Comparing assimilation processes: Why are some migrants more vulnerable to assimilation?

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to all children who are displaced and excluded from education and Alan Kurdi and Omran Daqneesh, who are the victim of the Syria Civil War. I hope that this paper will serve Syrian children to access at least their fundamental education rights.

Abstract

In the past, countries built their refugee education systems on the possibility of refugees going back to their countries (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019). Hence, refugees' native languages and origin countries' curriculum were the main tools in refugee education. Until 2012, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) encouraged host countries to educate refugees based on their origin country's curriculum and by their native language. However, UNHCR has changed the refugee education paradigm to make the quality of education a priority. Then, UNHCR supports countries to integrate refugees into their national education system (UNHCR, 2012). Host countries have opened public schools to refugee children, but the new situation brings new problems like decreasing immigrants' cultural and personal space in the educational environment. These problems push immigrants into an assimilation process. Turkey has experienced different practices for Syrian refugees. These practices have led to differences in Syrian refugees' assimilation and integration process, even on the same siblings. This research offers a lens to explore why some refugees are more vulnerable to assimilation and why some of them are integrated more quickly than others.

- *Keywords: refugee, refugee education, assimilation, integration, social integration, Syrian refugees, refugee education in Turkey*

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Introduction

Being born in the Middle East makes people familiar with migration. Because of trade, important and holy places, the Middle East has been one of the most popular locations for mass migration. From Alexander the Great to Amir Timur and the Mongol Emperor, to name a few, many ancient leaders have launched expeditions to the Fertile Crescent lands in order to capture the wealth and knowledge of ancient civilizations. Hence, different nations settled in this region. This multicultural land breeds myths and stories about migration, and migrants have become a part of daily life. For example, comparing different cultural practices and discussing the origin of tribes, groups, and communities is common in family meetings or community councils. In one of these discussions, I learned that my ancestors had moved from Baghdad, Iraq to Gercus, Ottoman Empire (now Turkey), then migrated to Mardin, and finally to Istanbul. Also, as a young boy, my grandmother used to tell me many stories about asylees and migrants.

Moreover, my ancestors were Arabs who were assimilated into Turkish society. For two hundred years, we defined ourselves as Kurds. Still, today in my community, Kurdish is the primary language for communication. After establishing the Republic of Turkey, many of us represent ourselves as Turks because we participated in compulsory mass education. In the future, people who identify themselves as Kurds will be a minority group. As a member of a migrant and assimilated community, I want to understand which factors affect the other members of my ethnic group as well as those factors that led me to acquire the dominant culture's values. My great-grandfather was assimilated without formal education. He spoke Arabic fluently but also spoke some Kurdish. My father can

speak only Kurdish, whereas I can speak both Kurdish and Turkish; however, my nieces can only speak Turkish, despite their parents speaking Kurdish fluently. I want to understand if this situation is the outcome of education, interaction with the local culture, or a combination of the two. This situation is the main reason why I am interested in this topic.

Another motivation for my research is my professional background. In Turkey, where there is a monocultural education system, I worked with refugees for two years. The Turkish education system is open to Syrian refugees; however, Syrian children do not have any connection with their cultural background and native language within the education system. Hence, they are pretty vulnerable to cultural assimilation. Additionally, when I worked with children, who were siblings, I observed that the children demonstrated diverse motivations and experiences as they integrated into Turkish society. While some of them avoided assimilating into Turkish culture by strong nationalistic feelings to their home culture and country, other children embraced Turkish culture. As a Middle Eastern child of assimilated immigrants, and a previous youth worker, I have a strong connection and interest in this topic.

Besides personal enthusiasm, I am curious about the result of migration in the Middle East. Acculturation is another natural result of intensive migration movements in the Middle East. We can see that the same norms or customs in different groups are practiced by different races, ethnicities, and religions. For example, Kurds and Persians celebrate the 21st of March as Newroz to welcome Spring. Arabic Alewites, a Muslim minority, and Christians in the Levant region commemorate the same day, which is Eid el

Birbara, for the same purpose. Witnessing this situation has engaged my attention since childhood because I want to know if this is due to assimilation or integration. I built this research around my interest and UNHCR's current refugee education paradigm because the new paradigm gives appropriate circumstances to host countries to accelerate the assimilation process of refugees.

In the mass migration of Syrians to Turkey that started in 2011 and is still continuing, the public services of the Turkish Government and local authorities were overwhelmed by and struggled to meet refugees' needs because Turkey had not been prepared for migration for this scale. Turkish authorities have been trying different models to solve those problems with access to public services. Since 2011, Turkey has announced three models for refugees' education in order to support full integration into Turkish society. The first model carried out a community-based system. Non-formal education methods were used, and official authorities did not undertake the responsibilities for formal education. All educators and all students of schools were Syrian, and Arabic was the only language for instruction. Turkish authorities later revised the first model, which lasted from 2011 to 2014, because it was not successful. In the second model, the Ministry of National Education [MoNE] preferred collaborating with NGOs and the United Nations' organizations to solve refugee children's educational problems. Three hundred and eighteen Temporary Education Centers (TECs) were opened in twenty-one Turksih provinces (Kolcu, 2018). Children were educated in the Arabic language, and the Turkish language was learned to support social integration. The model of TECs lasted only two years because it did not meet the needs of both refugee

children and local children. The main reason for this situation was that this model was designed for short-term aims. Hence, it led to social exclusion instead of social inclusion.

MoNE insisted on the first two models because bureaucrats believed that the war would end in the shortest time. After that, Syrian refugees would go back to their countries. Hence, the idea was that they should stay connected to their national education system as much as possible. However, the war has not ended. Also, the largest cities of Syria – except Damascus – were destroyed. Hence, Syrian migrants have not been disposed to return to their homeland (Culbertson, 2019). Since coming to terms with reality, Turkish authorities have decided to alter the education model for Syrian children because Turkey has the largest refugee population and adapting them into local society is of vital importance. Hence, Turkey announced a new model in 2016. This model aims to ensure the full adaptation of all Syrian children into Turkey's formal education system (Unutulmaz, 2019). In the third model, which is the current model, Syrian children go to public schools that have better educational opportunities than the type of schools in the first two models.

Turkish is the primary language for the official education system in Turkey, and this system rejects other cultures and languages within the school environment. As a result of this situation, migrant children do not have the chance to practice in their native language and to experience their cultures within the school environment. In addition to that, social and academic issues like bullying standardized tests force Syrians to give up on their norms, values, and languages. This issue created a non-welcoming education environment for refugees and assimilated them rather than integrated them.

Literature Review

I read this literature to clarify two main perspectives. The first one is how scholars explain the reasons for the value and identity changes of societies explained in the previous sections. Secondly, the new refugee education paradigm results, which are assimilation and integration, will be discussed. I also address three different themes related to the target group, research content, and target group's experiences in the arriving country. In sum, I am reading literature looking for possible answers to the questions below.

- How are refugees and other migrant groups defined? What is refugee education?
- Who are the Syrian refugees? How are Syrian migrants discussed in Turkey's context?
- What are scholarly explanations for assimilation and integration for refugee children?

Defining Migrant Groups

Our current description of migrants is people who cross a border for any reason. However, immigrants are categorized based on their official status. People who have been forced to leave their country due to civil war, internal conflict, and oppression are defined as refugees. A refugee is concerned about cruel treatment due to their own beliefs, peoples, and political ideas (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951). "Asylum seekers" are used for defining people who have officially applied for

refugee status but have not received a response from the host country (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2019a). In other words, asylum seekers are people who want to have international protection. If asylum seekers' application was denied, they are defined as undocumented migrants in the host country. After that, they can be deported to their home country if authorities catch them. According to UNHCR, migrants are people who prefer to move to another country to live in better conditions. Migrants change their countries to access better education, health, and business opportunities. Also, migrants can change their countries for a short time (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016). Understanding these terms is essential in the refugee education context because definitions affect statistics, and these statistics impact policies. For example, many people believe that immigration education and refugee education are the same, but because of legal restrictions, each group accesses formal education at a different level.

Refugee Education

I am reading literature about refugee education to formulate the importance of refugee education for both refugees and receiving countries. In literature, scholars talk about refugee education from two aspects. The first group speaks about the purpose of refugee education (Suarez - Orozco & Michikyan, 2016; Borjas, 1985; Ali & Hartmann, 2015; Kanno & Varghese, 2010). Policies and practices in refugee education are other fields of this group (OECD, 2019b, Rong & Brown, 2002; Ullman, 1999, Mitchell, 2001). The second group is interested in the content and vital factors of refugee education.

Education is one of the crucial parts of responding to any humanitarian crisis (Sinclair, 2001). However, after migration, refugees have limited access to formal education, and refugee education is in trouble with a non-welcoming education environment, safety concerns of migrants, policies, official problems, and funding. Despite the 1951 Geneva Convention and Convention on the Rights of Child in 1989, which are two critical international convenants that refer to the education right of migrant children, 3.7 million refugee children are unable to access educational facilities around the world (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2019). Authorities try to integrate refugees into their national education system because the integration of refugees into the education system affects refugees' potential, academic outcomes, and the future of the employment market (OECDa, 2019). In their article, "The Purposes of Refugee Education: Policy and Practice of Including Refugees in National Education Systems," Dryden-Peterson and her colleagues (2019) explain the purpose of refugee education in the new paradigm. They suggest that refugee education should prepare refugees for four possibilities in the future: moving to a third country, turning back to their home countries, integration into local society for a long-term stay, and the future of transnationalism. In this reading, they use "vernacularization" to define refugees' integration into the national education system (Dryden-Peterson, et al., 2019, p.348). However, this term contradicts the future of transnationalism because becoming localized requires assimilation in the new context. The main reason for this situation is that host countries do not create enough space for refugees' cultures and values. In refugee education, assimilation is an enormous danger, but host countries' monocultural and mono language practices and scholarly approaches include critical points to promote assimilation. For example, generally, they

concentrate on the academic outcomes of refugee children. The cultural needs of refugee children are ignored (Mitchell, 2001). Also, refugee children need to practice their native language, but learning the host country's language is shown as a more urgent duty in academic studies (Akyuz et al., 2018).

In terms of the content of refugee education, I will address six thematic areas from the literature. These areas are curriculum, certification, teachers, language, type of school, and educational environment. Whereas Dryden-Peterson et al. (2019) suggest that refugees should get used to the host country's curriculum, Makarova and Herzog (2014) emphasize the importance of supporting refugees via additional curricula activities to promote their integration process. "Education is a powerful symbol of the future…, and yet delivery on the promise of education very often depends on formal accreditation by authorities and the possession of validated documentation" (Kirk, 2009, p.41). As is known, a diploma is an essential tool for continuous education. Also, certification is one of the critical factors to enter the labor market. However, in the refugee context, studies do not emphasize the importance of accreditation strongly because the priority is making education accessible.

In the formal education context, there is a lot of research about the role of teachers in education, but in the refugee education context, the number of studies related to the role of and qualification of teachers is limited. In terms of diversity and multicultural education, there is substantial research on teachers in literature, but this research does not focus on refugee children's unique needs (Wiseman and Galegher, 2019). In the refugee context, capacity-building training programs are essential for teachers because

"mainstream teachers" are not qualified to work with refugee children. "Traditional teachers" are not qualified to serve the purpose of migrant children (Wiseman and Galegher, 2019, p. 75, and 78). The main reason for this situation is that teachers are trained for stable conditions. Hence, Mendenhall et al. (2019) suggest that teachers should be supported in crises because they directly affect students' achievement.

The type of school is handled based on population, pros and cons, and the capacity of educational facilities. For example, Dryden-Peterson et al. (2019) mention how migrant children would increase the classroom population if they enrolled in public schools. In the same article, they compare segregated and integrated schools based on their opportunities for them. Albakri and Shibli (2019) share their experience about segregated schools near the refugee's shelters in "*How to improve sustainability: The critical role of education for Syrian refugees."* This article tries to prove how a revised segregated school affects refugee children's academic outcomes.

