KADİR HAS UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
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THE *ISTANBUL EXPERIENCE* AND ITS IMPACT ON TRANSFORMING PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS TURKEY

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM BREMEN AND SÃO PAULO IN ISTANBUL

SAMUEL XAVIER

SUPERVISOR: PROF. DR. ASKER KARTARI

MASTER'S THESIS

ISTANBUL, JUNE 2020

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Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Kadir Has University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's in the Discipline Area of Communication Studies under the Double Degree Program of Intercultural/Transcultural Communication.

ISTANBUL, JUNE 2020

I, SAMUEL XAVIER;

Hereby declare that this Master's Thesis is my own original work and that due references have been appropriately provided on all supporting literature and resources.

SAMUEL XAVIER

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19.06.2020

ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This work entitled THE *ISTANBUL EXPERIENCE* AND ITS IMPACT ON TRANSFORMING PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS TURKEY: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM BREMEN AND SÃO PAULO IN ISTANBUL prepared by **SAMUEL XAVIER** has been judged to be successful at the defense exam held on **19.06.2020** and accepted by our jury as **MASTER'S THESIS**.

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I certify that the above signatures belong to the faculty members named above.

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DATE OF APPROVAL:

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FOREWORD/ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In 2005, I stepped onto an airplane for the first time and traveled across the Atlantic ocean. I had no clue what to expect on the other side of the world, but I knew that it would be extremely different from my home in Brazil. I ventured to a new world full of different traditions, people, food, and so on, and coming all the way to Istanbul, I was mesmerized. The world's cultures have always sparked my interest, but it was through the Double Degree Program *Transcultural Studies/Intercultural Communication* that I discovered my passion for cultural comparisons.

This thesis reflects some of my experiences in Istanbul. As soon as I came here, I immediately felt at home, and the city and its people revealed themselves to be friendly, welcoming, and open-minded. My predisposition towards Turkey changed entirely, and I am extremely grateful for this amazing opportunity and eye-opening experience.

I would like to personally thank Prof. Dr. Asker Kartarı for his support, encouragement, and guidance, which enabled me to learn so much during my time in Istanbul. His way of teaching, his willingness to pass along knowledge, and his love for culture and cultural interactions helped me to grow and to observe the world through new perspectives.

I thank my departments at the *University of Bremen* and at the *Kadir Has University* for this great program that contributed so much to my personal development and advanced my career.

Last but not least, my utmost gratitude to Iris Hähnsen and Sérgio Ribeiro for their financial and emotional support, my friends Helene and Sirin for their help and motivation, and to Verena Mertz and Zahban Wali Ahmed for editing and proofreading this thesis. You are all part of this moment of happiness.

Thank you.

ABSTRACT

XAVIER; SAMUEL. THE *ISTANBUL EXPERIENCE* AND ITS IMPACT ON TRANSFORMING PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS TURKEY: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM BREMEN AND SÃO PAULO IN ISTANBUL, MASTER'S THESIS, Istanbul, 2020.

This work focuses on examining and comparing Brazilian and German students' perceptions towards Istanbul and Turkish people before and after their experiences in Istanbul. Through the research question "Which images do students in Bremen and São Paulo connect with Istanbul/Turkish people in Istanbul?" this study seeks to find out how Brazilian and German students characterize Istanbul and its Turkish citizens, and to what extent stereotypes towards Istanbul and its population are still prevalent in 2020. Through face-to-face and Skype interviews, this study examines the way culture is perceived and points to the importance of reflecting upon *culture* as diverse, evolving, and fluid, when aiming to dismantle generalizations and preconceptions. Lastly, it demonstrates how personal experiences and interaction with the reality of cultures lead to the deconstruction of stereotypes, enable personal growth, demystify cultural prejudices, and facilitate respectful and successful intercultural communication regardless of differences.

Keywords: culture, stereotype, Istanbul/Turkey, Turks/Turkish people, Orientalism, Islam/Islamophobia, media influence, intercultural communication, study abroad

ÖZET

XAVIER; SAMUEL. *İSTANBUL DENEYIMI* VE BU DENEYIMIN TÜRKIYE'YE ILE ILGILI ALGILARI DEĞIŞTIRICI ETKISI: ISTANBUL'DA YAŞAYAN BREMENLI VE SAO PAULOLU ÖĞRENCILER HAKKINDA AMPIRIK ÇALIŞMA, MASTER'S THESIS, Istanbul, 2020.

Bu çalışmada, Brezilyalı ve Alman öğrencilerin İstanbul'a gelmeden önce ve sonraki İstanbul'a ve Türklere yönelik algılarını incelemeye ve karşılaştırmaya odaklanılmıştır. Araştırmaya konu olan "İstanbul'un ve Türklerin, Bremen'de ve Sao Paulo'da yaşayan öğrencilerin aklındaki imajı nasıl?" sorusuyla bu çalışmada, Brezilyalı ve Alman öğrencilerin İstanbul'u ve burada yaşayan Türkleri nasıl karakterize ettikleri ve 2020 yılında hem şehre hem de insanlarına yönelik stereotip düşüncelerin ne ölçüde yaygın olduğu sorularına yanıt bulmak amaçlanmıştır. Yüz yüze ve Skype üzerinden yapılan görüşmelerle kültürün algılanış şekli incelenmiş ve önyargıları, genellemeleri ve stereotip düşünceleri yıkmak için kültürün çeşitlilik gösteren, gelişen ve değişken bir yapı olarak düşünülmesinin önemli olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Son olarak, bu çalışmada kişisel deneyimlerin ve kültürlerin ortaya çıkardığı gerçeklikle etkileşim içinde olmanın nasıl stereotip düşünceleri yıktığı, kişisel gelişim sağladığı, kültürel önyargılara açıklık getirdiği ve farklılıklara rağmen saygılı ve başarılı bir şekilde kültürler arası iletişim kurmayı kolaylaştırdığı ortaya konmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: kültür, stereotip, İstanbul/Türkiye, Türkler/Türk halkı, Oriyentalizm, İslam/İslamofobi, Medya etkisi, Kültürler arası iletişim, yurt dışında okumak

