Turks." As a result when German persons visited Turkey they were "surprised." Participant one saw his role with American students similarly. He stated, "That's what I've done here. I've been able to share information—what it is like over there."

Participant one also emphasized the shared "democratic ideals" between Turkey and the United States. As a result of their status as "allies," he emphasized how relationships between American and Turkish citizens could be mutually beneficial when he stated:

> I think the people are really suitable to be involved in many things, cooperate in many things. I think the exchange between the two countries ought to continue more and more. I think both the United States and Turkey would gain in some things from each other.

The importance of English language skills. Participant six discussed challenges that Turkish international students often had with English. He often observed Turkish students to struggle more with the "trickiness" of English as opposed to the academic material. He provided this context:

> Before my last year in my university, we didn't use English. In Turkey, we never use English because we are not a colony—in our history we've never been a colonized society, like India. Never. So that's why Turkish is a very strict and powerful language. We grow up with Turkish, that is our language, and after thirty, I decided to learn this language. That's difficult.

Peer Reviewer

As previously discussed, the researcher met with the peer reviewer on three occasions to solicit feedback on the data analysis process. Following the first round of interviews and creation of the individual textual descriptions, the researcher and peer reviewer met to discuss the data collection progress and tentative themes that were emerging. The peer reviewer asked questions as to how those interviews would guide the subsequent interviews. Upon the completion of the final interviews and composite textual-structural descriptions, a second interview was scheduled with the peer reviewer. How the final themes were identified was explained to the peer reviewer and she was provided with data samples so that she could confirm the audit trail. At the third and final meeting, the peer reviewer verified the correctness of the audit trail as she was able to trace themes from the composite descriptions back to statements in the original transcripts.

Outside Expert

The outside expert was most consistently involved in the initial stages of the data collection process. Following the completion of the first round of interviewers, the researcher created a list of 24 common ideas that participants discussed. The researcher

solicited confirmation and contextual explanations of these ideas. For example, the researcher identified participant fluctuations about whether to return to Turkey immediately after graduation. The outside expert stated, "I see this a lot," and attributed it to job opportunities and life standards. He echoed the participants when he discussed how "one is allowed to be more productive" in the United States and "life is less stressful here." He provided context on many of the common ideas such as English language skills, the Turkish community, experience of prejudicial attitudes, and "pop culture" in Turkey. The outside expert provided a sense of interrater reliability (Creswell, 2007) by confirming that the researcher was accurately interpreting the disclosures of the participants.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of this phenomenological study on the experiences of single graduate Turkish international students. The data analysis process was described and thick descriptions of the participants' experiences were provided. Summative findings on the phenomena of being a single graduate Turkish international students suggested that their experiences include: growth, decisions regarding participation in the Turkish community, interactions with Americans, future career opportunities, loss of time with family and significant others, the importance of English language skills, and the significance of the political history of Turkey. The following chapter positions these findings in the review of the literature presented in Chapter 1. Limitations and implications of these findings are also discussed.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The previous chapter presented the summative data on the experiences of single graduate Turkish international students at a Midwestern university. The purpose of this chapter is to meaningfully apply this data. First, the connection between the data and previous research is highlighted and then unique findings are noted. Second, implications of the study are explored and specifically applied to the practice of university administration and counselor educators. The chapter closes with limitations, delimitations, suggestions for future research, and the researcher's experience.

Relationship of Results to Previous Research

Several topics discussed by the participants were relevant to previous research findings in the international student literature. Specifically, the participants discussed social relationships (including Turkish community size, relationships with Americans, and prejudice), the importance of English skills, hope for increased career opportunities, and career decisions related to returning home. The participants did not mention counseling services, but the absence of this topic is itself relevant to previous research on academic stress. The following sections present the findings similar to those found on international students in general, and whether Turkish students presented a unique experience.

Social Support

Previous research identified social relationships as one of the largest challenges and losses for international students (Hayes & Lin, 1994). Upon arrival, international

students face the difficult task of developing a new social network. Whether related to relationships with Americans, or other international students, these challenges were confirmed by the participants. Participant three shared this observation of social challenges:

> I know . . . other universities, I am talking all of the Turkish undergrads are playing Playstation, because they are having difficulty getting along with other Americans or other cultures. They are coming together with other Turks, they are self-fulfilling prophecy. They knew before coming here that if they do, their English will not be improved, studies will not be good, but at some point they are coming here and they can't find other ways socially . . . Or if you are a grad students, you are going to coffee shops and you have music you are listening to, Walkman? Because you don't have enough time to build friendship or necessary framework for the developments of your social activities and you are generally alone, all grad students, actually including Americans. I know most grad students, they are alone.

The following sections connect previous literature on social relationships to the current study.

Relationships with Americans. Previous research found that international students frequently described relationships with national students as shallow and superficial (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Yoon & Portman, 2004). Similarly, Trice (2004, 2007) found that international students and national students were poorly integrated. This research supports previous findings as only participant two reported a close relationship

with a national student. This is striking as all the participants discussed the value of relationships with national students for the improvement of their language skills and shared cultural learning.

Some participants did express confusion over the lack of integration between international and national students. Participant one shared that the American university environment is such an "international place" and "a good opportunity for people to learn more about other countries, other cultures . . . because I realized that some of the American people are not aware of other parts of the world, especially students." Participant six made a similar observation when he stated that "international student activities should be more and many of them feel alone. I can see that." These observations by the participants lend support to Altbach's (2005) proposition that international students are more likely to be recruited for the financial benefits they bring than the international exchange they could encourage.