Another factor that affects refugee education is the language because refugee children, besides desiring to learn the host country's language, they try to protect and to develop their native language (OECDa, 2019). Language barriers are reasons for limited education and for the high percentage of dropping out of school among refugee children. Also, because of difficulty in expressing themselves, some refugee children are sent to special education classes, or despite their capability, they are placed in classes in which unsuccessful children are sent (Suarez-Orozco, 1989).

The last theme in the literature is the education environment. There are plenty of studies that are related to refugees' educational environment (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2006; Albakri & Shibli, 2019; Mitchell, 2001). However, studies investigate this topic through a multicultural education lens. As I mentioned above, they are different. Despite this fact, Riberio and his colleagues point out the education environment as one of the most significant reasons for the achievement gap between refugees and Portuguese students (2019). Also, they underline that problems in the school environment directly affect migrant children's outcomes.

The last thing in the literature that I came up with is about the model and practices of countries (Akyuz et al., 2018; Albakri & Shibli, 2019). I do not label these articles under a theme because they mention the purpose of refugee education while talking about factors. In my reading, I realized that different countries try varying models in refugee education to bolster the integration process of refugees because "there is no single or best integration model. Most countries mix elements, practices, experiences, experiments inspired or imported by one or the other of the main models" (OECDb, 2019, p.23). However, countries' practices are far from ensuring a quality education for refugee children because mass migration happens unexpectedly, and host countries are not prepared for this situation.

Syrians in Turkey

Turkey has the longest border with Syria. In addition to that, Turkey and Syria have many common features like religion, population, history, and cuisine. Before the civil war in Syria, both countries had excellent relations, and crossing borders between

the two countries did not require a visa. Also, many people who live near the border have relatives on the other side of the wall. During holidays and celebrations, thousands of people crossed the border to visit their relatives. Hence, Turkey and Syria have strong historical and social relations.

Turkey hosts the largest Syrian refugee population worldwide by around four million (*World Vision*, 2020). In spite of this fact, the literature is not comprehensive. For me, there are three reasons for this situation: nationalism, funding problems, and Syrians' status. Syrians and their issues are ignored. However, in the educational context, the Turkish education system and its migrants' policies are analyzed mostly. Syrian children's educational experiences are studied based on integration and social inclusion mainly. For example, Akyuz et al. (2018) analyze Turkey's educational policies from the viewpoint of social integration. Unutulmaz (2019) discusses and compares the policies and practices of Turkey in the field. He compares three different approaches of Turkey based on social inclusion. Celik and Icduygu (2019) analyze how Turkish authorities' practices affect Syrian children's integration into the national education system by interviewing parents and teachers. They illustrate the other factors which affect education quality, such as educational policies, experiences, corporate culture and educators, and migrant children profile (p.256). Besides, they highlighted that the language barrier is more complicated for the parent than students in the educational context. However, there are no single studies related to Syrians' assimilation in the literature, but some scholars use assimilation and integration interchangeably in their publishing.

Assimilation vs. Integration

As mentioned previously, refugees pass the physical border after some serious issues like war, conflict, poverty, and drought. Unfortunately, problems are not solved after arriving in a new country. Meeting refugees' economic, social, and educational needs and protecting their cultural values, norms, and languages are the much-debated subjects in post-migration. Assimilation and integration are the two most known concepts to discuss and regulate refugees' life after migration. I would like to read this literature from a Turkish context, but because of limited sources and publishing, I read these two concepts from the global context.

Assimilation

In the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), assimilation is defined as "the process of becoming similar to others by taking in and using their customs and culture." Park (1928) puts forward one of the early definitions of assimilation. He explains that assimilation is a mechanism of intertwining and fusion in which individuals and groups gain the remembrances, feelings, and attitudes of other people and groups and unite with them in ordinary cultural life by sharing their history and practices. Other assimilation scholars, Borjas (1985) and Gordon (1964), state that as long as education facilitates foster integration and mobility in the receiving society, it should cause a decrease in homeland ties. Also, both scholars handle assimilation as an inevitable migration process. Gordon's assimilation consists of different stages. According to him, assimilation starts with close links with the host society. It finishes with ending values conflict after the

subsequent intermarriage and quitting racial and ethnic discrimination. In sum, classic assimilation theorists see the assimilation process as a path for melting pot ideas. In contrast to classic assimilation theorists, Alba and Nee (1997) and Portes and Zhou (1993) do not see assimilation as unavoidable. Alba and Nee (2003) refer to assimilation as an imposition against minority groups who want to preserve their cultural and ethnic integrity.

Old assimilation theory from Chicago School highlights that minority groups would lose or change their all cultural norms and customs to be part of mainstream society. Still, the majority group would not be affected by this process (Alba and Nee, 1997). Portes and Zhou (1993), in *The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants*, offer a new perspective to evaluate migrants' assimilation. Their *segmented assimilation theory* explains the second-generation assimilation's process differences from the first-generation assimilation process. According to this theory, all members of the migrant community do not experience assimilation in a straight line. While some of them find a variety of ways to incorporate the host country's labor market and mainstream culture, some try to stick with their cultures, languages, and homeland. As it varies from individual to individual, it also differs from group to group based on migrant groups' national origins, socioeconomic situation, and ties with the host society. Another important point about this theory is that *segmented assimilation theory* suggests that migrants can choose what should be assimilated to increase connection with home society.

Assimilation has a negative impression in the field because it is related to the power of hegemonic culture. Also, it creates a hierarchy between migrant groups' cultures and host society culture. Besides the sociological and economic context, assimilation is critical in the refugee education context because it is a goal of education (OECD, 2019b; Martinovic et al., 2009).

Integration

There is no single way to explain immigrants' adaptation to the host country (Alba and Nee, 2003). Another aspect of education in the refugee context is integration. Social integration of migrants covers migrants' inclusion into the labor market and adaptation of the host society's cultural norms (Borjas, 1985; Alba and Nee, 2003). While assimilation is required to absorb home country norms and customs, integration gives refugees a chance to sustain their cultural backgrounds and religions and practice their language in the mainstream culture, political life, and labor market (Ghaffar-Kucher, 2006). However, some scholars use both definitions interchangeably (Bean, 2006).

In literature, discussing integration is different than assimilation. While assimilation arguments are based on theory, integration is explored depending on indicators and interaction between migration society and receiving society. For example, Martinovic et al. (2009) make a connection between migrants' "individual characteristics" and communal conditions' "contextual characteristics" (p. 873-874). Individual characteristics refer to the race, color of skin, shared history, cultural similarity, religion, language, age, level of education of migrants. Scholars state that these factors influence

social integration directly. Contextual characteristics cover the estimated size of the migrant group and the unemployment rate. According to them, small immigrant groups integrated more efficiently, and job opportunities create a space for local and migrant society interaction. "The longer immigrants live and are socialized into the ways of the host society, the greater the likelihood of their becoming thoroughly absorbed in it (Guarnizo et al., 2003, p.1212). In compliance with this perspective, integration has a strong connection with duration in the receiving country.

Whereas assimilation and integration have vital importance on migrants and host societies, these concepts are discussed with limited scholars and literature perspectives. Borjas (1985) and Friedberg (1996) employ these patterns from an economic perspective. They suggest that incorporating home society and promoting it in the labor market has a strong relationship with assimilation. Hence, their views are on refugees' social capital assimilation. In *Assimilation in American life: the role of race, religion and national origins* (1964), Gordon investigates assimilation in terms of cultural assimilation, and he indicates that assimilation has a process and happens in different stages. While some scholars focus on the arriving country (Gordon, 1964; Borjas, 1985; Portes, 1993; Friedberg, 1996; Alba and Nee, 1997 and 2003), few of them investigate the effect of the home country on the assimilation or integration process (Martinovic et al., 2009; Salamońska and Unterreiner, 2019). Norman (2019) compares migrant and refugees' interaction with the host country based on countries' regime and democratic culture by comparing Turkey, Egypt, and Morocco.

Conceptual Framework

Syrian refugees will not return to their homelands, at least the majority of them. Since returning is no longer an option, they want to secure their future as soon as possible. Hence, Syrians will try to find common ground with Turkish society. While they keep some cultural norms and practices, they will try to restrict language usage and connection with the home community. Also, assimilation will not happen at the same time among them. It will show differences from generation to generation, sibling to sibling. Therefore, I used Portes and Zhou's (1993) segmented assimilation theory to evaluate Syrians' assimilation process.

Segmented Assimilation Theory

Old assimilation theory from Chicago School highlights that minority groups would lose or change their all cultural norms and customs to be part of mainstream society. Still, the majority group would not be affected by this process (Alba and Nee, 1997). Portes and Zhou (1993), in *The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants,* offer a new perspective to evaluate migrants' assimilation. Their *segmented assimilation theory* explains the second-generation assimilation process's differences from the first-generation assimilation process. According to this theory, all members of the migrant community do not experience assimilation in a straight line. While some of them find a variety of ways to incorporate the host country's labor market and mainstream culture, some try to stick with their cultures, languages, and homeland. As it varies from individual to individual, it also differs from group to group based on migrant groups' national origins, socioeconomic situation, and ties with the host society.

Another important point about this theory is that *segmented assimilation theory* suggests that migrants can choose what should be assimilated to increase connection with home society.

For this research, I employed this theory from three perspectives. According to the Syrian Barometer, there is a significant difference between Syrian's economic and social integration (Erdogan, 2020). Also, Syrians show different integration levels based on location, education level, ethnicity, and interaction with the local community from my experiences. The differences between the integration process and integration models are discussed via segmented assimilation theory. The second perspective covers increasing interaction between Syrian and Turkish societies. This interaction shows differences among Syrians. I investigated the relationship between theory and Syrians' situations. Also, the reasons and factors behind this situation are a part of the research. The last perspective is about Syrians' perspectives on upcoming assimilation and integration. Most migrant parents prefer to send their children to immigrant schools where the language of instruction is Arabic. Although parents' desire to protect their children from foreign cultural influence and assimilation is understandable, full integration into Turkish culture and continuous cognitive development are significant advantages that only public schools can provide. Hence, Syrians will give up on some of their cultural characteristics to be a part of mainstream culture. This possible abandonment will be discussed within the scope of segmented assimilation theory.

This research is designed to be comparative qualitative research. In migration studies, the comparison is the most popular method because "comparisons can help us

understand both the structural constraints surrounding individual experience and understand the specificity of responses to that global experience" (Green, 1994, p.15). Also, "the migrant embodies an implicit comparison between past and present, between one world another, between two languages and two sets of cultural norms" (Green, 1994, p.3). Comparative studies allow scholars to explore how education reshapes migrant children's thoughts about cultural values and their identities. Generally, the comparison of policies and practices of different countries allows a valid measure of education's impact on migrant children. Mitchell and Bateman (2018) argue that a sense of belonging in early childhood education is based on family backgrounds and language that is spoken at home. Bondy and her colleagues (2019) analyzed how race, gender, and ethnicity influence assimilation. Smith et al. (2019), in their *Cultural Values and Behavior among African American and European American Children*, compare two different groups who migrated to the U.S. at the same time.

In this research, I employed Nancy Green's (1994) *divergent model* to compare siblings' experiences in the arriving destination. In *The Comparative Method and Poststructural Structuralism: New Perspectives for Migration Studies,* she launched three new models for comparative studies in migration studies. These models are linear, convergent, and divergent models. The linear model is used to compare an immigrant past and present. It follows a migrant from home country to receiving country and compares changes of migrant. The convergent model is an arriving destination-oriented model. In this approach, different migrant groups are analyzed in the same location. The background of immigrants is used to explain their experiential differences. For this

research, the divergent model would be the best option to compare siblings because divergent studies situate the answer of the difference at the arriving country, not the starting point of the migration (Green, 1994, p.14). One of the other reasons is that despite caring about the relationship with the origin country, I want to focus on what is happening in the hosting country, which is Turkey. Another reason for my choice is that I want to explore which factors have more impact on the adaptation and assimilation process.