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTEREST IN THE RESEARCH SUBJECT

In the Spring Semester of 2019, I had the opportunity of attending several seminars at *Kadir Has University* in which conceptualizations of *culture* and its relation to a variety of subjects in the area of intercultural communication were introduced and discussed. My participation in these seminars, together with my interactions with local and international students, awoke my interest in wanting to know more about how different understandings of culture might influence peoples' views and actions towards specific ethnic groups. Considering the complexity and range of the subject, I decided to focus my attention exclusively on the preconceptions, expectations, and stereotypes international students held towards Istanbul and Turkish people. Leaning on my own experience, and on how my views had changed during my time in Istanbul, I wanted to find out "which images students connected to Istanbul and its population before coming to Istanbul," and "if/how students' perspectives had changed during their time in Istanbul." The events of the following *Erasmus* trip were pivotal in my decision to engage in the subject.

In May 2019, the *ESN* (Erasmus Student Network) organized a trip for 75 students (mainly from *Kadir Has University* and *Istanbul University*) for four days to Fethiye (a port city and district on Turkey's Southwestern Turquoise Coast). During our stay in Fethiye, all students remained in the same hotel, and a number of activities had been organized for the whole group. I spent a lot of time with these students and had numerous opportunities to develop friendships and engage in conversations, which facilitated casual interactions and honest dialogues. In one of our conversations on the way back to Istanbul, students started talking about culture and cultural differences. They shared personal experiences in Turkey and how their views about Istanbul and Turkish people had been changing during the semester.

As they started talking about "Turkish culture," I asked them what they understood as culture and which images they related to Turkish cultures. All of the answers related to the collective cultural characteristics identifying "the Turkish culture" by traditions and

heritage. Students spoke very enthusiastically about their experiences. Realizing how contentious, modern, and complex the subject was, I decided to continue looking deeper into prevalent images and stereotypes towards Istanbul and Turkish people and how these are connected to peoples' understandings of *culture*.

1.2 RESEARCH TOPIC, STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC

Around the world, people have been bombarded with one-sided images of Turkey and Turkish people (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017). It seems that there is also a tendency of looking at culture as a collective and homogeneous feature of a group (Spencer & Rodgers, 2007; Spencer-Oatey, 2012). The two previous sentences are intrinsically connected: they show how the comprehension of culture has been often limited to collective characteristics of a group, leading people to be unable to distinguish isolated behaviors generating one-sided images. The adoption of a unilateral understanding of culture contributes to the creation of generalizations directly affecting the image(s) of entire groups, communities, and countries. These generalizations precede the formation of stereotypes and prejudices applied to such groups as a whole.

I decided to look more carefully into the importance of comprehending intersectionality between culture and stereotypes addressing the gap in academia concerning current perspectives towards Turkey and its citizens. To do that, I chose to limit the scope of my research to two cities (Bremen/Germany and São Paulo/Brazil) aiming to examine how German and Brazilian students characterize Istanbul and its people. Furthermore, I also wanted to find out through which channels students' perspectives were formed and whether stereotypes towards Turkey and Turkish people were still prevalent among students in 2020. The topic of this investigation has shown to be extremely relevant in raising awareness about the importance of understanding cultural diversity when aiming to disrupt the perpetuation of stigmatized images and stereotypes and to promote better communication between cultures.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW: SCHOLARS, KEY TERMS, CONSTRUCTS, AND CONCEPTS

The topic of perceptions and stereotypes can be investigated from multiple theoretical backgrounds and traced back to different academic fields such as sociology, psychology, ethnography, anthropology, and biology. In this thesis, I chose to look into the subject through works and theories found in the fields of socio-cultural ethnography and cultural psychology, as literature in these two fields intertwines on the topic. Certainly, throughout this paper, I will use references to works outside these fields, yet the theoretical foundation of my research will be built upon concepts in these two fields. The choice of literature, scholars, and theories will be clarified in the next pages and will be presented as follows:

➢ The first sources conceptualize *culture* based on works by Helen Spencer-Oatey (2012) and Geert Hofstede (2010).

➢ These are followed by concepts presented by Asker Kartarı (2019), Judith N. Martin, Thomas K. Nakayama, Lisa A. Flores (1998), PsycInfo database, and Edward Said (1978) discoursing on how *Intercultural Communication*, *Stereotyping*, and *Orientalism* relate to the understandings of cultures and processes of homogenization and stereotyping.

➢ The works of Levent Soysal (2010), Ahmed Saifuddin, and Jörg Matthes (2017) touch upon the subject of Turkish representations in the West and how these are aligned to misinterpretations and negative images attributed to Islam and connected to Istanbul and Turkey.

➢ Lastly, I refer to an important work by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988; 2002) on the role of international media and its corroboration to the process of stereotyping "the Orient."

***What is Culture? A Compilation of Quotations* (2012) – Helen Spencer-Oatey:** Helen Spencer-Oatey is a professor at the University of Warwick, well-known for her published academic work and for conducting several studies in the field of communication. Among her research interests are works on social and cross-cultural pragmatics, interpersonal and intercultural interaction, intercultural discourse, and the

interface between culture, language, and behavior. In *What is Culture? A Compilation of Quotations,* Spencer-Oatey discusses different definitions and concepts surrounding culture looking into several ways of understanding culture, linking them to the history of culture, and examining how different conceptualizations of culture have affected (and still affect) relationships today. Considering Spencer-Oatey's background and academic reputation, her compilation is a credible source in the subject of culture and intercultural communication. Her work is an extensive, complete, and modern study (2012) which provides crucial information for this research.

Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind **(2010) – Geert Hofstede:** Geert Hofstede was an internationally renowned Dutch psychologist with a respectful reputation in the field of intercultural studies. Together with Gert Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov, he developed the cultural dimensions model, which aims to identify cultural differences. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory presents a framework that analyzes how values relate to and affect behaviors and communication within a culture as well as cross-culturally. In his work *Cultures and Organizations Software of the Mind*, he uses the computer as a metaphor to depict how culture works as a shared software of our minds that enables communication. This way, he defines culture basically as an entity we share with those around us (Hofstede, 2010). Hofstede does not specify rules or list details about how to analyze each culture individually but points to the basics of what builds the structure of social landscapes. The universal nature of this model is why I have employed it to assist me in discussing and analyzing the contents of culture and stereotypes in contemporary Turkish society.

Seminars: *Ethnographic and Qualitative Analysis of Culture; Intercultural Communication* **(2019) – Asker Kartarı:** Prof. Dr. Asker Kartarı is one of the most influential figures in Turkey in the field of Intercultural Communication. After completing his studies in mechanical engineering, he acquired a master's degree in sociology and a Ph.D. in Intercultural Communication. He has published numerous articles and works in the field of folk culture and intercultural communication, which played a decisive role in establishing and promoting cultural studies in Turkey. He is currently a professor at *Kadir Has University*, Turkey, where I personally attended two of his seminars in 2019: "Ethnographic and Qualitative Analysis of Culture" and "Intercultural Communication." Concepts presented by Kartarı in his work *Kueltuer,*

Farklilik ve iletisim/Culture, Diversity and Communication were introduced and discussed in the seminars in 2019 and are a fundamental part of this research. Kartarı discusses the importance of understanding the individuality of cultures and how it contributes to the process of successful communication, avoiding generalizations and the perpetuation of inaccurate and misleading images of entire groups.

***Readings in Cultural Contexts* (1998) – Judith N. Martin, Thomas K. Nakayama, and Lisa A. Flores:** Judith N. Martin (Ph.D. in speech communication) is a professor of communication in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University. She works in the field of cross-culturality and has co-authored a variety of works in the field of cultural studies and cross-cultural and intercultural communication. Thomas K. Nakayama also is a professor at Hugh Downs and director of the Asian Pacific American Studies Program at Arizona State University, where he conducts studies in the field of critical theory, cultural studies, and rhetorical studies. Lisa A. Flores (Ph.D., University of Georgia) is an associate professor of communication and ethnic studies at the University of Utah where she teaches on the topics of culture, race, feminism, and rhetoric.

In their work *Readings in Cultural Contexts*, the authors introduce and debate important concepts and theories for the field of intercultural communication, such as the concept of relational dialects through the model of *Intercultural Communication Dialectics* by Leslie A. Baxter and Barbara M. Montgomery (1988). The model focuses on the contradictions in relationships. Among the many relational paradoxes presented in this model, the oppositions between "cultural vs. individual," "differences vs. similarities," and "static vs. dynamic" are particularly interesting for this research as they reinforce the importance of acknowledging differences to elude generalizations and the formation of stereotypes.

***The Intersectionality between Culture and Stereotyping* – The American Psychological Association (APA) PsycInfo database:** The American Psychological Association (APA) is the biggest scientific licensed organization of psychologists in the United States. Not only are psychologists part of this association but over 118,000 members from different disciplines and professions including educators, consultants, and students. This association focuses on the interdisciplinary aspects of behavioral and

societal research. It is a reliable source and a powerful resource to locate and compare scholarly investigations in the field of psychology and across disciplines. *APA PsycInfo database* has been extremely useful in this study, providing a great spectrum of references in different fields allowing comparisons and corroborating to a more complete overview of the correlations and intersections between stereotype, stereotyping, and culture and cultural behaviors.

Orientalism **(1978) – Edward Said:** Edward Said was a Palestinian-American academic, political activist, and literary critic, who examined academic literature in the light of social and cultural politics. He was promoted to full professor in 1969 and published *Orientalism* in 1978 – an influential, challenging and very polemic work. Said dedicated his book to the analysis of Western scholarship of "the Orient," specifically of the Arab-Islamic world. He argues that Western academic works have been intentionally creating and spreading biased and manipulative projections of the East, among them, a false and stereotyped perspective of "otherness" of the Islamic world facilitating and supporting Western colonial policy. Despite being published in the 1970s, *Orientalism* is a fundamental work for understanding how "the West reinvented the East" even building the consensus that "legitimizes" American atrocities in the Middle East. *Orientalism* shows how the West intentionally constructed distorted perspectives of the East for political and economic gain. In this study, the concept of *Orientalism* is indispensable as it allows us to understand how current images and stereotypes towards the East and Islam came about, as well as why they are still prevalent today.

Future(s) of the City: Istanbul for the New Century; Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe? **(2010) – Levent Soysal:** Levent Soysal is the head of the Department of Radio, Television, and Cinema of *Kadir Has University*. Having completed his Ph.D. at Harvard University, Soysal continued his research on how public events acquire new meanings according to time and place, and how these events affect the process of identity construction of individuals and societies. Levent Soysal (2010) talks about the place and future(s) of Istanbul in *Future(s) of the City: Istanbul for the New Century*, and discusses concepts and criteria of a global city, as well as to which extent Istanbul is – or could become – one (Göktürk, Soysal, and Türeli, 2010). According to Soysal in *Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe*, "Istanbul has

not reached its full potential partially because of the negative portrayals of Turkey in international media, which encompasses unenthusiastic and pessimist images of Islam suggesting its incompatibility with the West and with European and American values" (Göktürk, Soysal, and Türeli, 2010). His work is essential to this paper in enriching the discussions about the images towards Istanbul and the role of religion and politics constructing these images.