Prejudice. Another possible reason for the limited relationships with American students may have been the experience of prejudice and frequent misconceptions. International student trends discussed in the previous research include: the perception of prejudice more than naturalized citizens (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992), the experience of prejudice related to status as international students (Lee & Rice, 2007), Muslim students reported more discrimination than other religious groups (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992), students from the Middle East and Africa reported the highest amount of discrimination (Hanassah, 2007), older students and those who had resided in America longer rated discrimination higher (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007), and international students may see

experiencing discrimination as part of earning their American degree (Lee, 2007). It should also be noted that the studies related to Muslim and Middle Eastern students were done prior to 9/11, and it is likely that conditions have worsened.

Some of these trends were confirmed by the participants, most often related to being Muslim or mistakenly being identified as Middle Eastern. Although the participants are not Middle Eastern, they often experienced similar prejudicial behavior and beliefs. Participant three shared experiences of having derogatory comments yelled at him when out in town. He also shared that certain classmates' attitudes against Middle Easterners and Arab persons made him "really nervous," despite not defining himself as such. Participant two's boyfriend experienced multiple references to "Al-Qaeda" and "terrorists" that she found upsetting but not surprising. Apart from the negative reactions, the experience of being perceived as Middle Eastern was upsetting in itself because it displayed a lack of understanding about Turkey.

In addition, some participants expressed feeling that certain professors were more critical of their academic work due to their standing as international students. Participant five experienced comments such as "you can't graduate with these language skills" from some professors, in contrast to others professors that were extremely encouraging. Another participant cited how a certain professor was "making all of our papers red" with corrections, also telling them that they would not be able to graduate with their language skills. These experiences highlight Baty's (2007) findings that faculty were frustrated with international student language skills. He emphasized that the fault for this situation lies with university recruitment practices.

Similar to Lee's (2007) observation, the participants found these experiences distressing, but unsurprising. In fact, they often gave reasons for their experience. Participant two stated,

> I don't accuse those people, you know, this is state politics, this is how American administrators see Muslim people, that's not people. That is, they change the perceptions through advertisement, through news and that sort of stuff. I don't blame people.

Participant six explained, "As individuals, people are the same, but some society or under some political atmosphere they might behave differently." It appeared that the participants viewed their experience as normative.

Size of Turkish community. As discussed earlier, Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) found a curvilinear relationship between self-esteem and strong ties with common culture communities. Specifically, they found that strong ties with networks of up to 32 persons were positively correlated with self-esteem, but beyond that number strong cultural ties were negatively correlated to self-esteem. While specific percentages and numbers were not explored in this study, a similar trend was discussed. Multiple participants discussed a self-limiting of time with their Turkish community, as too much time with other Turkish students was believed to be detrimental to the development of English language skills. In addition, many participants described English language skills as a source of pride or self-esteem, consistent with the research of Olivas and Li (2006). Conversely, participant four, who was apologetic about his language skills, felt his language skills made spending more time with Americans "not possible." Thus, this study supports the

findings of the previous research and contributes by highlighting the mediating factor of English language skills.

Primacy of English Language Skills

Consistent with previous international student research that emphasized the widespread impact of English language skills, the participants frequently highlighted the significance of English language skills to their current situation and future prospects. Areas the participants discussed that had been previously studied included: increased time for academic work (Pederson, 1991), relationship to acculturative stress (Poyrazli et al., 2004; Yeh & Inose, 2003), impact on self-concept (Olivas & Li, 2006), TOEFL scores (Bollag, 2005; Heitman, 2005, Huang, 2006; Pederson, 1991), faculty frustration with language skills (Baty, 2007), and relationship to social support (Dao et al., 2007; Poyrazli et al., 2004). The unique aspect that the participants identified that was not found in the previous research continued to be the act of limiting time with their Turkish network for the benefit of English language skills.

The primacy of English language skills occupied such a dominant spot in the disclosures of the participants that other issues seemed insignificant in comparison. Unlike previous research on international students, the participants identified few significant stressors and were very pragmatic about distress they experienced. It is possible that the significance of English language skills made it difficult for other issues to come forward. Were additional support services provided to address English language skills, the descriptions of other issues (social relationships, academic concerns, financial issues, etc.) may change.

Academic Stress and Counseling Center Use

Closely tied to English language skills is stress related to academic coursework. The participants shared that taking courses in their second language drastically increased the time spent outside of the classroom over that of their native classmates. This was particularly true for the doctoral students and did limit time that could be spent on social, stress relieving activities. Although the participants discussed stylistic differences between an American and Turkish classroom, they clearly reported that the majority of classroom challenges were related to the "trickiness" of the English language. Poyrazli and Kavanaugh (2006) suggested that the stress experienced by graduate students is higher than for undergraduates, but the participants described Turkish students as well prepared academically. No participant expressed worry of losing financial support related to academic performance, as identified by Charles and Stewart (1991) and Pedersen (1991).

Academic issues and grades were found to be one of the top concerns prompting international student counseling center use (Yi et al., 2003). Because the participants labeled academic difficulties as an English language issue, it is not surprising that counseling center usage was not mentioned once by the participants. As discussed earlier, the participants employed various methods to improve English language skills. The issue of English language improvement was conceptualized as a typical challenge, and it is hypothesized that the university counseling center was not thought to be relevant to language skills.

Career Opportunities and Returning to Turkey

The promise of "imagined lives" and the associated increased social mobility, knowledge, and power stems from the dominant discourses on education in the West (Koehne, 2006). These discourses have a powerful pull on the expectations of international students. Throughout the interviews, the participants expressed that they had high "expectations" and expected "increased career opportunities" as a result of their American education. Frequently mentioned was the "prestige" associated with an American degree and the belief than an American degree was the "best" in the world. They acknowledged that pursuit of these dreams did come with costs and whether their dreams would be achieved was yet to be seen.