Research Questions

1) How do siblings define themselves, their identities, and their sense of belonging in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis in Syria and Turkey? How do their elementary educational experiences shape their identities and sense of belonging?
2) How are assimilation and integration considered in Syrian migrants' discourse?
3) What does make some refugees more vulnerable to assimilation?

Methodology

The Syrian crisis is different from other mass migration movements. The migration in Syria or from Syria to other countries is still continuing but returning is on the table. Syrians' decision-making process in the middle of this congestion is required to analyze deeply.

For this research, I used interviews to collect data. I interviewed children, their parents, teachers, and a society leader. I chose this method because I want to learn

participants' opinions about children's behavior, language, and approaches to their cultures and values. Besides, semi-structured interviews are the most effective way to talk with children and other participants about their feelings (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Interviews were based on open-ended questions because I would like to create a space for participants to share their experiences. To support my perspective and enhance my data, I interviewed at least one parent, teachers, and a society leader of the Syrian community.

In total, twelve children, six parents, four teachers, and one society leader got involved in the research. The researcher conducted interviews as one-to-one. However, when the interviewees chose to speak in Arabic, an interpreter attended the interviews. Children and parents were picked from five different families. Although the researcher was in Turkey, interviews are conducted via phone calls and zoom meetings due to IRB restrictions. For both phone calls and zoom meetings, voice is recorded.

Target Group

People seeking a safe shelter in a country different from their home country after fleeing violence, persecution, or war are defined as refugees (Save the Children, 2019). In October - 2014, Syrians in Turkey received temporary international protection, which makes them refugees. However, they miss out on some of their rights which are protected by international conventions. On the other hand, public schools are fully open for refugees. Therefore, Syrian children can register for a public school where they cannot speak Arabic.

Participants of this research include Syrian refugees in Turkey. According to the Directorate General of Migration Management [DGMM] (2021), more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees live in Turkey under temporary international protection. For this research, I studied Syrian refugees in Turkey. Primarily, I focused on the Syrians in the Southern part of Turkey. The province that I chose is Gaziantep. Gaziantep host 450.000 Syrian refugees, who are 21.5% of the total population (DGMM, 2021). Gaziantep had five refugees camp, but all of them were closed. Syrians in Gaziantep mostly Arab, but there are small Turkmen and Kurd migrant societies.

My participants moved to Turkey from different parts of Syria. They came from Idlib, Aleppo, Latakia, and Manbij. Despite these variations, they do not have cultural norms except some nominal norms. One of the families was part of the first arrived wave of refugees in Turkey. The latest-arrived family came to Turkey three years ago. Even though some of them stayed in a refugee camp, some of them have not stayed in a camp. As a natural result, there are many correlations to discuss and compare assimilation and integration.

Data Sources and Data Analysis

Data sources

The method above provides in-depth information to evaluate which sibling is assimilated and which one is integrated. Data sources include siblings' interests, differences between them, and their interactions with their families, friends, and own

societies. Furthermore, the frequency of speaking Arabic and Turkish and cultural commitment level are other details for my research to consider as data.

As stated before, my primary findings are similarities and differences between the two siblings. Hence, these siblings are my research's leading participants, so my primary data source is interviews with them. As a result, I want to build my research question around this framework. In addition to that, children's parents, other households, teachers, and their society leaders are the secondary participants. I am going to analyze my data from three different themes: cultural practice, connection with both societies, and language practice.

Data Analysis

Based on the interaction of the Syrian community with Turkish society, a new discourse has been created among Syrians to justify or discuss their integration or assimilation. Participants' daily practices, ideological changes, contradictions, reactions to the current situation, and their fears about the upcoming future are data of this research. I followed the clue of cultural and educational effects on the new discourse. I want to examine discussions and conversations deeply because I need to produce enough information to strengthen my research validity. As I mentioned, a new discourse is created because of many reasons, and this discourse brings a new language. Syrians negotiate their future with limited options. Each scenario is supported by different arguments. For example, in order to avoid blaming for not returning, Syrians use historical and religious ties with Turkish society. Their word choices endorse similarities

between the two societies. There are various cultural footprints. For instance, the beginning of Ramadan, the fasting month of Muslims, was different in both countries, but now, Syrians have started to follow Turks. Also, the change in dress preferences of Syrians is easily observed.

Discourse analysis is used to investigate how people experience a topic via their language (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In qualitative research, ethnography is used to explain the cultural dimension in a society's daily experience, behavior, and language (Plano Clark, 2015). In discourse analysis, the ethnographic approach allows the researcher to investigate the relationship between social action, linguistic changes, and culture (Manor-Binyamini, 2011). Hence, I used ethnographic discourse analysis as my methodological stance to analyze my data and clarify the connection between culture and assimilation. For ethnographic researches, observing and spending a long time with the target group is required. However, I did not spend time with the Syrian community in Turkey because of the pandemic. As I mentioned previously, I have been working with Syrians for two years. During these years, I had enough chance to observe them. Also, I worked with more than five thousand Syrian children and their families, so I have enough capacity for the Syrian community. Also, the village that I grew up in is located less than 3 miles from the Syrian border. Hence, my knowledge about Syrian culture is profound and significant.

As a previous social worker, I have witnessed that migrant groups in Turkey have concerns sharing information about their experience because of their complicated official

status in Turkey. Thus, I need to deal with non-shared details, so I used Gee's *the Making Strange Tool*. Besides analyzing what was said, I dealt with what was unsaid (Gee, 2011).

During the interviews, I collected more data than I expected. At this point, I classified interview transcriptions under different categories, but I picked five categories: cultural experiences, cultural transformation, language usage, relationship with societies, and the role of people in assimilation. For the research, I need to know the intensity of cultural changes of Syrian, what leads to assimilation, and why different age groups experience assimilation at different levels. Therefore, I picked this sample to use in this research.

Findings

The majority of Syrian displaced people migrated to Turkey to use Turkey as a transition country. However, because of the agreement between European Union and Turkey, Syrians movement toward European countries is almost stopped. Therefore, staying in Turkey and building a new life is a preferable choice now.

In the previous sections, the problem, background, and method of analyzing data were explained. Before analyzing data, it is crucial to explain how each society perceives the other. Also, factors that affect data analysis need to be explained. Hence, I will clarify the historical ties and the intensity of communication between the two cultures. In addition to that, how Syrians discuss possible returning will be addressed.

Before discussing the findings, I need to highlight that this study cannot be generalized to all refugees or Syrian refugees in Turkey. This study focuses on a particular Syrian group that lives in Gaziantep, and analyzes are valid for only this group.

From Distant Neighbor to Next-door Neighbor

Migration is a phenomenon of my life. Throughout my entire life, I both migrated and have witnessed a few mass migration movements. I saw Iraqi Kurds' mass migration movement in my childhood while they crossed the border and sheltered in Turkey. During my youth, my family had to migrate to Istanbul. And, as an undergraduate student, I saw millions of Syrians cross the border into Kilis, where I lived at the time. At the same time, thousands of Iraqis were sheltered in Turkey as they fled from ISIS. Due to this remarkable influx of migrants, the people that I saw on the street, the food that I purchased and ate, and the music that I heard around me changed almost on a daily basis.

Syria, officially the Syrian Arab Republic, was established in 1946. The Ottoman Empire, which was a Turkish state, controlled the land of Syria from 1517 to 1918. After short-term independence, Syria was mandated by France until Syria gained its complete independence in 1946. Because of Ottoman authority and Islam, Turkey and Syria have many things in common. For example, Kurds are the largest ethnic minority group, and Alewites are the most significant religious minorities in both countries (Mahfudh, 2012). Also, people's names, special days, cuisine and climate, and landscapes are similar. Turkey's longest border is with Syria.

On the other hand, both societies have different perspectives about similarities or differences between each other. *Syrian Barometer* is published every three years. The primary purpose of this Barometer is to observe and evaluate the Syrian integration and inclusion process. Also, this research scrutinizes how both societies see each other. According to Barometer, 81.9% of Turkish citizens do not think Syrians have cultural similarities with them. More interestingly, 61.5% of Turks have not yet had a conversation with a Syrian. Also, the research claims that there is a social distance between the two societies (Erdogan, p.61-65-72, 2020). Both communities have many common features in theory, but the *Barometer* shows that reality is different. It is a widely held view that Turkish society denies the similarity between the two communities. Therefore, this paper analyzes the assimilation and integration process of Syrian refugees into an unfamiliar society: Turkish society.

How were Syrians received in Turkey?

The demonstrations started in Syria on the 15th of March 2011. Demonstrators in Syria demanded better democracy, more human rights, and economic advancement for all groups. The case of Syria was the last step of Arab Spring which started against oppressive regimes in Arabic countries. After the demonstrations turned into conflicts in Syria, and ISIS attacked Syria and gained control of many cities, a mass migration movement started as people fled to neighboring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan.

At the beginning of the migration process, Syrian immigrants were welcomed by Turkish society and government. Turkey implied an open border policy for Syrian immigrants for a long time. However, the beginning of the mass migration was chaos for Turkey because it was not prepared for a humanitarian crisis of such a large scale. As a country, Turkey's previous experience with refugees was that they used Turkey as a transit point to Europe. In the '90s, Turkey hosted thousands of Iraqi Kurds, but they returned to their home countries after internal conflicts have done in Iraq. Despite having various policies, it did not have enough practice and interaction with refugees until the Syria crisis. After that, besides Turkish authorities, civil organizations and individuals organized many humanitarian aid campaigns to support Syrians. It could be said that Turkey has improved its capacity and policies during the Syria crisis.

Furthermore, to reduce xenophobia against Syrians, they were coded coreligionist and oppressed by authorities. Mainstream media used the language for a long time. This language is still in use by official institutions. However, anti-immigrant approaches have tended to rise. Whereas Turkish authorities maintain their approach to Syrian immigrants, Turkish society's position is arguable today. When we look at the *Syrian Barometer,* interactions with Syrians are decreasing. For example, from 2017 to 2019, conversations between Turks and Syrians dropped from 46.1% to 38%, shopping from a Syrian market fell to 19.6% from 26.5%. Also, this research shows that using negative adjectives to define Syrians is a rising trend (Erdogan, 2020).

Possible Future of Syrians in Turkey

The rising trends of alienation among Syrian refugees in Turkey indicate confusion about their future. However, this is more complex because there are contrarieties between current studies and my data. By speaking with families, I found that the reason is rooted in the Syrian culture.

Said, who is one of my participants, and his family were among the first group that sheltered in Turkey. He came to Turkey with his wife and their seven children. They are from Latakia. This city is known as more secular than other Syrian cities. The family stayed in a camp for seven years, and a new child has joined the family in the refugee camp. They moved out of the camp because Turkish authorities had closed the camp to promote Syrian integration. Before coming to Turkey, five children have been registered at a school in Syria. The other three children started their education in Turkey. Said wants to take his family immediately back to their homeland. Said does not believe that they would stay in Turkey forever.

Kadir and Sara were living in Idlib, a northwestern Syrian city. They sheltered in Turkey two times. In 2013, the entire family had fled from civil war. After staying in a camp for two years, they returned to Syria. They left their two daughters in Syria because they had been married. Then, the family returned to Turkey in 2015 because millions of people had sheltered in Idlib from another part of Syria to be freed of the regime's military attacks. As a result of the internally displaced people (IDPs) movement, Idlib residents got into action and headed toward Turkey. Kadir and Sara live with their three

kids, two started education in Syria, and two are now students in Turkey. Both parents want to return to Syria with their kids after the war is finished.