Media Representation of Muslims and Islam from 2000 to 2015: A Meta-Analysis **(2017) – Ahmed Saifuddin and Jörg Matthes:** Conducted by Ahmed Saifuddin and Jörg Matthes, Ph.D., University of Zurich, professor of communication science at the Department of Communication, University of Vienna, Austria, and since 2014 also Director of the Department of Communication at the University of Vienna (2017), these scholars present a meta-analysis of 345 international published studies from 2000 to 2015, in which the role of the media in the constructions of Muslim and Islamic identity/identities was examined. The research shows how Muslims and Islam tend to be recurrently negatively portrayed (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017). Being a recent and extensive study, Ahmed and Matthes's work is very enlightening and enriches the discussions concerning the role of media forming contemporary perspectives towards Islam and Turkey.

Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media **(1988; 2002) – Noam Chomsky:** Noam Chomsky is known by many as the father of modern linguistics and the most cited living author (Cogswell, 1996). Professor of Linguistics and Philosophy, and Institute Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he has written several articles and works in the fields of philosophy, linguistics, and intellectual history. Among his most influential works, one finds *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, in which he discusses how mass media shapes ways of thinking and therefore also perpetuates structures and political regimes. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988) introduces the *Propaganda Model* as an attempt to explain the relationship between the press and the news and how audiences are influenced by them (Blackhatter, 2015). In this work, the foundations of the model will help us understand how mass media has successfully spread and maintained stereotypes about the East.

1.4 AIMS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This research aims to fill an academic gap and provide research on Brazilian and German students' views towards Turkish people in the city of Istanbul. It hopes to enable comparisons and further analysis of possible changes and developments in the perspectives on Turkey and Turkish people. Considering the many aspects involved in this research, below, I briefly mention some possible contributions that this research paper may have for the field of intercultural communication.

- ➢ There is little to no research concerning perceptions specifically towards Istanbul and Turkish people in Istanbul, and as the first comparative study on the subject with a focus on Bremen, São Paulo, and Istanbul, results of this investigation can be used as a base for further studies in different academic fields.

- ➢ It draws attention to the idea of a world divided into "East" and "West" and how that acts as a reinforcing agent for notions of confrontation based on stereotypes, which can hinder the establishment of a mature, friendly, and respectable relationship between people of different cultures.

- ➢ It relates directly to the field of intercultural communication because this study raises awareness about prevalent prejudices and stereotypes, as the world has been constantly attacked by waves of discrimination and intolerance.

- ➢ It shows how resistant stereotyping is to change. Deconstructing them is a great challenge as these are anchored in deep-rooted ideologies, religions, and traditions.

- ➢ It problematizes the way culture has been perceived. People must be aware of the importance of reflecting upon the understanding of culture to dismantle their prejudices, generalizations, and stereotypes. These generalizations are constructed upon a lack of understanding of culture, perceiving it as collective, inherited, and rigid rather than individual, evolving, and fluid.

- ➢ It demonstrates how effective personal experiences, individual contact, and authentic interactions with the reality of cultures can deconstruct years of deeply settled stereotypes enabling successful, fruitful, and effective interpersonal and

intercultural communication despite the country of origin, religion, or age.

1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study uses a qualitative research methodology. It aims to gain a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation. According to Flick (2007), the qualitative approach is a logical and appropriate method when aiming to explore and analyze subjective interpretation patterns and meaning constructions. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with a variety of students. Semi-structured interviews provided more expressive freedom to the interviewees. They also allow the researcher to tailor questions according to each participant, who also has the autonomy to introduce information that seems relevant to them. This way, both parties can allow themselves a certain degree of independence without losing sight of the research subject.

The interviews were mainly conducted in person, but online video chat softwares were also used. I opted for conducting oral interviews rather than collecting written statements considering that written statements can be revised and "improved," which could possibly compromise the results of the research. Participants gave their statements individually in a calm and private environment. All interviews were conducted in English, documented by a recording device, and transcribed according to the guidelines of Kuckartz (2010) and Langer (2010) with some minor modifications. The names of the participants are kept anonymous.

Transcription codes used in this research:

Code	Meaning
(..)	speaking pause
(…)	quote is interrupted
[ ]	inserted comments (by the researcher)
*	anonymization of names
Italics	foreign words
" "	quote/unquote statements

1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

This work is divided into five main sections: introduction, theoretical and contextual framework, research method/methodologies of data collection, empirical research, and conclusion. The *Introduction* presents the framework in which this study is conducted, problematizing the topic of stereotypes towards Istanbul/Turkey and Turkish people and staging the main literature, concepts, and scholars used in this thesis. The introduction also shows the relevance of the subject in the academic field and reveals the goals and contributions of this study to the field of cultural communication.

The second section, *Theoretical and Contextual Framework*, discusses key concepts, definitions, and theories used in this paper, examining them based on scientific and academic literature. This chapter defines and conceptualizes *culture*, discussing its centrality in intercultural communication. It also discusses the intersectionality between culture and stereotypes as well as the role of Islam and the media constructing and upholding negative images and stereotypes towards Turkey, Istanbul, and Turkish people.

The third section, *Research Method*, provides detailed information about the methodologies and the process of data collection, explaining the steps of the research, clarifying choices of methods, and specifying the process of data analysis. The fourth section, *The Empirical Study*, approaches the research subject systematically, pointing out the difficulties and "bugs" during the research process, presenting and analyzing the data, and then discussing and evaluating results and findings answering the research question(s) as detailed as possible. Eventually, this chapter will also look into previous studies on the perceptions and stereotypes attributed to Turkish people by Germans and Brazilians, contextualizing the results of this research into the academic field. The last section, *Conclusion*, restates the thesis, summarizes the results and the main points of evidence of the investigation, and emphasizes the contributions of this study to the field of cultural communication as well as its importance for further investigations.