Previous studies attempted to understand whether international students were orientated more towards the American job market or their home job market (Leong & Sedlacek, 1989; Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). Findings were mixed and limitations of these studies were the lack of assessment of preference based on country of origin. Four of the participants in this study clearly stated plans to return to Turkey. They discussed the possibility of temporary work periods in the United States, but these were described as valuable experience that would make them more marketable in Turkey. Two of the doctoral students discussed mixed feelings regarding whether or when to return to Turkey. Reasons they cited for staying were increased research opportunities and freedom and comfort related to life in the United States. Reasons for returning to Turkey included the better social environment, proximity to family and friends, and the experience of being an "alien" in the United States. Despite these mixed feelings, when

the two doctoral students discussed future places of employment the examples provided were Turkish universities. Thus, this study contributes to the current research as the participants in this study were generally oriented toward the Turkish job market.

New Findings

The majority of the findings of this research were consistent with previous research on international students. This study also yielded new findings that had not been previously identified in the literature.

As discussed earlier, the research participants described experiencing a very particular form of growth in three domains: risk taking, managing life tasks, and from encountering other cultures. The specifics of these domains were discussed in Chapter 3. No research was found that described the specific type of growth that resulted from international study. Further research is needed to determine if this type of growth is particular to Turkish international students or international students in general.

Another new finding was the concept of loss of time. Although the participants did express missing family and friends, their focus was on time with family and friends that was permanently lost. Participants discussed friends moving on to different stages of life and the reality that time with aging family was short. This description of loss of time may be related to value the Turkish participants placed on relationships. Time spent apart from those relationships was conceptualized as a loss.

Only participant two shared having close relationships with American students. Previous research has found relationships with national students to be beneficial to international students (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Yoon & Portman, 2004), but does not

articulate what international students can do to encourage those relationships. Participant two was the only female doctoral student in the study and reported being motivated for her English to be "perfect." Participant two provided a unique account of how she established relationships with American students. She identified choosing to spend the majority of her free time in the graduate student office and noted that most international students spent little time there. She chose to model her behavior after those of national students, in comparison to international students. She described her process this way:

> Usually American students come here [graduate student office] and, you know, interact before class time. That's how it works that I figured out. You just talk to each other and regular things—what did you do during the weekend, that sort of stuff. But by doing that, you are making friendships, you are knowing your other PhD students, who are having the same education with you. It's good to interact with them.

She then shared her national friend's observation of her behavior:

> He said, "You are not like them," and said something like I'm not part of the international community, because some of the international student cannot speak English very well and he says I'm better at English. He can understand what I'm saying. Then he, we, became friends, and we have the same interests.

The conditions participant two met to develop these relationships with Americans include: studying "American student culture" and modeling it, having excellent English skills, and not being a part of the international student community. Separating herself from the international student community came at a cost to participant two, as she also

articulated more feelings of loneliness than other participants. In addition, since other participants identified the international student community as a valuable support, it cannot be advised that all international students do the same as participant two. Later sections discuss what role the university can play in encouraging interactions between national and international students, so that burden of responsibility does not lie solely with international students. What can be gleaned from participant two's behavior is the decision to model national student patterns of interacting around classes, so that more opportunities for interaction occur.

Another unique finding articulated was related to the consistent pattern of participants being associated with terrorism and being identified as Middle Eastern. Whereas media outlets frequently discuss prejudice against those believed to be Muslim, no research was encountered that connected this pattern to Turkish international students. As the participants stated, these connections highlighted the lack of knowledge American students had about Turkey. National students consistently displayed a lack of awareness of Turkey's status as a modern secular nation situated on the border of both Europe and Asia. These consistent stereotypes and misconceptions of Turkish students possibly decreased motivation for the participants to take risks in developing relationships with national students. In fact, the participants were more likely to discuss learning about other cultures through international students from other countries than they were to discuss learning from national students. This phenomenon again leads to questions regarding the university's role in increasing international knowledge and awareness in all students.

Findings Related to Research Questions

Chapter 3 attempted to answer the general question of how full-time single Turkish international graduate students conceptualized their experiences as international students, but did not directly answer the first three subquestions: (a) what contexts influenced their experiences as international students (b) what assisted their adjustment as international students (c) what detracted from their adjustment as international students. The fourth subquestion is addressed in the next section. Reviewing participant responses revealed inconsistencies in how the participants responded to the first three subquestions. For example, when asked about the most significant contextual influences most participants expressed being unsure how to answer the question and instead discussed how they perceived the university environment generally. In regards to assisters and detractors to their experience such a range existed that a response for one participant was commonly the opposite response for another. It is likely that these subquestions were not appropriate and the researcher assumed too much uniformity across the participants. But, due to the open nature of phenomenological qualitative research, commonalities did emerge, just not what was suspected by the researcher.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

The previously discussed research findings have implications for the ways that counselor educators and university administrators engage in the issues surrounding international students. This section attempts to answer the fourth research subquestion: implications that full-time single Turkish international graduate students' experiences have on the ways that counselors and counselor educators can support international

students. The implications were expanded to include possible university administrative responses. The following sections specifically apply the current research to future research and practice.

Implications for Universities

The research participants frequently discussed the impact of university environmental factors. Participants regretfully noted a lack of well attended cultural activities and poor integration between international and national students. At the same time, they also encountered a lack of accurate knowledge about world issues from national students. So while they had no choice but to operate in a culture that was not their own, they felt valuable opportunities were missed for a mutual learning between national and international students. Thus, they articulated both a desire and need for increased learning opportunities on campus. The current research can be applied by offering new ways the university can consider increasing the impact and appreciation of international students, thereby increasing campus wide learning.