Another family is from Manbij, a northeast city of Syria. This city has a more diverse population than other cities. Unlike other families, their father is educated, and he is a graduate student in history now. Five of the children were born in Syria, and one was born in Turkey. Only two children are current students: one started education in Syria, the other in Turkey. All family members visit Syria on holidays, so still, this family has a solid and ongoing connection with the homeland. Hasan believes that a return to Syria is a strong possibility in the upcoming days. However, he expects that his children must return to Syria after they complete the education process in Turkey.

Serruh took her kids from Syria in 2015, after she lost her husband in the war. She came from Aleppo with three kids. Her son was in sixth grade before migration, and now he is a high school student and preparing for the university registration exam. The youngest one, on the other hand, started education in Turkey. She desires to return to Syria, but she wants her kids to complete their education in Turkey like Hasan.

The last family is from Aleppo too. There are six people in the family. The eldest is a high school student, but he went to school in Syria until secondary school. The youngest daughter is in 3rd grade now and has never lived in Syria because she was born in 2012, after migration in 2011. After a political solution is found between internal conflict sides, he does not want to stay one more day in Turkey.

Society leader came to Turkey in 2012. He has four kids. He is working for MoNE as a counselor to support Syrian kids. In addition, he organizes the Syrian community in the town, and he lobbies for Arabic education in the school. He does not believe that Syrians have a future in Turkey. Hence, he will not stay in Turkey after peace has been made.

Despite these wishes for the future, recent research has an opposing claim. According to the latest *Barometer* study, 51.8% of Syrians will not return to Syria under any conditions. 41.7% of them make a possible return conditional. Their requirements include ending war and changing the current authority or creating a safe zone in Syria. Only 0.2% of Syrians in Turkey declared that they would return to Syria even if the war continued. Syrians who wanted to return to Syria were more numerous than today in 2017 (Erdogan, p.158, 2020).

Syrian Barometer findings conflict with my data at a point. These contradictions can be explained by the current discourse, which was created after the internal conflicts broke out. Differently from today, the Syrian civil war was between two groups: the regime and opponents. During the war, all sides forced Syrians, especially youth and young adults, to call to arms. Some people refused to take arms against their citizens, and they migrated to other countries like Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. However, there is ongoing social pressure on Syrian youths in the receiving countries by their community, but the root of this pressure is in Syria. Two sides (regime and opponents) blame them for not protecting their homelands against imperialist attacks on mainstream media, social media, and most especially on Telegram. Syrian refugees are accused of abandoning their

countries. According to both sides, Syrian youths must take arms. The reason behind this blame is that military service is defined as debt to the homeland. Hence, Syrian migrants are categorized as war deserters. Sometimes these indictments get ugly and annoy Syrian youths. Therefore, Syrians outside of the country feel that they owe something to their country. They believe that they have to do something to pay the debt in a different way. Therefore, they want to be a part of the reconstruction process. Hence, they would like to return to Syria one day. However, this wish is factually inaccurate.

On the other hand, major cities of Syria like Aleppo, Homs, Dara, and Deir Ez-Zor were destroyed. The residents of these cities have moved to another country or another town in Syria. Furthermore, Syria's land is controlled by four different main groups, and ISIS still exists in a few small villages. In addition, sides of the internal conflict have not received a political solution to procure peace yet. From these signs, it could be said there is a fragmented and unstable authority. Six million IDPs in Syria ("*Situation Syria regional refugee response"*, 2020) consolidate this perspective. Hence, there is no possibility of return for Syrian refugees and immigrants worldwide in the near future. However, refusing the possibility of returning is considered a shame among Syrians. The reason behind this is that it can be explained by social pressure. As is described previously, Syrian refugees are accused by moving out of Syria. As a previous Youth Worker, conversations about this have come up many times. In addition to that, Syrians do not want to be exposed to judgmental behavior. Although Syrians may mark the "not returning" option on the survey, they could say that they will return someday when speaking with someone about the same topic.

Assimilation and integration are processes, and they are possibilities of refugees' uncertain future. From *Barometer's* statistics, we can assume that most Syrians will stay in Turkey. Besides, more than a hundred thousand Syrian babies are born every year in Turkey. Talking about Syrians' uncertain future is vital for Turkey because it needs to investigate how refugees pursue their education while simultaneously protecting their culture, language, value system, and identities. Therefore, I analyzed my data along with three themes: cultural practice, connection to home society, and language practice.

Cultural Practice

Regardless of location, when you enter a Middle Eastern restaurant, you are likely to see kebab, kofta, doner, lentil soup, baklava, and kunafah on the menu. Persians, Kurds, Turks, and Arabs claim that the origin of these foods is in their cuisines. There are many events, norms, and places that cannot be exactly shared between cultures, communities, and groups in this field, like foods. It is impossible to make a distinction between society, groups, and nations in the Middle East. While there are many events, norms, and places that are specific to cultures and communities in this region, it is also critical to note that they cannot be read as completely distinct from one another between societies, groups, and nations. Determining starting and finishing points of cultures in this geography is challenging. Hence, talking about assimilation in the Middle East and Mesopotamia is more complicated than doing so in other parts of the world because, except for significant changes like language and religion, following minor changes related to cultural norms is troublesome.

Even though Turks and Syrians have many cultural similarities, there are some distinctions between them. These dissimilarities emerge in music, cinema, and other art forms. From my experience and data, I witnessed some participants listen to Turkish music or watch Turkish TV series, while others insist on watching Syrian TV and listening to Arab singers. This approach is an indicator of interaction between a migrant and home society. The reason behind this sign is the result of the assimilation process.

Identifying the signs of assimilation is complicated in the Syrian community like other migrants in the Middle East. Syrians can sustain some of their cultural activities or norms without the risk of assimilation in Turkey. Thus, Syrians can keep some of their norms, beliefs, and cultural habits. This situation makes it complicated to analyze assimilation; however, there are some changes in Syrian practices. This situation could be explained by Portes and Zhou's (1993) segmented assimilation theory because Syrian refugees make choices for their assimilation process. For example, Syrians will keep their religious practices, cuisine, and speaking Arabic within limited locations like at home. These selections are seen in their education choices. Syrian students remain in between building social capital and protecting their cultural identity.

The Turkish education system is monolingual and monocultural. Turkish is the only instruction language, and other languages are taught for second language education. Except in higher education and a few foreign schools, literature and history of minority groups and other nations are not taught in the Turkish education system. Therefore, there is no space in education for Syrians to practice and connect with their cultures. The desire

of refugees to learn their history, culture, and language in the educational environment is related to refugees' expectations about assimilation (Thomas, 2016).

Yusuf is 12 years old, and he is in 5th grade. He started his education in Turkey. Yusuf has never gone to a school in which the primary language was Arabic. He, Serdar, and Semih are sons of Said. Serdar is the eldest kid in the family. He is a graduate student now. When they migrated to Turkey, he was a high school student. Serdar registered for high school in a camp, and Arabic was the primary language in the high school. Semih was in the 8th grade before migration. Like his elderly brother, his education journey started in the camp. He is now an undergraduate student.

Yusuf	Turkish: Arapça ders istemiyorum. Türkçe ders istiyorum. Daha çok seviyorum (Türkçeyi). Daha çok Türkçe müzik dinliyorum. Bunlar adaptasyonum için önemli. English: I do not want Arabic lessons. I want to Turkish lesson. I like more (Turkish). I listen to more Turkish music. They are essential for my adaptation.
Serdar	Turkish: Sadece Arap çocuklar değil, bütün öğrenciler için Arap tarih dersi olması gerekiyor. Ayrıca, Suriyeli çocukların kültürlerini yeterince öğrendiklerini düşünmüyorum. Türkçe müzik ve filmleri daha çok tercih ediyorum. English: Not only for Arabic kids, Arabic history must teach all students. Also, I do not believe that Syrian children learn their culture enough. I prefer more Turkish music and movies.

Semih	Turkish: Arap dili, tarihi ve edebiyatı Suriyeli çocuklar için gerekiyor çünkü bu konuda geride kalıyor küçük çocuklar. Türkçe müzik dinliyorum, bazen İngilizce. English: Arabic language, history, and literature are required for Syrian kids because little children drop behind about this topic. I listen to Turkish music, sometimes English.

In the interview with their father, he claimed that Yusuf is the furthest person from Arabic culture in the family. Also, his brothers believe that Yusuf will not remain a Syrian Arab in the future. The consensus and approach of family locates Yusuf far away from Syrian culture. They reached this conclusion based on their feelings. Hence, I believe that his family pushes Yusuf into an assimilation process. The words that were said by Yusuf look like the suggested words by his family. Teaching children what needs to be said is a typical Middle Eastern behavior. Middle-Easterners especially do not want to be labeled by foreigners as "bad parents". Hence, they tend to teach their kids what should be said to "outsiders". Therefore, these words are not his words because he wishes to start his education in Syria like his elderly siblings. As a result, he does not lose his connection with his culture, but he is still forced to negotiate the ambivalent messaging from his family.

Although Serdar and Semih are the family members who are closest to their homeland culture, both do not want to return to Syria. It is clear that they are more knowledgeable about their cultures and Syria than Yusuf; however, they do not have any self-defense mechanism against upcoming assimilation. They believe that they can keep them away from assimilation. While both support Arabic lessons for Syrians, they see it

as more urgent to teach Turkish to Syrian children before Arabic. They justify this situation with the likely possibility of staying in Turkey because learning Turkish is the most critical factor of building social capital in Turkey.

Furthermore, Said wants to return immediately, but he tries to convince family members to stay in Turkey. The family does not prefer direct communication about staying in Turkey. Elder households use suggestions instead of commands. Phrases like "Syrian children should learn Turkish better" or "showing a good school performance is important for the future, so learning Turkish is crucial" contain different meanings. One of the motivations behind these messages is that Syrians must be prepared to stay in Turkey. Said realizes that his kids are in the process of becoming distant from their culture. According to him, they do not speak Arabic fluently, and they do not show enough effort to improve their Arabic. Hence, after a possible returning his children will feel as foreign in Syria. Despite this fact, he urges his children to learn Turkish immediately. Although he is not confused and opposed, he tolerates his children being a part of the mainstream culture because he does not want to return to Syria with children who are not "exactly an Arab". Returning with assimilated kids will not be welcomed in Syria. This situation can be explained by post-war discourse.

In the Syria crisis, the situation looks like hunter and collector tribes. During the hunter-collector era, muscle power was the indicator of hierarchy or people's social status. In the Syria situation, joining the armed conflagration has the same effect. Also, this situation gives a moral high ground to child and youth soldiers. When I was working with Syrian children, I contacted and worked with child soldiers a few times. In casual

conversation, they blamed their peers because of their clothes, behaviors, and social activities. Because of post-war discourse, a new cultural norm has been born. This norm creates a hierarchy between Syrians based on their choice to stay or migrate. It is likely to experience discrimination after returning to Syria. Therefore, Syrian parents do not keen on taking their kids immediately to Syria. Thus, parents ignore their kids cultural shift and justify this situation by children educational needs.

There is a distinguishable difference between the culture in Syria and Syrians' culture in Turkey. Whereas Syrians who stay in Syria follow a secular paradigm, Syrians in Turkey are more conservative about their religion. However, patriarchy is a problem for both sides. For research, I only interviewed two mothers because men in the family did not let others participate in the research. Sara is one of the mothers who I interviewed. She goes to an Adult Education Center to learn Turkish because she wants to communicate with her Turkish neighbors. She has five kids, but only three of them live in Turkey. The eldest one is Eyup. He is 26 years old. He was a sophomore in undergraduate before leaving Syria. He fled from Syria because the regime had called him to join the army. He has not registered for a formal education institution but went to two adult education centers to improve his Turkish. Esma is the middle child of the family. She was in first grade before leaving Syria, and now, she is in the 8^{th} grade. The youngest kid is Dundar. He is in 6^{th} grade now.