2. THEORETICAL & CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework is meant to assist the reader throughout the stages of this investigation. It is composed of three parts. The first part approaches, defines, and discusses key concepts used in this paper, looking into culture and how it relates to the subject of intercultural communication and stereotyping. The second part explores the representations of Istanbul, Turkey, and Turkish people in the West, investigating how these representations might be allied to long and widespread misinterpretations of the East. This part also looks into the role of *Orientalism*, global Islamophobia, and international media corroborating to the formation of stereotypes and negative images towards Istanbul and Turkish people. The third part specifies the boundaries of the research and the selected theoretical and methodological elements used in the investigation.

2.1 A CRITICAL LOOK AT CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

2.1.1 Culture and its centrality in intercultural communication

Throughout history, *culture* has shown to be a remarkably challenging concept, presenting several definitions that vary according to time and field of study. Controversies regarding *culture* are not limited to the multiple meanings and definitions that the term holds, but also to the overuse of the word and to its attachment to political and ideological views, which aggravates its understanding (Avruch, 1998). Edward Tylor presented a definition for culture in 1870, which became very important in social sciences and turned into the foundational definition for anthropology for many years. Tylor defines culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1870). According to Tylor, everyone has culture obtained through the inclusion and participation of an individual in any social group.

For this work, I adopted Tylor's definition of culture together with collaborative definitions of scholars in the field of anthropology, ethnography, and cultural studies:

> Culture is never perfectly shared by individuals in a population (no matter how, sociologically, the population is defined) it has to do with the ways in which culture is to be found "in there", inside the individual. (Avruch, 1998, p. 18; concepts supported by Kartarı 2019; Matsumoto, 1996 and Spencer-Oatey, 2008)

> Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behavior. (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 3)

Once *culture* has been defined for this work, I would like to briefly look into the multiple layers that it presents according to Hofstede (2010). Being aware of these layers and the differences between culture and common human characteristics enriches the discussions in this paper and avoids misguided interpretations of the data collected. These layers are "culture vs. human nature and personality," "culture vs. biology," and "culture as a social construct vs. an individual construct."

The first layer is **culture versus human nature and personality**. Hofstede stated in 1991 that even though "certain aspects of culture are physically visible, their meaning is invisible" (1991, p. 8). The meaning is created by interpretations made by the participants of a group. Simple gestures can be misunderstood and have opposite meanings depending on where and with whom they are used. The "ring gesture" (thumb and forefinger touching), for instance, is understood as a sign of agreement in the UK but as obscene in certain Mediterranean countries. According to Hofstede's model presented in *Cultures and Organizations Software of the Mind* (2010), it is important to differentiate elements of culture from elements such as human nature and personality. The following graphic illustrates this further.
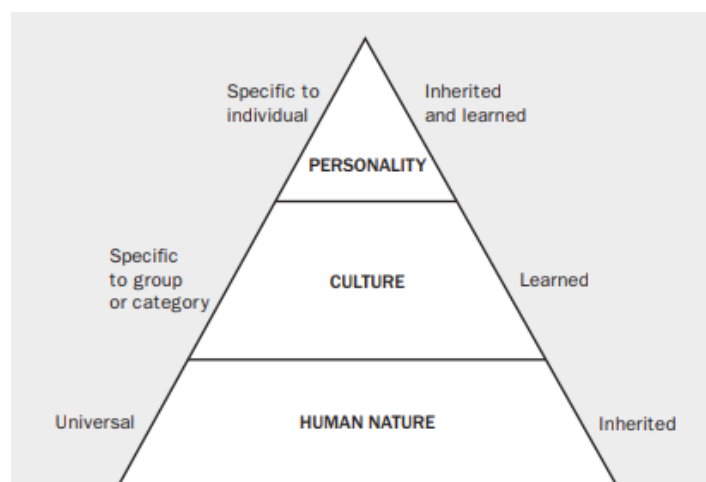
Three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming (Hofstede, 2010, p. 6)

Failing to establish these differences can initiate a process of mischaracterizations of culture leading to misguided generalizations of certain groups of people, as if these characteristics were biological instead of influenced by culture. Hofstede explains the three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming presented in the graphic above as follows: "Human nature" is what all human beings share, independent of country, social status, profession, or the community in which one grows up. It is biologically inherited and constitutes the ability to feel things such as love, hate, fear, anger, joy, and sadness. It constitutes the basic physical and psychological functions in human beings, for instance, the need we feel to associate with others and belong in a social setting. In contrast, "personality" is unique and constituted by a set of individual mental programmings. It characterizes a person in a very particular way and sets apart each specific individual. These peculiarities can be partly inherited and partly learned. "Learned" means influenced, constructed, and modified by collective programming and personal experiences (Hofstede, 2010).

The second layer suggests that **biological inheritance differs from culture**. Culture is learned and developed through the social environment. Today it is clear that culture is not biologically inherited, but because of the lack of research in the past, it was often used to explain recurrent patterns in certain groups. The misuse of the word "culture" to support pseudo-theories of race resulted in catastrophic events such as slavery in America and the *Holocaust* (Hofstede, 2010). The way of dealing with biological needs is biased by cultural traits, however, these are two explicitly different things. We all have to eat, sleep, breathe, reproduce but how people do it (how often, where, and with whom) is a product of the environment in which people grow up. Our environment teaches us what is acceptable and what is not, and our bodies start responding to what we have learned. A good example of how our biology can directly respond to what culture teaches us is the report of Clyde Kluckhohn, an anthropologist who spent many years in Arizona and New Mexico studying the Navajo. He tells the following story:

> I once knew a trader's wife in Arizona who took a somewhat devilish interest in producing a cultural reaction. Guests who came her way were often served delicious sandwiches filled with a meat that seemed to be neither chicken nor tuna fish yet was reminiscent of both. To queries she gave no reply until each had eaten his fill. She then explained that what they had eaten was not chicken, not tuna fish, but the rich, white flesh of freshly killed rattlesnakes. The response was instantaneous – vomiting, often violent vomiting. A biological process is caught into a cultural web. (Kluckhohn, 1968, p. 25–26 cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2012, p. 7)

This example shows clearly how our cultures set boundaries and construct and shape what we believe to be acceptable or not. These beliefs influence our minds and bodies. It is directly related to the psychology of the human mind and can be reflected in the biology of our bodies.