Multiple participants emphasized that their educational experience incorporated time in and out of the classroom. A result of their experiences was conceptualized under the theme labeled growth, which could be alternatively categorized as learning.

An identified impetus for that growth came from encountering other cultures. By putting themselves in another culture they were able to see their own culture from a distance, see differences and similarities in people across cultures, and increase their competency in navigating other cultures. They believed that this growth would make them increasingly attractive to future employers.

It is intuitive to think that a similar type of growth would be attractive to national students and American universities. Before providing author suggestions, an observation from one of the participants is provided. Participant one was responding to a question about detractors from his experience, and his hope for tapping into the international resources at his university:

> [In Turkey] we have festivals that I've never seen here. We have something called May Fest. Because we have a large campus here [current university], they could make more things. I just see some things for children, for charities, but there could be something for the students. What we do in Turkey is make concerts and everyone enjoys themselves in the large area on the grass. We have more space here [current university]. They could do so many more things because I see that the students here don't have many attractions, most of them. So, that could be done . . . Because, last night a [Turkish[student asked me about that. Because they came, you know, one of the students in prep school, and she asked, "When is the May Fest?" That's what she said. I said, "I've never seen this sort of thing." She was really surprised. She said, "What do you mean?" Because every [Turkish] university has this kind of thing, most of them. She was surprised to hear that. I said, "I've never seen this sort of thing. I swear. I've been here three years." This kind of thing could be done easily here, and much better. Not only like concerts, there are some games, attractions, many activities. I was surprised not to see. Maybe that's a new idea. Because I think what

happened, to see the things happen in Turkey, we expect to see it here in some ways. I think the things and the culture are different.

As reflected in the above description, the participant expressed a desire for university supported campus wide activities. Many of the participants were involved with the international student office and their activities, but found these activities were much smaller and did not draw many national students. They described their interactions with that office as increasing contact between other international students and the faculty and staff of the international student office.

This author suggests that the university administration support cultural activities on campus with the same backing that would be seen for orientation or homecoming events. Often these events have large student organizing committees that meet for extended periods of time. If student committees included both national and international students this could be a starting ground for increased integration and shared cultural learning that could be reflected in the campus wide events.

In addition, university administration should consider barriers that international students face. The most pressing need the participants identified was improved language development. Some of the participants were required to take the TOEFL for admittance; others were not. Even those that took the TOEFL and had high scores did not feel it was predictive of whether they would face challenges related to their English proficiency. Universities should be mindful of this and either provide additional support services or reconsider their admission requirements. Not doing so negatively impacts the international student experience and increases frustration among faculty. University

administration can provide an environment that fosters supportive interactions with faculty, as opposed to the critical interactions some participants described.

The goal of the above suggestions is that international students have valued roles on the university campus. Sufficient support services are one way to communicate this value. Increasing opportunities for them to share their unique knowledge and perspectives is another way. As reflected in this study's participants, international students often have a desire to share about their culture. Participant one stated, "That's what I've done here. I've been able to share information—what it's like over there." Participant six expressed a desire for Americans to understand Turkish frustration over American international policy. He stated, "So American people watch TV and see girls who are wearing scarves and kill her from stoning. The radical interpretation of Islam and people do not know. They say, 'Wow, what an idiot people are they.'" The participant went on to explain how American policy impacted the political power structure in Turkey and increased the frequency of incidences like the above. For participant six, the consequences of misinformation are significant. By increasing opportunities to converse on international topics, learning is increased. The goal is not agreement, but instead exposure to ideas that would otherwise be missed. Conversations like these could be increased if international students had strategic roles on campus. These roles could be in the form of campus jobs, teaching assistantships, or even housing locations specifically set aside to increase international student exposure.

Underlying these author suggestions is the belief that the university has an important role in integrating international students with the wider student body. This is

consistent with Trice's (2007) review of the literature that stated, "While some studies suggested that this was strictly the international student's choice, other studies indicated that host nationals played an important, if not, primary role in fostering the isolation" (p. 110). The current research suggests international students are motivated for integration, whether to increase their English proficiency or share about their own culture. The author predicts that if the environmental conditions are conducive, Turkish international students are likely to move toward integration. What this author does dispute is that a belief that the lack of integration is a direct result of Turkish international students' lack of effort or desire to be integrated.

The responsibility for integration does not come without many benefits to the university. As discussed earlier, much has been written about the importance of internationalization to institutions of higher education (Lambert, 1995). But, universities frequently struggle with how to adequately provide an international experience for domestic students. Most students do not have the financial resources or time to take a semester abroad. Increasing international students' exposure in the classroom and increasing contact outside of the classroom enables domestic students to have contact with many different cultures. The capital investment to universities would be low, as international students are already on campus.

Implications for Counselor Educators

Whereas counselor educators have influence on the campus due to their role as faculty members, they can also exert influence specific to their skills and training as counselor educators. There is an increasing focus in the counseling profession for the

counseling role to be expanded to include social justice advocacy. This is based on the belief that most of the concerns minority clients bring to counseling are not a result of problems within the individual, but instead due to unequally shared power in their society or community (Sue & Sue, 2008). So to truly meet the needs of their clients, counselors must leave the confines of the traditional office and be active in their community (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). The case for social justice advocacy could also be supported by the Rogerian concept of authenticity. If counselors and counselor educators see injustice, the authentic response would not be focusing on client or student change as primary, but instead environmental change.