Dundar	Turkish: Arapça çizgi filmleri daha iyi anlamama rağmen, daha çok Türkçe çocuk programları izliyorum. English: Despite understanding more Arabic cartoons, I watch more Turkish kids' programs.
Esma	Turkish: Kuran dışında Arapça bir şey okumuyorum. Az da olsa Türkçe kitaplar okuyorum. English: I do not read anything in Arabic except Quran. Even if a little, I read Turkish books.
Eyup	Turkish: Suriyelilerin yanında çalışmıyorum ve bu yüzden git gide kültürümden uzaklaştığımı hissediyorum. English: I do not work for Syrians; that is why I feel more and more distant from my culture.

Eyup	Turkish: Kültürel olarak, ben Arap kültürürüne daha yakınım. Muhammed Türk kültürüne daha yakın. Bunda okulun önemli bir etkisi olduğunu düşünüyorum. English: Culturally, I am closer to Arab culture. Muhammed is more relative to Turkish culture. I think the school has an essential effect on this.

Eyup believes that Esma and Dundar have already lost a lot of things about their culture. Sara and Kadir, their parents, have the same idea about this issue. For example, Dundar wants to continue his education in Syria in Arabic. Esma is the most curious person about their home and town in Syria. Dundar is pointed to as the weakest person in

the family for the possibility of alienating from Syrian Arab culture. However, he has more feelings about Syrian culture. He wants to learn and practice more in school. He feels happy when his teacher mentions Syria in the classroom. Therefore, his statement above is a result of social pressure. Also, the ideas of his family do not bear on any arguments.

Esma and Eyup have more positive feelings and ideas to connect with Turkish society. Learning and being a part of Turkish culture is an inevitable process, according to them. Because of their age and birth order, they have more space to explain themselves. Hence, they are free from social pressure. Thanks to freedom, they could speak about their possible future. Both of them keep a distance from their culture and society. Eyup does not want to work for Syrians because they do not want to speak Arabic more. And, Esma does not wish to exercise Arabic to improve that.

Syrians do not know what would happen in the future If they decided to stay in Turkey. Besides, Syrians do not know what would happen If they chose to return to their home country. It is clear that Syrian parents do not want to take their kids to Syria because of some concerns which were emerged in the new discourse. Hence, the parents overlook their children's avoidance of home culture. The younger kids make an effort to connect with their home culture, while their elderly siblings try to interact more with Turkish culture. However, the younger group is labeled as more Turkic in their society while their interaction is less than their siblings.

Children who start their education in Syria have a capacity about Arabic culture, so they do not need to learn more, but at the same time, they do not practice their back-home culture. Syrian children who accessed education for the first time in Turkey do not have enough cultural capacity to practice Syrian Arabic culture in Turkey, but there is a desire to learn that despite their parents not having the same passions. Hence, comparing siblings' cultural practices is not a valid method to produce information in this context. Instead of that, their ambition can be compared. From this perspective, it could be said that elderly siblings' assimilation process is faster than their younger siblings; however, parents and society's social process make them more vulnerable to assimilation.

Connection to home society and interaction with the Turkish community

According to an ancient Mesopotamian myth, Europeans are the children of ancient civilizations in Mesopotamia. During a war between Persians and Medes, a solar eclipse had happened. Medes' religion was based on the solar deity, and the meaning of a solar eclipse was that it was a punishment by their gods. They were convinced that they were being punished because of the war. Then, they decided to migrate to another land in order to escape from the gods' wrath. While some of them migrated to the west part of India, another group of them migrated to Europe. Hence, modern history could have started with migration so that "modern humans are the children of immigration" (Suarez - Orozco & Michigan, 2016, p.2).

Despite physical borders, there are 20.3 million refugees worldwide, and 85% of them live in a neighboring country (UNHCR Refugees Statistics, 2020). Syria has the largest forcibly displaced population in the world, with 13.4 million. More than 6.5

million of the displaced people have fled from Syria to another country. Syrians sought asylum in 130 different countries ("*Refugee Statistics",* 2020). Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq have the most prominent Syrian population, respectively ("*Situation Syria Regional Refugee Response"*, 2021). This means that 9 out of 10 Syrian immigrants live in a neighboring country to their homeland. Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq are members of the Arab League like Syria, so Arabic is the most spoken language, and Arabic is used in public services like education and health. Also, these countries' physical border policies are softer than Turkey's. Hence, connection with home country culture and land is easier for Syrians in these three countries.

The story of Syrian refugees in Turkey is not the same of other refugees around the world. The 86% of refugees live in a developing country (UNHCR – Refugee Statistics, 2021), which means refugees shelter in a neighboring country like Syrians in Turkey. Despite other host countries, Turkey has a better economic and institutional structure. Also, there is an Arabic minority population in the south and southeast part of Turkey. As a result, Syrians migrated to a familiar country. Besides this fact, Syrians still have a solid physical connection with Syria. Also, this connection is supported through Syrians intensive population in the provinces of Turkey. However, association with Syrians and Syria shows a fluctuation. At this point, I questioned my participants' connection with their home society and Turkish society. Also, participants' thought on a possible return to Syria gives a perspective on their connection intensity. The differences between siblings would be a possible answer of who is assimilated or integrated.

On the other hand, to secure the southern border, Turkey changed its open border policy for Syrians. However, the migration towards the Turkish border has not stopped. Therefore, Turkey has started to build refugee camps in the land of Syria. Also, some Syrians made their accommodation destination and set up their tents near Turkey's border. Most of the IDPs are relocated to these camps. In addition to United Nations' institutions and a few international NGOs, Turkish authorities and Turkey-based organizations like the Turkish Red Crescent take responsibility to provide food and humanitarian needs. Due to this policy shift, mobility between the two countries has almost stopped. As a result, Syrians' connection in Turkey with their home country has become emotional rather than physical.

Syrian refugees are in the middle of uncertainty. Both their and their home country's future are blurred. While trying to maintain their life in Turkey, they discuss the possibility of returning to Syria. Hence, they want to keep their ties warm as much as they can. The problem is not voluntary returns; they are afraid of forced return mostly, so their concerns are not to end. Indicators of connecting with home are social circle preference and thoughts on returning to Syria.

Syrians have a considerable population in almost all Turkish cities. Syrian population concentrated in specific neighborhoods, towns, and regions. In ten cities of Turkey, the Syrian refugees' population passed 100.000 (DGMM, 2021). Hence, Syrians have a great connection with their compatriots. Also, recently, Syrians launched many civic organizations to strengthen ties between the Syrian community in Turkey. These NGOs undertake different roles. Despite international and national NGOs in Turkey,

Syrian civil organizations focus on protecting refugees' values, identities, and cultures. For instance, they organize workshops based on Arabic, Syria history, and geography. These organizations try to convince Syrians about possibly returning because, as the Society leader said, it would protect Syrians against assimilation.

Adil and Amine are the two kids of Ahmet. Adil finished his elementary education in Syria, and he started his secondary education in a refugee camp. After five years of teaching Arabic, all his classes are in Turkish now. Amine was born in a refugee camp. She has never seen Syria. She is in the 3rd grade now, and she has been taught in Turkish for these three years. Adil and Amine are 19 and 9 years old, respectively.

Adil	Turkish: Türkiyenin en büyük üç şehri İstanbul, Ankara ve Adanayı biliyorum. Suriyenin en büyük şehirleri Şam, Halep ve İdlib English: As I know that the biggest cities of Turkey are Istanbul, Ankara, and Adana. The biggest Syrian cities are Damascus, Aleppo, and Idlib.
Amine	Turkish: Türkiyenin en büyük şehri İstanbul. Suriyenin Şam olarak biliyorum, çünkü orası başkent. English: Turkey's largest city is Istanbul. As I know, Damascus is Syria's because it is the capital.

Eyup	Turkish: Türkiyenin en büyük şehirleri İstanbul, Ankara ve Gaziantep. Suriye'nin en büyük şehirleri sırasıyla Halep, Şam ve Humus. English: The biggest cities of Turkey are İstanbul, Ankara, and Gaziantep. Syria's biggest cities are Aleppo, Damascus, and Homs, respectively.
Esma	Turkish: Ne Suriye'nin ne de Türkiyenin en büyük şehirlerini biliyorum. English: I know neither Syria's nor Turkey's biggest cities.
Dundar	Turkish: Türkiyenin en büyük şehri İstanbul, ama Suriye'nin en büyük şehrini bilmiyorum. English: Turkey's largest city Istanbul, but I do not know the largest city in Syria.

These responses look like they come from a trivia session. However, I would like to understand how Syrians connect with their homeland. Also, I wanted to look at Syrian children's interaction level with Turkey. In the first family, Adil's answer is mostly correct. He is a high school student, and he joined formal education in Syria, so it is expected for him to give the correct answer, at least for Syria. Amine is wrong about Istanbul but is not about Damascus. However, the critical point is that she knows where the capital of Syria is. Assuming the capital as the largest city is common misinformation. Hence, Amine's response shows her effort to connect with her homeland. Amine speaks Turkish fluently, so she is labeled semi-Arab and semi-Turk in the family. Compared to

her eldest brother, she is more interested in their homeland. According to her father, she talks more about Syria than Adil. She tries to create a defense against assimilation, and she tries to increase with back home; however, her family approach leaves Amine alone for this fight.

In the second family, what Dundar and Eyup said is no surprise for me; however, Esma's response is different than my expectations. According to her parents, she is the most successful family member in the school, but it is a sign of disengagement with both countries; however, I do not think she experiences disengagement at the same level for both countries. For example, she feels that replacing Syrian teachers with Turkish teachers is an excellent thing for Syrian students.

Elder siblings' social circle is more extensive than their younger siblings. This situation is valid for their circles in both countries. Nevertheless, their approach to improving their social environment is different from their younger siblings. Younger siblings try to make friends from Syrian society, but their elder family members have a different perspective to make friends. As mentioned previously, in cultural practice, the focus point is the feelings and ambition with home society. It is clear that younger siblings in the families have more aspiration than older family members to create a connection with Syria and the Syrian community in Turkey.

Language Practice

Turkey is the heaven of languages. Currently, 39 languages are spoken by citizens of Turkey (Erdogan, 2019; *Ethnologue Turkey*, 2021). Arabic is the 4th most

spoken language in Turkey (*Türkiye'de Konuşulan Diller*, 2021). Especially in some southern cities, Arabic is the primary language. However, according to The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 18 languages in Turkey are categorized as vulnerable (Moseley, 2010). It means that they will disappear soon. It can be seen that it is the result of the monocultural system. Not only in the education system but also in other public services, Turkish is the only formal language. As a result, minority group members are exposed to Turkish more than their languages due to education and mainstream media.

My participants' native language is Arabic. Before acquiring and connecting to Turkish, they speak Arabic at home and on the streets. Generally, the first touch to Turkish happens in the school. Before that, they could connect to Turkish via social media, but it is not common and intensive in the Syrian community. My thesis focused on three sub-point to determine the difference between siblings. Fluency in Arabic and Turkish, preferred language for the interview, and frequency of using Turkish out of school are the data to analyze under this section.

Syrians speak Arabic at home and in social life. While Syrian adults can speak Arabic to access public services via translators, children do not have any chance to do that. They have to speak Turkish in schools. At the same time, they want to know how to write and read Arabic because the alphabet of Arabic and Turkish is different, so it requires additional effort.

When I was working with Syrian refugees, the main topic in the field was how we could teach Turkish to Syrians. From official authorities to civil organizations, we believe that Syrians' main reason for communication and connection issues is not speaking Turkish. For this reason, MoNE has changed its refugee education paradigm to solve these problems. Besides, NGOs open dozens of Turkish classrooms. Also, big donors like European Union and UN institutions have donated millions of dollars for these activities. I would say that this approach was too aggressive and that access to Arabic has reduced dramatically.