The third layer is **culture as a social construct vs. an individual construct.** Human socialization processes and culture are undoubtedly related: The processes and interactions which construct and define a social human are shaped by culture (and cultural elements). When a child is born, the baby is taught according to the values, principles, and practices of the country and community in which the baby lives. Hence, infants learn to respond to physical and social stimuli in ways expected by their specific, influencing group. Whether a baby will smile at everyone or only on occasions, or which attitudes define "a good boy" or "a good girl," will vary as a result of specific cultural elements (Lustig & Koester, 1999). Naturally, each child develops their individuality, and divergences in character and behavior are expected; nonetheless, whichever way individuals differ from each other in any given culture, there are similarities across families and individuals of that country and culture. These similarities form the basis of a certain culture, providing tools to its participants for building successful interpersonal interactions: "…[C]ultures provide their members with a set of interpretations that they then use as filters to make sense of messages and experiences" (Lustig & Koester, 1999, p. 31).

Discoursing the subject of culture construction and interpretation tools within a culture, Kartarı talks about four steps in the process of culture formation: learning/perceiving/ processing/understanding. Through these steps, a reference frame is created that provides each individual with the "material" through which their culture is built. The reference framework is the knowledge that we acquire through life and through which we come to understand things and make associations. Our own cultures form our personal reference frames. When we see a plate, we think "food"; when we see fire, we may think "hot" or "danger." These associations are the results of an acquired knowledge that is part of our reference frame, forming different paradigms.

These paradigms are built through education, and the reference frame is the arrangement and outcome of organized paradigms; the way paradigms are put together

in our minds gives sense and meaning to things. We behave according to our reference frame, and each individual has a different one. Considering that, it makes sense to understand culture as subjective ways of perceiving the world. Associations are manufactured meanings to things, e.g., years ago in Azerbaijan, blond women were considered "prostitutes" while in other countries, in Brazil, for example, it is a sign of outstanding beauty. Time plays a decisive role in how people understand things, and living cultures are always young, evolving, and changing; "unchangeable cultures can be observed only in museums" (Kartarı, 2019).

Complementing the perspectives of Hofstede and Kartarı as outlined above, Martin, Nakayama, and Flores discuss the *model of Intercultural Communication Dialectics* by Leslie A. Baxter (1988). Through this model, Martin, Nakayama, and Flores (1998) explain the centrality of culture in the field of intercultural communication. Relations, relationships, and culture are intrinsically connected. How each individual perceives, relates to, and communicates within social institutions (such as religion, education, economy, etc.) contributes to the process of building one's political views, faith, etc. Martin, Nakayama, and Flores (1998, p. 41) believe that "culture is the most important global communication issue in the 1990s and the 21st century." Miscommunication generates stereotypes, creates generalizations, and perpetuates oppositions especially since, in the current world, intercultural and international contacts have become part of people's everyday life on a personal and interpersonal level.

The *Model of Intercultural Communication Dialectics* is composed of six different dialectics and seeks to show the important relations among them in constructing intercultural communication. It points out four main relevant areas: culture, communication, context, and power. For this work, I would like to focus on three of the dialectics exposed in this model as they can interfere directly with constructing perceptions. The three dialects are "cultural vs. individual," "differences vs. similarities," and "static vs. dynamic."

The *Cultural-Individual Dialectic* points to the fact that communication is composed of patterns shared by particular groups (like genders and ethnicities), but it also comprises individual elements. A person uses a distinct vocabulary to communicate with people from a certain region because they were born and raised there. This binds this person to

this group, but it does not define them, considering that even though they share similar language characteristics of their group, they (as an individual) have many other features that define and distinguish them (from said group). A "group membership" does not determine the essence of an individual. The *Differences/Similarities Dialectic* highlights the fact that similarities and differences exist among all cultural groups. Even though many experiences are a common part of human experiences, these similarities can work in cooperation or opposition to successful communication, as people tend to overemphasize differences, creating false images and expectations. For instance, imagine two men of two very distinct countries/cultures expecting to become a father. In terms of similarities, we could mention the joy and anxiety of fatherhood, but the way each father expresses love for their child might differ and possibly be incomprehensible to the other father. The *Static/Dynamic Dialect* addresses the fact that culture and cultural practices are always changing, although people tend to see them as constant. Surely, there are characteristics of a group that are consistent over time, but that does not mean that changes/evolutions do not occur. The changes are usually observed by outsiders who have branded a certain group by a supposedly constant characteristic.

Understanding these dialectics and using them in our daily intercultural interactions is still complex and there is no formula for complete, smooth, and unobstructed communication. Nonetheless, acknowledging these aspects and considering the insights they provide leads us to a better communication standard, less saturated by generalizations, prejudices, and stereotypes.

2.1.2 The intersectionality between culture and stereotyping

A stereotype describes "a cognitive structure that contains a perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about a human group" (Hamilton & Trolier, 1986, p. 133). The action of stereotyping is the result and application of beliefs in perception, judgment, and biased decision-making (Judd & Park, 1993). There have been many studies which have proven so far that every society can develop consensual, fixed beliefs about the nature and characteristics of human social groups: "People everywhere find it easy to develop stereotyped ideas of whole nations and agree well enough with

each other to believe their views are consensually validated" (McCrae & Terracciano, 2006, p. 160). According to studies conducted in different countries and continents such as North America, Middle East, and Japan, stereotyping appears to reach "all" groups, communities and countries (Best & Williams, 2001; Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Cuddy et al., 2009; Leach, Minescu, Poppe, & Hagendoom, 2008; McAndrew et al., 2000; Poppe, 2001; Terracciano et al., 2005; Terracciano & McCrae, 2007).