At the individual client/student level, advocacy may include empowerment strategies that increase contextual awareness as well as advocacy for the removal of barriers that create stress in client or student lives. Counselor educators can also be active in creating supportive communities that provide opportunities for international students. Two primary avenues of influence are the university counseling center and multicultural education.

Counseling center services. The participants in this study identified their primary barriers as English language skills and prejudicial beliefs. In addition, stigma about mental health services creates a barrier for international students to seek counseling support (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989; Mori, 2000). As previously discussed, counseling center services are one of the least used resources by international students (Yoon & Portman, 2004).

Counselors must be creative in offering support for students as they develop their English skills and face prejudicial beliefs, while navigating the stigma attached to mental health services. Previous research has suggested that psychoeducational groups be offered in locations such as the international student office (Mori, 2000). Providing a group that advertises the opportunity to practice English language skills may be attractive to international students. In addition, counselors can provide educational materials that empower international students in the face of prejudicial attitudes and normalizes the adjustment to a new cultural environment. Groups are also excellent opportunities for participants to increase their social support.

When counselor training centers offer groups such as the above, there is an additional benefit to the counselor or counselor in training. Many geographic areas where universities are located lack a diverse client base. This absence of diversity is not a legitimate excuse for not providing multicultural training at practicum and internship sites (Lee et al., 1999). Support groups for international students provide an opportunity for counselors in training to get multicultural experience under supervision, thereby increasing their cultural competence.

Multicultural education. A natural starting place for increasing counselor competency with international students is simply to include the topic in multicultural coursework. Students should be exposed to the diversity across international students, challenges they face, and strengths they possess. In order for counselor educators to teach on the subject, counselor educators are responsible to first familiarize themselves with the significant issues surrounding international students as well as increase their own

contact with this population. Opportunities exist for them to invite international students to classes to share their experiences and issues related to being an international student. Counselor educators' role as advocates in the university environment could open additional avenues for increased contact with international students.

In light of the above discussion on the role of counselors as social justice advocates, it is also logical to posit that there could also be an expanded role for students or counselors in training to be social advocates on their campus. Curriculum could be expanded to include a service learning component that could be met in a variety of ways, including serving the international student population. Students should also be encouraged to be socially active on their campus, seeking out relationships with international students and participating in cultural activities.

If the proposed contact between counselors and international students is positive, a potential benefit for the counseling profession is the opportunity to recruit international students as potential counselors and counselor educators. Ethnic minorities have historically been underrepresented in counseling and faculty positions (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2002). Increasing counselor and counselor educator diversity has the potential to increase multicultural competency across the profession.

Future Research

This research was conducted in response to the need for both qualitative and culturally specific research on international students. While some of the participants' responses were similar to findings on international students in general, this study described new characteristics specific to Turkish international students. These unique

aspects specific to cultural groups support the continued need for culturally specific research on international students.

As previously discussed, qualitative research allows for the participants to communicate to the researcher their experiences and the meaning they have attached to their experiences, as opposed to the researcher coming in with a previously held framework (Creswell, 2007). Using a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to obtain rich descriptions of many issues previously identified in quantitative research. For example, many studies identified English language skills as a salient factor in international students' experiences. This researcher obtained personal stories and examples of how English language skills specifically impacted classroom experiences, social decisions, and future career decisions; providing further support for why international students emphasize language skills in their experience. Previous studies identified that Muslim international students often perceive higher levels of discrimination than those from other religious backgrounds (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992). But, this study provided examples of how even the assumption of being Muslim or from a Middle Eastern country yielded the same type of perceived discrimination. Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) discussed the optimal international student community size. This study provided a continuum of how the participants chose to engage in the Turkish community, even if their decision was not what they believed to be optimum for their language skills and adjustment. Using a qualitative approach provided context, and sometimes an explanation, for patterns previously identified in international student research.

As very little research was available on Turkish international students specifically, this type of study was needed to inform future research. A methodological error found in international student literature is the use of instruments on international students that were developed for national and minority students (Yoon & Portman, 2004). While this qualitative study could inform additional qualitative studies, it also has the potential to aid in the creation of valid instruments for Turkish international students. Content areas that could potentially be measured include factors related to the development of English language skills and their impact on adjustment, relationships with national students and the Turkish community, and growth. The qualitative foundation provides data for how Turkish international students define these concepts. Instruments such as these would allow for comparisons across universities, gender, academic programs, marital status, and length of study.

This study also highlighted issues that invite further exploration. Consistent with Yoon and Portman's (2004) critique that international student literature tends to exclusively focus on personal factors at the expense of environmental factors, more research is needed on exploring dynamics of prejudice and discrimination that the participants identified. Being a secular nation, yet with a high Islamic population, increased the false stereotypes that Turkish students encountered studying in the United States. Further inquiry is needed regarding the impact of English language skills and the impact of relationships with national students. This research model could also be recreated to study married students, undergraduate students, only doctoral students, or

females. Studying Turkish students from the perspective of other international students or faculty members could also yield unique observations.

Limitations

A discussion of the limitations of this study must be included to aid the reader in considering whether or not to accept the proposed findings. Several limitations were identified in this study

Being unable to speak in their native language limited the relationships participants had with Americans. Participant four described this as not being able to communicate his "true self." It is possible that this limited the data that the participants provided to the researcher. While member checks were used to ensure what was communicated was interpreted accurately, it is unknown what additional data would have been provided had the interviews been conducted in Turkish or with an interpreter.