Serruh and her three kids arrived recently in Turkey. Six years ago, she came with three kids. The eldest one is Faruk, 19 years old. In Syria, he was in 6th grade. Now, he is a high school student and preparing for the university exam. Nergiz is the youngest kid in the family. She was three years old when her family arrived in Turkey. She is in 3rd grade now. Their mother is very sensitive about speaking and learning Arabic. She supports her kids in learning Arabic by teaching the Quran. This situation is the same in all other families. Parents believe that teaching the Quran could help their children to improve their Arabic skills.

Nergiz	Turkish: Arapça okuma yazma biliyorum. Okulda da Arapça konuşuyorum. Sadece öğretmenim Arapça bilmediği için onunla Türkçe konuşuyorum. English: I can read and write in Arabic. I also speak Arabic at school. I speak Turkish with my teacher only because she does not speak Arabic.

Faruk	Turkish: Türk arkadaşlarım daha fazla o yüzden genellikle Türkçe konuşuyorum. Okuma saatlerinde sadece Türkçe kitaplar okuyorum. Arapçamı geliştirmek için sadece Kuran okuyorum. English: I have more Turkish friends, so I usually speak Turkish. I read only Turkish books during reading hours. I only read the Quran to improve my Arabic.

Nergiz speaks Turkish fluently and much better than her brother Faruk. Also, Faruk has the same idea about Turkish speaking ability. Their mother is sensitive about their cultural heritage, so speaking their mother language is a big deal in the family. Serruh believes that while her kids adapt to Turkish society, they will forget their background. Hence, she takes responsibility for that and teaches how to write and read Arabic to kids. However, Nergiz feels more responsible about speaking Arabic. While she limits space for Turkish, her elder brother does the total opposite. Unfortunately, her efforts are not realized by her mother and brother because Nergiz is marked as the weakest point of the family.

Interviews were done in Turkish and Arabic. The researcher left the decision to participants to choose the language for interviews. Participants who started their elementary education in Syria chose Turkish. They were seven people. Even though they can speak Turkish fluently, four in five children who started their education in Turkey preferred speaking in Arabic during the interview. I asked questions in Turkish, and they responded in Arabic.

Speaking Arabic frequently is essential to resist assimilation because speaking Arabic happens in a limited space. Parent's positions are that children must speak Arabic fluently, but at the same time, they have to learn Turkish as soon as possible. Elder kids strictly follow this path, and they instill it with their younger siblings. On the contrary, despite all pressure, younger children try to open more space to practice Arabic. While they fulfill their parents' wishes by watching a few Turkish videos, they use Arabic more in spaces where is not controlled by families, like streets and schools.

Facilitators of Assimilation: Teachers

"Six years ago, I saw a different name on the student list. I understood that he is a Syrian. I was excited because it was not common around me, and having a Syrian made me proud. I mentioned him to all my friends and relatives. Now, half of my class is Syrian, and I am already exhausted. I do not understand them, and they do not understand me either. They live here, and they do not speak Turkish well. I think it is their biggest problem". I heard these words from Aziz, who is a social studies teacher in the Turkish education system. Like Aziz, I interviewed five teachers. Aziz is the most senior teacher in the group, and Leyla is the newest teacher with two years of experience. Although at different levels, all five teachers are not happy about having Syrians in their classrooms. They believe that Syrians are not ready to be educated with their peers because Syrians do not learn anything, and they take from their Turkish friends' time. According to them, the main reason behind this situation is not learning Turkish.

Aziz	Turkish: Yaşadıkları ülkenin dilini bilmeyip, kendilerini ifade etmedikleri için iletişime geçmiyorlar. Bizim milletimizde dilini konuşmayan bir kitleye bir kitleye karşı önyargılıdır ve bu yüzden problemler yaşıyoruz. English: Since they do not know the language of the country they live in and do not express themselves, and they do not communicate. Our nation has prejudices against people that do not speak our language; that is why we have problems.
Mecid	Turkish: Suriyeli çocukların Türkiyede ki kültürü öğrenmeleri için okul ideal bir yer. Suriyelilerin eğitim ortamında dillerini kullanmasını doğru bulmuyorum bu onları hem akademik olarak hemde sosyal adaptasyon olarak geriye götürecektir. English: A school is an ideal place for Syrian children to learn about the culture in Turkey. Also, I do not find it right for Syrians to use their language in the educational environment. This will take them back both academically and in terms of social adaptation.
Firdevs	Turkish: Türkçe öğrenmek adaptasyon sürecinin en önemli parçası. Türkçe öğrenmeden burada devam edebileceklerini düşünemiyorum. English: Learning Turkish is the most important part of the adaptation process. I cannot imagine that they can continue here without learning Turkish.

Burak	Türkçe: Yerel halka gelen mültecilerin dilini öğretemezsin. Bazı milli ve dini değerlerimizi benimsettirmeden onları adapte edemeyiz ve bunu dille yapabiliriz ancak. Birde, Suriyelilerin kendi dilleri ve tarihlerini öğrenmeleri adaptasyon süreçlerini yavaşlatır. English: You cannot teach the language of refugees to the local community. We cannot promote Syrian adaptation without adopting some of our national and religious values, and we can only do this with language. Also, Syrians' learning their own language and history slows down their adaptation process.
Leyla	Türkçe: Arap dili ve kültürüyle ilgili dersler sosyal uyum getirmez. Çünkü ailesiyle Arap kanalı izleyip, Arap yemeği yiyip, Arapça konuşuyor zaten. Bu derslerin olması çocuğu geriye götürür. English: Classrooms in the Arabic language and culture do not bring social cohesion because Syrian is watching Arabic channels with his family, eating Arabic food, and speaking Arabic. Having these lessons takes the child back.

Teachers are not the main participants of this research, but I interviewed them to understand how a cruel system surrounds Syrian students. Teachers are the face of the Turkish education system and the representative of the power of education. Also, in Syrian's education context, teachers have a different role. Culturally, teachers and clergy members act as social leaders. Besides that, at the beginning of the Syrian crisis, teachers took more responsibility than usual. They helped Syrians to register and access opportunities. In addition to that, teachers were unique ways to connect with a life outside of trauma or crisis. Hence, what says by teachers like acquiring Turkish and Turkish culture quickly is vital to Syrians.

Unfortunately, the role that was attributed to the teacher accelerates the assimilation process of Syrians. Mendenhall and her colleagues (2019) suggest that teachers should be supported in crises because they directly affect students' achievements; however, this approach ignores children's cultural needs in the education system. Besides, Turkish teachers do not qualify to work with refugee children because "traditional teachers" are not qualified to serve the purpose of migrant children (Wiseman & Galegher, 2019). The main reason for this situation is that teachers are trained to teach in a monoculture and mono language system in stable conditions. Therefore, Turkish teachers only focus on academic achievement, so they urge Syrian to learn Turkish to gain better academic results. As a result, Syrians refugee children are isolated from their language and culture due to their teacher efforts.

Discussion

In literature, scholars assume that cultural closeness makes integration easier. At the beginning of a crisis, affinity based on race, religion, or kinship increases solidarity. However, the longer duration of crisis dissolves these ties. There is no doubt about Syria and Turkey's closeness regarding geography, history, and culture. However, these similarities are not crucial in Turkey's context because the polarization between the two societies has been picked up recently. Erdogan (2020) states that;

> Immigrant communities, no matter how different or distant their cultural background may be from the host society, will not be perceived as a threat or cause concerns in the host society as long as their number is small. In the case of

> Syrians in Turkey, however, the substantial scope of the mass mobility and the very large number of refugees that arrived in the country have created certain anxieties among Turkish society. (p.145)

This situation makes polarization greater day by day between two societies.

Under this condition, Syrians try to find a solution for the upcoming blurred future. Education plays a crucial role in surviving among the Syrian community because education gives two chances to them. Firstly, they would be qualified for the Turkish labor market. Secondly, having a certification from educational authorities in Turkey is a vital factor for resettlement to another country. Unfortunately, it costs something to Syrians. Hence, Syrians will give up on their cultural norms in order to be a part of Turkey.

Integration or assimilation

Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) evaluates 52 countries' integration policies and grades countries' performances in eight policy areas which are labor market mobility, family reunion, education, political participation, permanent residence, access to nationality, health, and anti-discrimination. Turkey's overall score is 43, categorizing Turkey as a "halfway favorable" country (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). Education score is Turkey's third-highest score after health and family reunion, with 53.

Without a shadow of a doubt, Turkey has done great since the beginning of the Syria crisis. Turkey does not host only Syrians but also hosts more than 1 million Afghan, Pakistani and Iraqi undocumented migrants. Managing and trying to integrate

this population is not easy. For example, more than one million Syrian children are at school age. Only 63% of them are registered for a public school ("*Educational Statistics for Children under Temporary Protection in Turkey"*, 2020). This population is larger than a few European countries' populations. Besides, Turkey's migration management experience is not long-established. However, Turkish authorities try hard to promote Syrians' social adaptation because there is no possibility of a solution on the horizon in Syria.

In other respects, I believe that Turkey intentionally uses the "social adaptation" definition instead of assimilation or integration. The social adaptation is conceptualized around short-term staying in Turkey, and integration is debated for long-term staying. Hence, Turkish authorities avoid using integration for Syrians, and assimilation too. At the same time, the perception of both concepts is different. While integration is recognized as positive and successful, assimilation is comprehended negatively. However, Turkey's practices and MIPEX's assessments show Turkey is on the right track to integrate Syrians into Turkish society. In other words, in terms of policies, Turkey is on the right track. Hence, academia tends to be less critical of Turkey's practice in the field, so integration is used by academia and some NGOs to define the process.

On the other hand, since cutting the connection of Syrian children with their language and culture in the educational environment, this process must be defined as assimilation. Because of this reason, the youngest kids in the families are labeled "almost Turk". However, in the first two educational models, Turkey was on the proper way to integrate Syrians because Syrian students had a chance to practice their language and

connect with their societies. Also, they were supported by additional Turkish language courses. It can be said that elder children in families are integrated. After, Turkey started to follow UNHCR's current refugee education paradigm to prioritize quality education. The new paradigm holds refugees responsible for their integration. In other words, host countries have found a way to avoid paying regard to refugee children's cultural rights. The refugees load the responsibilities of the authorities. The only responsibility of governments is to open their public schools to refugees. Creating a space in the school system for refugees to practice their native language and cultures is not part of the new paradigm.

The new paradigm in refugee education has accelerated the assimilation of refugees; however, the only reason for assimilation is not this paradigm shift. The teachers that I interviewed highlighted the importance of learning Turkish. They believe that Syrian students should limit the place of Arabic in their life as much as they can. However, their behavior creates a cultural hegemony between the two cultures. Therefore, Syrian children see their background, language, and culture as something to get rid of. Besides, the teachers' approach makes their students feel guilty. The teachers I interviewed believe that Syrians do not make enough effort to be part of Turkish society. Turkish culture gives this power to teachers. In our culture, migrants and nomads are identified as stateless. Besides, we also find immigrants responsible for migration reasons. For example, Syrians are guilty of the war in their land. Reasons for blaming change from person to person, but their culture, history, and beliefs are some of the most stated. Thus, migrants have to leave them behind; otherwise, they would live the same

fate. This belief shapes teachers' ideas and words. Hence, they inculcate learning Turkish and Turkish culture to forget Arabic and Syrian culture. By doing this, teachers justify what happens and what will happen in the future. Thus, Syrians are likely to be assimilated soon.

Has assimilation started?