In addition to the studies mentioned above, a series of investigations have been conducted aiming to analyze not only "the ability" to create stereotypes but also the tendency of using them. These studies show that even though it seems that worldwide people of different societies can create and cultivate stereotypes, the tendency to use stereotypes differ from group to group especially between collectivist and individualist cultures (Brewer, Hong, & Li, 2004; Kashima et al., 2005; Zemba, Young, & Morris, 2006 cited in Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, Hamilton, Peng, & Wang, 2007). Stereotyping seems to be less "flexible" in Western cultures than among members of non-Western cultures (Miyamoto & Kitayama, 2002). Collective cultures incorporate situational and contextual factors when explaining behaviors of others, which does not necessarily lead them to abandon stereotyping altogether, but they are less inclined to the generalizations of outgroup members (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2007).

Furthermore, studies conducted in the West show that participants have recurrent difficulty in rethinking and reconciling their pre-established stereotypes towards members of outgroups after experiencing counter-stereotypic behaviors of individuals from these outgroup members (Kunda & Oleson, 1997; Trope & Thompson, 1997). Instead of reconsidering and pondering their stereotypes, Westerners tend to create new categories to fit these counterstereotypical behaviors to somehow maintain and justify prevalent stereotypes (Kunda & Oleson, 1995). In some cases, these counterstereotypical behaviors might even initiate a response of rudeness and violence against outgroup members when "violating" stereotypical expectations (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004).

Discussing stereotyping inevitably leads to topics such as prejudice and intergroup relations. It is one of the largest subjects researched, examined, and discussed in many academic fields (Social Psychology Network, 2009). Processes of stereotype formation

are connected to discussions of culture as a transmitter of knowledge, and upholding traditions is part of the practice of sharing culture and, with it, views about other groups. In this process, stereotypes are passed along as a natural transmission of knowledge without reflection or questions concerning their origin or veracity. Understanding this process shows culture to be the conduit through which knowledge, worldviews, negative perceptions, and prejudices are conveyed across generations.

Recent works on the topic of the transmission of stereotypes in communication have identified stereotyping as "one of the key beliefs that are shared among members of a cultural group" (McIntyre, Lyons, Clark, & Kashima, 2004). Stereotyping unifies and demarcates a group, enabling biased discussion of said group. This might explain why stereotypes are still so pervasive and so readily propagated, as it seems to appeal to the sense of maintaining sentiment of a cultural belonging through the agreement of stereotyping others (Castelli, Pavan, Ferrari, & Kashima, 2009; Clark & Kashima, 2007; Kashima, 2000; Lyons & Kashima, 2001, 2003; Lyons, Clark, Kashima, & Kurz, 2008; Ruscher, 2001; Ruscher, Cralley, & O'Farrell, 2005). Being aware of the connections between stereotyping and culture is paramount not only for understanding how they influence each other, but also for identifying methods through which negative perceptions can be dismantled to avoid the formation and perpetuation of prejudices.

2.2 THE CONSTRUCTION OF IMAGES AND STEREOTYPES

2.2.1 Cosmopolitan (mis)-representations of Istanbul/Turkey

This chapter will provide a brief overview of how Istanbul is depicted (by the international community) and which sources seem to influence Istanbul's international image. Istanbul is an incredibly attractive city full of historical places and landmarks. It includes a vast and expansive history, with settlements dating back to 6000 BC after Greek colonization brought together people from all over the world. The levels of splendor that Istanbul possesses make it "an important cosmopolitan center of the world" (Pamir, 2015, p. 14). The city has not only reached standards of a metropolis but also carried the title of "the coolest city on earth" (*Newsweek*, 29 August 2005 cited in Göktürk, Soysal, and Türeli, 2010, p. 302).

Even though Istanbul has been represented by numerous influential writers since the 19th century, *Orientalism* was the framework adopted by Western writers to depict the East, and Istanbul was included in this construct (Pamir, 2015, p. 14). According to Konrad (2011), Orientalism was the conceptual framework used by the West to construct Ottoman culture and Istanbul between the 18th century and the first half of the 20th century, and that attracted people to visit exotic Istanbul (Konrad, 2011, p. 31-45). Even though Istanbul has been rightfully elevated to the level of a global city and chosen as one of the European Capitals of Culture for 2010 by the European Union, Turkey's non-commensurability and its characterizations as an exotic and religious 'East' continue to limit Istanbul. It has been repeatedly represented by unenthusiastic and pessimistic perspectives towards Islam, which suggests Istanbul's incompatibility with the West and with European and American values. This scenario seems to hinder Istanbul from reaching its full socio-economic potential and plays a negative role in the attractiveness of Istanbul.

In *Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe?* (2010), Göktürk, Soysal, and Türeli highlight the interest of Westerners towards Istanbul because of its authenticity in terms of cityscape and culture (Göktürk, Soysal and Türeli, 2010, p. 8). This authenticity encompasses an eclectic blend of attractions such as the Grand Mosque, Grand Bazaar, Historic Peninsula, the Golden Horn, as well as belly dancers, street vendors, the call to prayer, etc. These elements are always included in the representations of Istanbul (Pamir, 2015, p. 17). Pamir (2015) also discusses the depictions of Istanbul in Hollywood movies, and uses *Stamboul Quest* – the first foreign espionage film to be set in Istanbul (1934; directed by Sam Wood) – as one example of how Istanbul is recurrently stereotyped.