In addition, the participants did not express the increased stress and mental health symptoms that previous studies found among international students (Cheng et al., 1993; Mori, 2000; Pedersen, 1991). It cannot automatically be assumed that the participants did not experience those symptoms. Multiple studies have found that bilingual and bicultural individuals express more emotion when recalling memories in their native language (Schrauf, 2000). Similarly, Caldwell-Harris and Ayçiçeği-Dinn (2009) studied Turkish students and found that they exhibited reduced emotion when using English as compared to Turkish.

Additional possibilities exist that may have limited participant disclosures. Participants may not have known how to express particular ideas in English in a way that

would have been perceived as acceptable or understood by the researcher. They may not have trusted the researcher or feared that information could get back to family or colleagues in Turkey. It is also possible that this researcher exhibited behaviors that could have been perceived by the participants as untrustworthy or lacking empathy.

While all the participants completed both interviews, two participants did not respond to the final summative results. As previously mentioned, it is suspected that participant one and four had graduated and returned to Turkey. While this final validation is important, other methods were used to increase the validity of the results. The peer reviewer verified the correctness of the audit trail, connecting the summative results to the interview transcripts. The summative results were also validated by the other four participants. Participants one and four did confirm in the second interview that the researcher had correctly interpreted their disclosures in the first interview.

Finally, the goal of this research was to study the experience of Turkish international students. But, the sample only included one female. While this may be representative of the percentages found in Turkish international students, it does not provide adequate data to describe the female Turkish students' experience or propose comparisons between males and females.

Delimitations

Delimitations of a study include the limits the researcher placed on the study prior to the beginning the data collection. They impact how the results can be applied to persons beyond those involved in the study. The results of this study were not intended to be broadly generalized, and can only be directly applied to the participants themselves.

Delimitations for this investigation include the small sample size, potential bias in sampling, and limiting the sample to graduate and single students. This research was intended to provide a research base from which more questions on the experience of Turkish international students can be explored.

Researcher Experience

Following each interview, I was struck by the resiliency and drive of the participants. I frequently reflected on how my own experience as a doctoral student would have been different if I was taking my courses or writing my dissertation in a second language and at such a distance from home. I have a deep respect for the participants and all they have accomplished.

I also thoroughly enjoyed hearing the stories of my participants. I believe it was a privilege to hear their stories as part of my dissertation. I was moved by how the participants coped with the challenges of being an international student by staying mindful of their goals.

I also value the counseling profession. In teaching Multicultural Counseling courses, I am struck by how few of my students are aware of the experiences of international students. I want my students to gain an appreciation and sensitivity to international experiences. Already, my research has increased my passion and motivation to include this topic in my courses.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the research findings as related to the existing research on international students, highlighted unique contributions of this current research, and

identified directions for future research as related to Turkish international students. A phenomenological research methodology revealed that single graduate Turkish international students conceptualize their experience through the structures of growth, decisions regarding participation in the Turkish community, interactions with Americans, future career opportunities, loss of time with family and significant others, the importance of English language skills, and the significance of the political history of Turkey. Whereas these results were a summative description of the participants, each one brought a unique account to the research process. It is the hope of this author that this research will be an impetus for further study on the experiences of Turkish international students.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

KENT STATE INSTITUTIONAL BOARD REVIEW APPROVAL

Appendix A

Kent State Institutional Board Review Approval

KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

December 17, 2008

Jessica Reno Burkholder
CHDS

Re: # 08-741: "Reflections of Single Turkish Graduate Students: Studies in Life at a Midwestern University"

Dear Ms.Burkholder:

I am pleased to inform you that the Kent State University Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved your Application for Approval to Use Human Research Participants as Level II research through the expedited review process. This was approved on December 17, 2008. **Approval is effective for a twelve-month period, December 17, 2008 through December 16, 2009.**

Federal regulations and Kent State University IRB policy require that research be reviewed at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year. The IRB has determined that this protocol requires an annual review and progress report. The IRB will forward an annual review reminder notice to you by email as a courtesy. Please note that it is the responsibility of the principal investigator to be aware of the study expiration date and submit the required materials. Please submit review materials (annual review form and copy of current consent form) one month prior to the expiration date.

HHS regulations and Kent State University Institutional Review Board guidelines require that any changes in research methodology, protocol design, or principal investigator have the prior approval of the IRB before implementation and continuation of the protocol. The IRB must also be informed of any adverse events associated with the study. The IRB further requests a final report at the conclusion of the study.

Kent State University has a Federal Wide Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP); FWA Number 00001853.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 330-672-2704 or tfreder2@kent.edu.

Sincerely,

Tonya Frederick

Tonya Frederick, R.N., B.S.N.
Research Compliance Administrator

Cc: Donald Bubenzer, Ph.D.
Martin Jencius, Ph.D.

Division of Research and Graduate Studies
Office of Research Safety and Compliance
(330) 672-2704 Fax: (330) 672-2658
P.O. Box 5190, Kent, Ohio 44242-0001

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Appendix B

Recruitment Script

Recruitment Script: The Experiences of Turkish International Students:
A Phenomenological Study

Jessica Burkholder, a doctoral candidate in the ACHVE department, is interested in the experience of Turkish students here at KSU. I'd like you to consider giving me permission to have her contact you about that research.

Jessica wants to do this study as a way to contribute to the research on Turkish international students and encourage counselor educators and universities to increasingly support international study experiences.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to engage in two interviews, one lasting approximately one to two hours and a second lasting less than one hour. You will be asked to reflect on your experiences as an international student. These interviews will be audio taped and scheduled at a time and place convenient for you. In between interviews, you will be asked to review a transcript and summary of the first interview. Following the second interview, she will request brief feedback via e-mail on her composite results. It is expected that these activities will take place over a period of three months. You will be provided with a $25 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the first interview, and then an additional $25 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the second interview.