As mentioned previously from *Barometer*, the interaction between Turkish and Syrian society is not enough for cultural exchange. Notwithstanding this fact, Syrian children have enough space to interact with the Turkish community because they can access the Turkish education system. It means that the assimilation process of Syrian refugees has started. Nonetheless, assimilation does not happen linearly. Assimilation follows different paths among Syrians. This situation can be explained by SAT which is conceptualized based on second-generation immigrants' assimilation process. However, this theory is valid for the first-generation and the first-and-half-generation of Syrians in Turkey. SAT suggests that refugees can sustain their values and traditions while trying to integrate into the labor market (Portes and Zhou, 1993). It means that migrants can keep their cultural values if they want. Except for their religion, other cultural values and norms are not redlines. We can read this situation from two perspectives. Firstly, religion gives Syrians a chance to sustain some cultural activities like reading and writing because the Quran is in Arabic, and learning the Quran could help to improve their Arabic. Secondly, Syrians are ready to leave behind their cultural values, which are not the same as Turkish society. Unfortunately, besides race, language, family background, and

religion, in the Turkey context, birth order, social pressure, and distance are other factors that accelerate Syrians' assimilation.

Birth Order

In literature, comparing migrants' generations is one of the most common methods. In this research, I made a comparison in the family. Whereas some families consist of first and first-and-half generations, some also have members from the second generation. In this research, I have found that birth order is another factor affecting the assimilation process. In a typical Middle eastern family, the role of elder siblings is disciplining other siblings and teaching them their cultural values. Hence, elder siblings are more likely to be the most traditional person among children. This research shows that elder siblings are more knowledgeable about their culture and are better at speaking Arabic. If you focus on assimilation, it can be said that the younger generation tends to be assimilated; however, I do not read data from this perspective.

Because of limitations, the younger generation's relationship with their background is limited. As a result, their Arabic fluency and cultural experience are weaker than other households. Despite this fact, young siblings in the family make more effort to strengthen ties with Syrian culture and Arabic. Thus, I analyze assimilation based on participants' ambition and effort about their culture. At this point, younger siblings show resistance while their elderly households are accepting the situation. Unfortunately, the birth order is a counter-resistance for them.

In this research, I do not investigate who is assimilated more. I try to understand who is more vulnerable to assimilation and what makes refugees more susceptible to assimilation. In Syrian families, the youngest kid is pointed out as a scapegoat or black sheep. Hence, families believe that their younger kids will be the first person to give up on their norms, beliefs, and norms. Also, not speaking and writing fluently Arabic well endorses this idea. However, elder siblings are more open than their younger siblings to learn Turkish and acquire Turkish culture. Despite some concerns, Syrian youths do not consider this situation harmful. Although parents' desire to protect their children from foreign cultural influence and assimilation is understandable, full integration into Turkish culture, as well as continuous cognitive development, are significant advantages that only public schools can provide.

Moreover, younger kids do not consider this situation harmful, but they want to connect insistently with their home culture. Their family members' approaches negate this situation because parents try to change other family members' emotional, strong feelings into unlovable reality. The birth order determines the severity of this pressure. While older kids are released to make their choices, parents manipulate more young kids. This manipulation pushes young kids into an inevitable assimilation process.

Furthermore, the birth order gives a representative role to the youngest kid in the family. The younger generation is educated fully in Turkish, so it is likely to be the most successful person in the family in terms of academic achievement. Hence, parents encourage them to learn and practice more Turkish or learn more Turkish cultural customs. As a result, the younger kid will be the first assimilated person in the family

(Friedlander et al., 2002). However, this situation will be a consequence of family desire, not kids' wishes. Birth order is one of the most powerful reasons to understand why it happens to younger kids, not older ones. From this perspective, it can be said birth order makes the younger kid defenseless to assimilation.

Social Pressure

There is an ongoing war in Syria. The Syria crisis is more complicated than in the past. Worst of all, war has created many polarizations among Syrians. One of the polarizations is related to Syrians preference for staying or moving from Syria. People who remain in Syria believe that they are more patriotic, so they criticize Syrian migrants for "abandoning" their country. Syrian youths and children are the targets of this criticism because they are blamed for not protecting their homelands. Families outside of Syria want to protect their kids against this attack. This social pressure scares Syrian families and youths, so families do not wish to send their kids into groups that will despise their kids. Being a part of receiving countries looks warmer under this pressure.

The Syrian refugee community in Turkey is the largest refugee community in the world. Communication within the community is at a very good level through non-profit organizations and nongovernmental organizations' activities. As is mentioned previously, the interaction between the Turkish and Syrian communities is limited. Hence, almost all friends of a Syrian are other Syrians. However, this situation works as a self-control mechanism sometimes. Syrian migrants have a Syrian refugee prototype. Syrian community marginalizes and excludes community members who are not matched with

this prototype. For parents, the only way to save their kids from this vicious circle is by making Turkish friends. They see the school as a place to do that because the interaction in school between two groups is more intense than in other areas. During all the interviews, parents said their kids must be hardworking to integrate into Turkey. One of the meanings of this wish is that their children should create another social environment for them to escape from this situation.

Syrian youths are aware of the situation. Hence, they try all ways to promote their integration process. Families believe that the younger generation is not conscious of the situation, so they try commands or wishes to support them. However, their tactics are like a medallion. On the one side, they have concerns about assimilation. What is the most important point is on the other side of the coin? This side says that Syrian children must be integrated or assimilated soon. Otherwise, social mobility will not happen.

Distance

Despite the past ten years, still, thousands of Syrians change borders. Some of them move out from Syria, some of them try to resettle in a third country. Most Syrians in Turkey live in the cities near the border between the two countries. Hence, what happens in Syria is the order of the day. Also, sometimes they witness the war from Turkey, sometimes they hear the sound of bombarding. These situations and incoming news change Syrians' hope for the future. As new information comes, Syrians' hopes of possibly returning fade. The distance increases the severity of the incident even more. Hence, distance in the Syrian refugees' context has a negative aspect.

Syrians came to Turkey because they did not want to be far away from their homeland. Also, they wanted to locate a place that would make it easier to return to Syria. In their mind, this preference could make logistics and mobility between departing and receiving countries easier. As the war continues, sides of the conflict and the characteristics of war have changed. Also, Turkey has restricted crossing between countries via policy shift. All these factors have ruined Syrians dreams about returning to their homeland. This situation affects all Syrian migrants, but Syrians who live in neighboring countries are involved more.

Not only Turkey but also European countries have more strict rules about their borders. Hence, resettlement to a third country is not even a possibility. In other words, Syrians cannot return and cannot move to another country. Staying in Turkey is the only possible thing on the table for the near future. Also, the situation in Syria takes refugees away from their homelands. Hence, Syrian families believe that their kids must be a part of Turkey as much as they can as quickly as possible. This behavior will expedite assimilation soon.

Conclusion

Migration is the destiny of Middle-Easterners. Throughout the history of the Middle East, migration phenomena have become a part of daily life. Modern history, social and technological developments have not changed this situation yet. Among sub-regions, the Middle East is ranked as the second in terms of the origin of migrants.

(United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division [UN DESA], 2017).

March 2021 was the 10th anniversary of the Syria crisis. During these ten years, the composition of the internal conflicts has changed many times. These changes continue to trigger the mass migration of Syrian refugees and internally displaced people. Up to now, half of the Syrian population has been forced to change its location (*World Vision*, 2020). Many Syrians are sheltered in Turkey because of cultural, historical, and geographical closeness. Also, using Turkey as a passing point to western countries is another reason to migrate to Turkey.

Turkey was not good at migration management at the beginning of the crisis. In the first few years, the public sector did not know how to take a position to meet Syrian needs like education, health, and social support. Despite other public services, changes in education are happening faster. Turkey has tried three different models. As Turkey put new models into service, the number of Syrian students has increased in public education, but accessing Arabic and cultural backgrounds has fallen down. While the elder siblings are educated in Arabic by the Libyan curriculum, younger siblings are now educated in Turkish and the Turkish curriculum. The latest model is built around UNHCR's current refugee education paradigm. The primary motivation of the new paradigm makes quality education accessible for refugees.

After the new model, the connection of Syrians with their norms, values, and language has dropped dramatically. Also, instead of Arabic literature, Syrian history, and

geography, they started to learn Turkish literature and Turkish history. The meaning of this shift is that warning bells start ringing. A society leader of Syrian supports the current education system for Syrian kids. He believes that this system is an excellent opportunity for educational equalization, but he highlights some problems.

Turkish: Suriyeliler geri dönecekler. Orada Arapçayı ve kültürlerini unutmamaları gerekiyor.	English: Syrians will return. There, they should not forget Arabic and their culture.
Turkish: Bu çocuk tarihini, edebiyatını öğrenmeden ülkesine dönerse orada da yabancı olacak.	English: If these children return to their country without learning their history and literature, they will be foreigners there as well.
Turkish: Çocuklarımızın (Suriyeli) kendi kültürlerinden uzaklaştığını görüyorum. Ben ve eşim evde kültürel ve dil destekleyici programlarla çocukları destekliyorum.	English: I see our children (Syrian) moving away from their own culture. My wife and I support our children with cultural and language support programs at home.

Like what the society leader said, hundreds of thousands of Syrian children access quality and formal education in the new model, but they cannot speak their language and cannot practice their cultures in the schools. Because of this limitation, Turkey does not integrate Syrians; it tries to assimilate them. However, it will not be complete assimilation. The first and half generations will be integrated. They will keep warm their ties with both cultures, societies, and languages. Unfortunately, despite all their efforts,

the younger family members will be assimilated partially. Religious practices like learning and reading the Quran will help them connect with their languages.

Syrian do not know what they will do in the future, so this situation makes upcoming assimilation more severe. However, impending assimilation will affect Syrian refugees at different levels. The focus point of this research is not who will be affected more than assimilation. I investigated what makes some refugees more vulnerable to assimilation. In order to distinguish between integration and assimilation, data is analyzed based on three themes: cultural practice, language practice, and connection with home society. This analysis shows that three factors make younger siblings more vulnerable to assimilation in this context: birth order, social pressure, and distance.

Younger siblings in a family are more defenseless to assimilation. It is expected that the second and first-and-half generation will be assimilated quickly. However, in this context, younger kids try to resist assimilation, but their families' approach pushes them into the assimilation process. Families do not believe in a future in Syria, so they want to integrate their kids into mainstream Turkish culture. Whereas they leave the integration decision to older kids, they direct younger kids about this process. Hence, birth order makes the younger kid vulnerable to assimilation in the family.

Another factor is social pressure. After breaking out the internal conflicts, a hierarchy between Syrians has emerged. People who stay in Syria believe that other Syrians are not forced to migrate; they abandoned their countries. Besides, Syrian civic units in Turkey act as a social control mechanism, but sometimes their critiques turn into

a lynch. Therefore, families want to keep their kids in a safe social environment. This approach decreases engagement with the Syrian community, so it accelerates assimilation. The last factor is distance with a negative aspect. Syrian refugees hear negative news every day about their homeland. This situation consolidates Syrian desires to stay in Turkey. Hence, social cohesion, in other words, assimilation, is already accepted by Syrian families.

Syrian refugees will be the third-largest ethnic minority group in Turkey. For now, Turkey provides only fundamental human rights and some second-generation human rights to Syrian refugees. Free public education is one of the vital rights for them. In the long view, free education will be discussed in terms of effects on cultural changes. In the context of Turkey, education is not the only reason for assimilation; family position is another factor for the younger generation assimilation. Despite some concerns, parents are not aware of what will happen to their kids because they rely on cultural and religious closeness. These factors have been discussed by scholars before. This research suggests that birth order, social pressure, and distance to homeland accelerates assimilation.