All audio files will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study. Your participation will be kept confidential. All information will be stored in a secure location, only accessible to the researcher. Results of this study will be published in a doctoral dissertation in Counselor Education and Supervision, submitted for a scholarly journal and presented at a local, state and national conference. Only limited demographic information will be included in the final project. Whether or not you participate, there are no penalties of any kind. You may cease your participation at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this study, may I provide her with your e-mail? If so, she will contact you within the week.

If you want to know more about this research project, you may also call her at 330-998-2941. Her advisors are Drs. Donald Bubenzer and Martin Jencius at 330-672-2662. This

project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University's rules for research, please call Dr. John L. West, Vice President and Dean, Division of Research and Graduate Studies at 330-672-2704.

If you choose to meet with her, she will answer any additional questions you have about the study and provide you with consent forms.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORMS

Appendix C

Consent Forms

Consent Form: The Experiences of Turkish International Students:
A Phenomenological Study

I want to do research on the experiences of graduate Turkish international students. I want to do this study as a way to contribute to the research on Turkish international students and encourage counselor educators and universities to increasingly support international study experiences. I would like you to take part in this project. I value the unique contribution that you can make to my study.

If you decide to participate in my study, you will be asked to engage in two interviews, one lasting approximately one to two hours and a second lasting less than one hour. You will be asked to reflect on your experiences as an international student. These interviews will be audio taped and scheduled at a time and place convenient for you. In between interviews, you will be asked to review a transcript and summary of the first interview. Following the second interview, I will request brief feedback via e-mail on my composite results. It is expected that these activities will take place over a period of three months. You will be provided with a $25 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of our first interview, and then an additional $25 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of our second interview.

All audio files will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study. Your participation will be kept confidential. All information will be stored in a secure location, only accessible to the researcher. Results of this study will be published in a doctoral dissertation in Counselor Education and Supervision, submitted for a scholarly journal and presented at a local, state and national conference. Only limited demographic information will be included in the final project. Whether or not you participate, there are no penalties of any kind. You may cease your participation at any time.

If you want to know more about this research project, please call me at 330-998-2941 or my advisors Drs. Donald Bubenzer and Martin Jencius at 330-672-2662. This project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University's rules for research, please call Dr. John L. West, Vice President and Dean, Division of Research and Graduate Studies at 330-672-2704. You will be provided with a copy of this consent form.

Sincerely,
Jessica Reno Burkholder, PCC, NCC
Doctoral Candidate

I agree to take part of this study. I understand what I need to do and that I can stop at any time.

Signature Date

AUDIO TAPE CONSENT FORM

I _____ agree to audio taping at _____

on_____

I have been told that I have the right to hear audio tapes before they are used. I have decided that:

I want to hear the tapes _____ I do not want to hear the tapes _____

_____ _____
Signature Date

Sign now below if you do not want to hear the tapes. If you want to hear the tapes you will be asked to sign after hearing them.

Jessica Reno Burkholder may / may not use the tapes made of me. The original tapes may be used for:

_____ this research project

_____ scholarly article

_____ presentation at professional meetings.

_____ _____
Signature Date

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix D

Demographic Questionnaire

The following information will be used to gather important information about you relevant to this study. Please do not put your name anywhere on this form. All information will remain confidential.

Participant number: _____

Gender: _____ Age: _____

Educational background and current degree seeking: _____
_____
_____

Expected graduation date: _____

Date of arrival for study: _____

Methods of funding international study (scholarship, on campus job, graduate assistantship, personal savings, etc.): _____
_____

Marital status: _____

Religious affiliation: _____

Housing status (on campus, off campus, host family, with other Turkish students, with other international students, etc.): _____
_____

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW ONE PROTOCOL

Appendix E

Interview One Protocol

Please reflect on the following questions to prepare for our upcoming interview:

1. Reflect on and describe an experience that has made an impression on you during your time as an international student.
2. What places and situations have influenced and affected your experiences as an international student?
3. How did you choose this university? Please describe what made those reasons important.
4. What were your expectations of this experience before coming to the United States? How has your experience differed from your expectations?
5. What are your thoughts on returning to Turkey? If they have changed, how have they changed?
6. How have your experiences affected you as a person? What specific changes have you noticed?
7. How has your time as an international student affected significant others (family, friends, etc.) in your life?
8. What has assisted your adjustment?
9. What has detracted from your adjustment? What do you think could have been done to improve this?

10. What aspects of being Turkish have impacted your international study experience (as compared to your observations of international students from other countries)?
11. What feelings characterize your experience?
12. What benefits do you think you have gained from your experience?
13. What losses have you incurred as a result of your experience?
14. What pieces of advice would you give to a peer contemplating studying at this university and/or in the U.S.?
15. What else would you like to share about your experience?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW TWO PROTOCOL

Appendix F

Interview Two Protocol

At the interview, all participants will be asked the following questions:

1. Is the transcription you received an accurate representation of our first meeting? If not, why?
2. Are there any corrections that need to be made to the transcript? If yes, please describe.
3. As you read through the transcript, were there any sections that you would like to explain more fully or clarify? If so, please describe.
4. What feelings did you experience as you read through the transcription and reflected on our meeting?

Following being provided with a textual description of the interview, the following questions were asked:

5. How do my descriptions compare with your experiences?
6. What elements have been left out?

APPENDIX G

COMPOSITE TEXTUAL-STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION

Appendix G

Composit Textual-Structural Description

The experience of being a single graduate Turkish international student at a Midwestern university is "not just about the education, but life here." Some described this experience as the fulfillment of a "dream," while others emphasized "responsibility" and that "you have to be an adult" being "a part of this culture to survive." Still others focused on "independence" and "writing" their own life. But, the following categories were found to be common and salient aspects of the participants' experience: personal growth, decisions regarding participation in the Turkish community, interactions with Americans, future career opportunities, loss of time with family and friends, English language skills, and the political history of Turkey.