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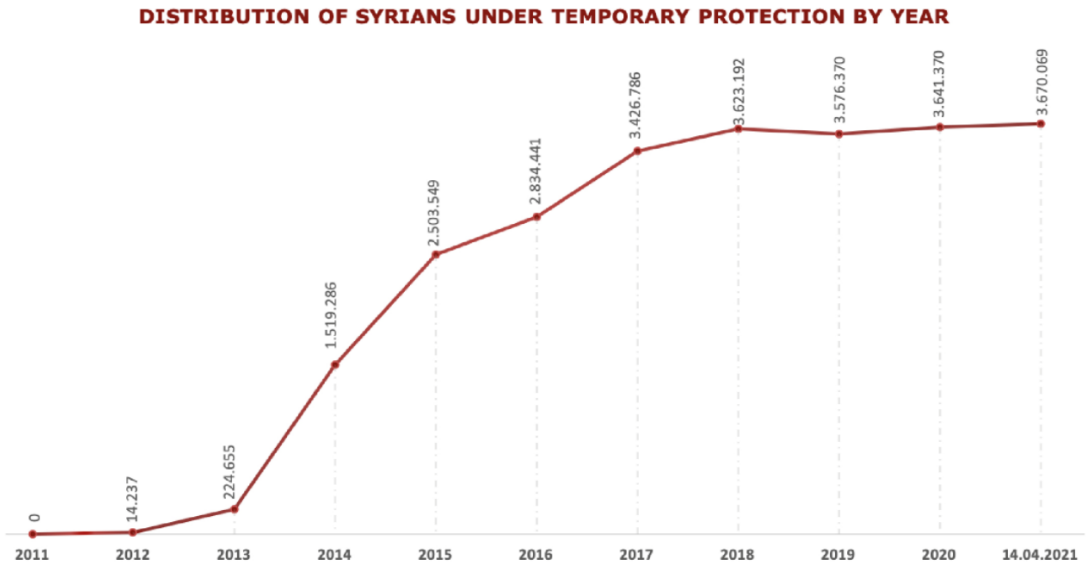
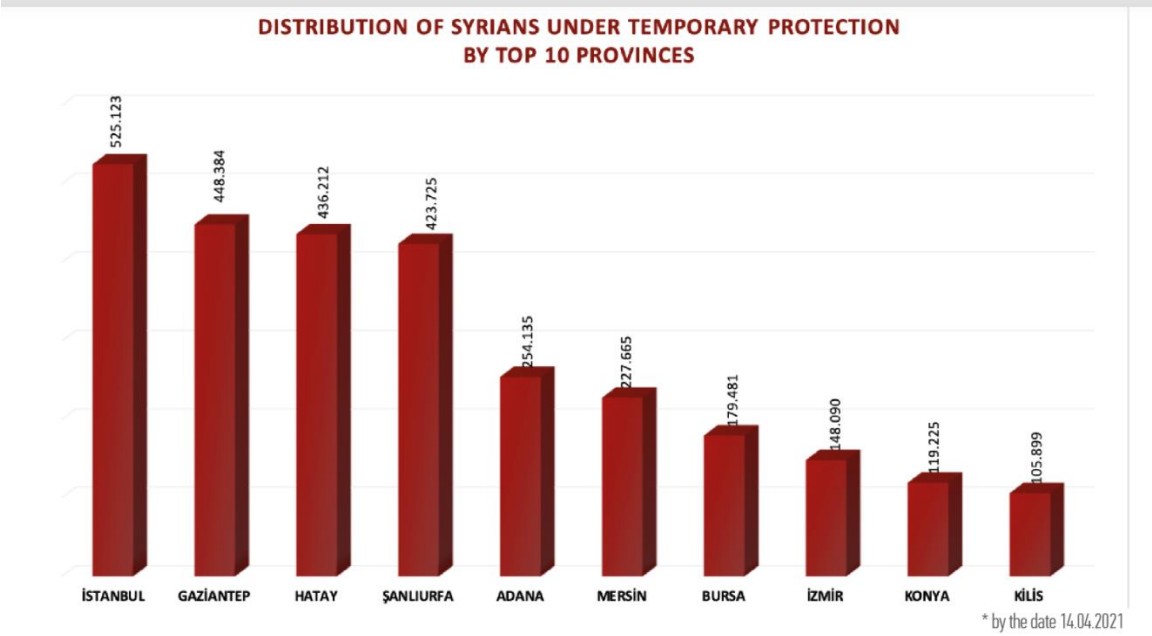
Appendices

Appendix A



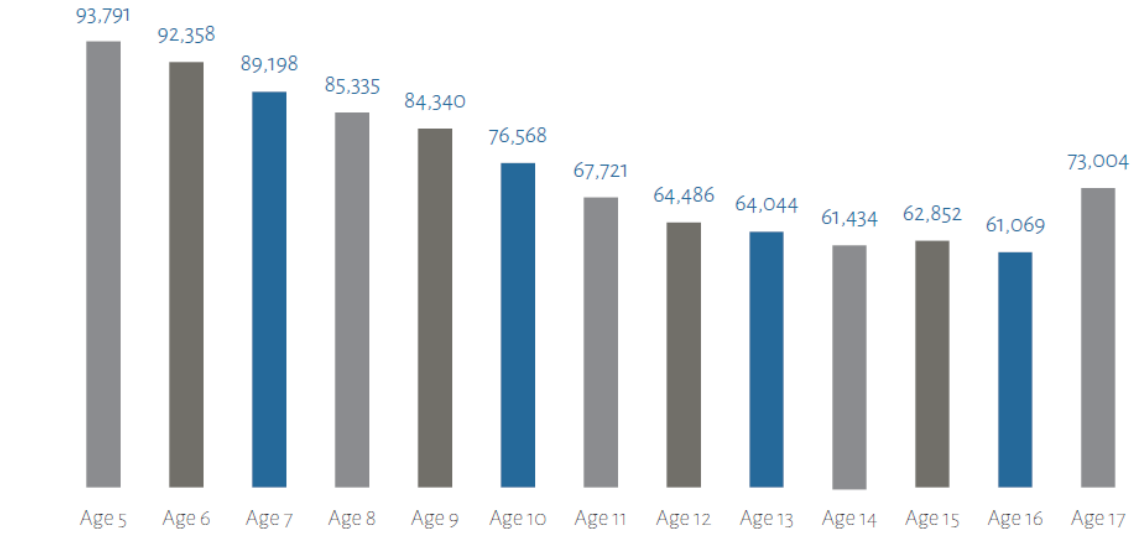
Source: ***DGMM 2021***

Appendix B



Source: ***DGMM 2021***

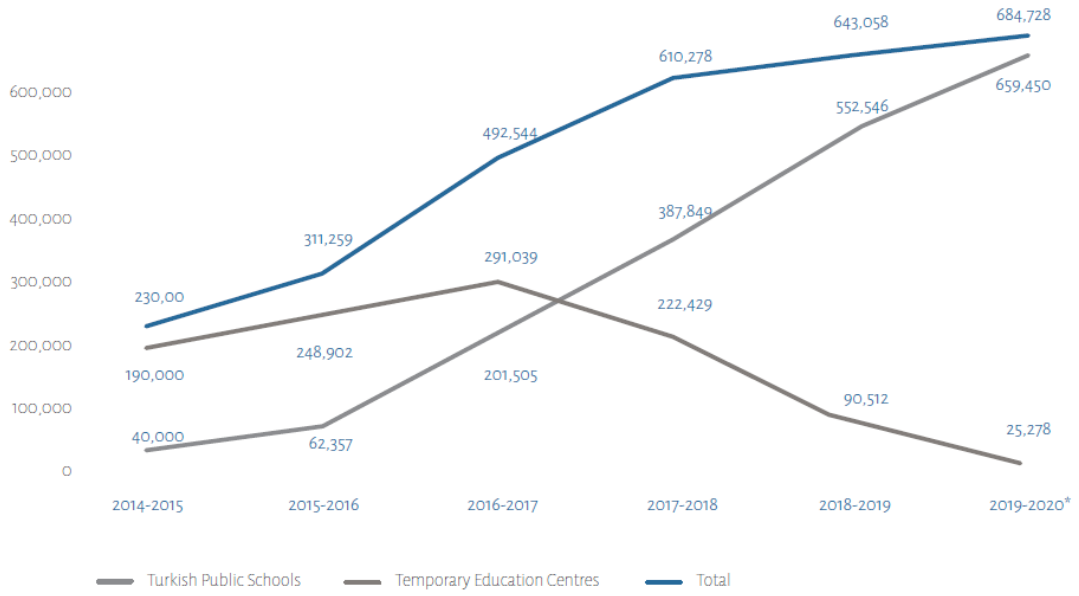
Appendix C



Source: DGMM, October 2019.

Syrians at the School Age

Appendix D



Source: MoNE, October 2019

The Number of Syrian Students in Turkey Public Schools

Appendix E

To what extent do you think Syrians in Turkey are culturally similar to us?

	SB-2017			SB-2019		
	#	%	# %			
They are not similar at all	853	40,8	80,2	1147	50,5	81,9
They are not similar	823	39,4		712	31,4	
They are neither similar, nor not similar	185	8,9	8,9	196	8,6	8,6
They are similar	152	7,3	7,8	153	6,7	7,0
They are very similar	10	0,5		7	0,3	
No idea/ No response	66	3,1	3,1	56	2,5	2,5
Total	2089	100,0		2271	100,0	

Source: *Syrian Barometer*

Appendix F

	Interaction with Syrians	SB-2017			SB-2019		
		Yes	No	No idea/ No response	Yes	No	No idea/ No response
1	To have a conversation	46,1	53,0	0,9	38,0	61,5	0,5
2	To shop (from a Syrian)	26,5	72,7	0,8	19,6	79,9	0,5
3	To establish a business relationship	15,6	82,8	1,6	12,2	87,3	0,5
4	To be friends	14,2	84,0	1,8	12,1	87,5	0,4
5	To have a problem*	10,6	87,2	2,2	12,9	86,7	0,4
6	To fight*				7,7	91,9	0,4
7	To flirt	3,4	94,9	1,7	0,6	99,0	0,4
8	To get married	2,9	95,6	1,5	0,4	99,2	0,4

** "To have a problem" and "to fight" were included within a single statement in SB-2017.*

Source: *Syrian Barometer*

Appendix G – Children Interviews' Questions

1) When and where did you start elementary education?
2) How did you feel on your first day at the Turkish schools? Were you happy?
3) What is your favorite subject in school?
4) Is there any subject or topic which you do not like in school?
5) If you had a problem in the school, who will be the first teacher to share the problem?
6) What is your favorite activity in school?
7) What is the weirdest rule at school?
8) What would you like to change in your Turkish school?
9) Who is your best friend at school?

10) How often do you speak Turkish and Arabic?

11) What are the five most prominent cities of Turkey and Syria?

12) Are there any differences between you and your sibling/siblings?

13) Do you do/have any activities to practice your language and culture?

14) Do you visit your Turkish friends' home to do homework?

Appendix H – Parents and Society Leader Interviews' Questions

1) When did you move to Turkey?
2) How old were your children when you arrived in Turkey?
3) Which of your children do you think is closer to your own culture?
4) Which of your children is more like a "Turk"?
5) Which one is more sensitive when you evaluate in terms of your cultural values?
6) How are your children's relationships with their relatives?
7) Which of your children do speak more Arabic?
8) Which of your children are more excited and enthusiastic about going to school?
9) Which of your child's education are you more satisfied with?
10) Which of your children do share more about school with you?
11) Which child does experience inclusion of your culture in school-related assignments?
12) Do you think your identity is affecting the education of children in Turkey?
13) Do you think there is a differentiation among your children after they start school?
14) Do you have any concerns about your kids' changes?

Appendix H – Teacher Interviews' Questions

1) When did you have the first Syrian student in your class?
2) How many Syrian students do you have in your class?
3) What did you feel when you saw a Syrian student in your classroom for the first time?
4) What are critical issues in the classroom for Syrian students?
5) How does the presence of Syrian students influence your classroom activities and performance?
6) Do you have any alternative plans or activities to support Syrian students?
7) Is the academic performance of Syrian students enough for adaption?
8) Does the Turkish education system meet the needs of Syrian migrants for social adaption?
9) Should the curriculum have more classes or activities about Turkish history, literature, and culture?
10) Is school a place for learning Turkish culture?
11) Should Syrian students practice their language and culture in the school environment to promote their adaption?
12) Do you think Turkish education influences whether Syrian students assimilate or adapt to Turkish society?
13) What is the role of education for social adaption?