The participants described personal growth in three major areas: "courage," increased ability to manage "responsibilities with life," and an expanded "worldview" due to "contact" with others from different cultures. First, choosing to study in another country while aware of the associated "risks" is a decision that requires "bravery." The participants described choosing to "bear" the "difficulties" and repeatedly expressed that they had "no regrets." This "courage" is also potentially attractive to future employers. Second, the participants described an increased experience of being responsible for managing their own life. While they may have lived independently in Turkey, the proximity of family and friends was a consistent support when needed. Finally, the participants described the paradoxical reality of seeing how fundamentally "people are the same," yet "absolutely different" based on their own cultural background. The

participants emphasized that being at this university allowed them to have contact not only with Americans, but also other international students. One participant called the opportunity to have these relationships as a "treasure." Participants described how as a result they are different from those at home as they have observed their own culture "from a distance" and also experienced how other cultures "live." This development translates now to many participants feeling they would be comfortable going "anywhere in the world" and seeing themselves as "world citizens."

All of the participants described a purposeful decision on their level of involvement in the Turkish community on campus. The campus where the participants attended had a sizeable Turkish community. Some participants were very involved in the community and described it as their "biggest supporter." They described the community as helping "with everything you can imagine" in getting acclimated. They explained how language limited the depth of relationships with persons that were not Turkish. Some chose not to be consistently involved in the Turkish community so that they could further improve their English skills and learn more from being "a part of American culture." They conceptualized this cultural immersion as a critical part of their education. Those that chose not to be as involved with the Turkish community did so with the awareness they may feel more "alone." All but one participant described being prepared or "mentored" by at least one Turkish person upon arrival. In addition, all participants did caution that "too much" time spent with Turkish persons could be detrimental to English

skills. Regardless of the level of involvement in the Turkish community, many described a desire and willingness to assist new Turkish students coming in.

While many described Americans to be "kind" or "friendly," only one participant described a close relationship with another American student. The participants frequently encountered ignorance from American students, as extreme as asking whether Turkish persons still rode "camels." The most frequent misconception mentioned was being referred to as "Arab" or "Middle Eastern." This was "upsetting" because Americans were unaware of Turkey as a "totally different society" that is a "democracy" and "secular." Due to the high percentage of Muslims in Turkey, the participants experienced prejudicial references to "terrorists" or "Al-Qaeda." This increased the participants' awareness that they are an "alien" here. As "socially" Turkey is better, this also contributed to all of the participants expecting to live permanently in Turkey, even if they do choose to remain for a period of time after graduation for work experience. Related to American culture, the participants were also intentional in traveling to other areas of the United States as the city the university resided in is "small." They emphasized that new Turkish students understand that they are not just coming to this particular city, but to the United States as a whole.

The primary motivation for the participants choosing to study in the United States was "increased job opportunities." An American degree was repeatedly referred to as "very prestigious." Doctoral students particularly emphasized the areas of research in choosing where to attend. Some participants also described post-graduate work

experience in the United States as even more desirable to future employers. Career opportunities also played a role in the participants' decisions on when to return to Turkey. Many described their plans as "fluctuating" and dependent on whether they are able to "find a job" here. Pressure from family to return home "get married" and start a family was a motivator for returning home sooner.

Consistent throughout the participants' descriptions of their experience was the feeling of "missing time" with family and friends. Multiple participants described a fear of significant others "dying" while they were so far away. One participant described being away from one's home as a "pain" that "you always have." But, again in discussing losses related to their study, the participants emphasized that they did not have "regrets" as they expected the benefits of their decision to outweigh these losses.

The issue of English language skills was ubiquitous across all the categories characterizing the participants' experience. Language influenced the choice to study at this university, as suggested by statements such as "I just wanted to come here to learn English" and that it was "critical" to attend a university where the native language was English since strong English skills are an important factor for future jobs. Participants described themselves as prepared academically, but when they faced challenges in the classroom it was most often related to the "trickiness" of the English language or the increased time it took to prepare for courses in their second language. Some approximated language increased class preparation time "five times" that of a native language speaker. Language impacted decisions on whether to spend time with Turkish

students versus American students, the level of depth in those relationships or whether studies even allowed time for socialization. Some participants were treated with disrespect related to language skills, such as professors being highly "critical" or service providers being "rude" due to language difficulties.

Finally, the participants repeatedly framed their experience in the context of cultural and historical aspects of Turkey. For example, when referring to cultural change multiple participants referred to the immigration of Turkish citizens to Germany and how those persons subsequently changed. Due to the shared "democratic" ideals and relationship as "allies" between the United States and Turkey, some participants described the two nations as particularly "suitable" for a positive partnership. Many participants expressed feeling "proud" of being Turkish and the positive reputation the Turkish community had on campus. One participant related this to their "strong cultural history" of never being "a colonized society" and their "powerful language."

APPENDIX H

FINAL E-MAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

Appendix H

Final E-mail to Participants

Dear xxxxxxx

I hope this e-mail finds you well.

I have attached a document that is a description of the *common* elements of my interviews with you and other Turkish students. Unique elements of your interview are not included, and will be addressed in another area of my dissertation.

Could you please read this document and write back whether this is consistent with your experience? I would appreciate any feedback you have upon reading this description.

I remain appreciative of your participation in my study.

Sincerely,

Jessica Burkholder

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