He argues that the construction of Istanbul in *Stamboul Quest* is extensively influenced by *Orientalism* and orientalist stereotyping (Pamir, 2015, p. 29). The film "constructs an understanding of the relationships between the East, referring to the Ottomans, Turks and Arabs in general, and the West" (Pamir, 2015, p. 63). This worldview constructs Istanbul as "part of a monolithic 'Orient', without any differentiation between the Arabic and the Ottoman cultures" (Pamir, 2015, p. 64). Representing Istanbul as part of a 'monolithic Orient' contributes to stagnating the misconceived perspectives and long-lasting concepts established by Western academia and media, totally disregarding the

individuality of Istanbul. The cityscape, culture, and food are characteristics that are always pointed out and referred to as "exotic features," as if they were a summary of Istanbul's essence, restraining the images of the city to a few characteristics appreciated by Western visitors. These representations are eloquently portrayed and do not deconstruct prevalent negative stereotypes: an oriental city appealing to the crave for the exotic, uncommon, and unexpected.

2.2.2 Global media constructing and upholding stereotypes

Media and mass media not only play an important role disseminating beliefs and ideologies, but also creating them through producing and sharing a view of culture (usually disregarding the cultural accuracy of such productions) (Gitlin, 1980; Hall, 1990; Poole, 2002). Images, stories, films, pictures, and photographs in the media generate and allocate symbols crafting a 'common culture' and enabling people to insert themselves into "this culture" (Van Dijk, 1991 cited in Ahmed & Matthes, 2017, p. 221). This insertion happens through media articulation; it dictates dominant social values and ideologies and presents biased interpretations and stereotypical portrayals (Hall, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; Saha, 2012; Van Dijk, 1991).

This chapter discusses media influence in contemporary Western societies using Chomsky's *Propaganda Model* as its framework. I aim to display how his model, despite numerous technological and societal changes, is still pertinent to the analysis and understanding of the contemporary structure of mass media. The *Propaganda Model* attempts to explain the ways in which audiences are influenced by looking into how political consent is generated through institutional biases, coercion, restriction, and manipulation. It also attempts to enlighten the means by which nonconformist opinions are sorted out, marginalized, changed, and distorted (Blackhatter, 2015).

This model operates through five filters:

> ➢ size, ownership, and profit orientation of mass media

> ➢ advertising as the primary income source of the mass media

> ➢ the reliance of the media on information provided by the government, business, and experts funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power

- ➢ 'flak' as a mean of disciplining the media

- ➢ anti-communism/anti-Islamism as a national religion and control mechanism

When Chomsky and Herman published their study (1988), there were fifty main media corporations (television stations, radio stations, movie studios, newspapers, magazines, etc.) in the United States. According to Jason at Frugal Dad (2011), this has changed drastically, and in 2011 only six companies controlled almost all media as a result of the consolidation of the previous fifty corporations. The way corporations are represented by different channels and how they organize themselves under different names gives the public the illusion of an immense variety of sources, and consequently, of a broad spectrum of news and information. Nonetheless, it is an illusion.

> [D]espite an increase in the number of the news channels in the media today, the rate of the increase in the number of news resources and news diversity does not meet the expectations. The advances in the information technology, in particular the Internet, have helped contribute to the variety of channels, yet not led to the diversity of views in the news. (Winseck, 2008 cited in Pedro, 2011, p. 120)

When looking deeper into the politics of Western countries such as the United States and in America in general, the idea of real freedom of the press and freedom of thought is debatable. It seems that mainstream media reflects ideas of powerful social actors securing the consent of actions in fields of politics, economy, culture, religion, etc. One could even talk about a social, political, and economic "agenda of the powerful" who dominate society at different levels, including the state and the government (Pedro, 2011). The second filter is *advertising as the primary income source of the mass media*. Television, radio, newspaper, magazines, and websites include all sorts of advertisements. The more money a company has, the more intense is its interest in investing and spreading its ideas and ideologies (Read, 2002). Such a power automatically puts the interests of any opposition in disadvantage and hinders ideas that contradict the interest of those spreading the news. The very existence of media centralization has created a dependent relationship between media and their financial supporters/providers. This affects investigative journalism negatively, causing the integration of newsrooms with transnational media conglomerates, and creates biased news, forcing professionals to act under this biased structure (Seung-Yoon, 2015).

The third filter talks about the *reliance of the media on information provided by the government, business, and experts*, and explains how information is funded and

approved by the primary sources and agents of power. This filter relates to the source of information: from where news originates and its impartiality. Reporters should be credible sources for the news, but seldom does information reach the public with objective interpretations. Due to the vast quantity of events that take place daily, an easy solution for media organizations is to rely on press releases or other public relations products, which have already been edited and tailored for media usage (Chomsky in Seung-Yoon, 2015). Taking the press in the White House as an example, although there are different media companies represented there, the information distributed comes from the same source, for instance, from the public relations department or a spokesperson transmitting the information according to instructions. This information is then broadcast by different channels leading to the impression it comes from "different sources," and thus must be valid and trustworthy.

The fourth filter is *flak* and can be understood as a negative response or retribution to a media statement. It encompasses simple phone calls as well as lawsuits and bills before Congress directing media statements with complaints and threats aiming to promote punitive actions. These penalties can happen on a personal level, for instance, a person or a team is responsible for what they make public, or these can also direct the company or corporations they represent. There are numerous cases of photographs, videos, and news items published on social networks that are ground for dismissal, trials, and even imprisonment.

The fifth filter is *ideology* – "anti-communism/anti-Islamism." Communism as an ideology has often been presented as the ultimate evil and threat to democracy and free economy (Read, 2002). The same fear is created with images of Islamic fundamentalists. Muslims and Middle Easterners are generally put into one category and often connected to ideas of extremism and terrorism. This ideology, seen in "anti-communism and anti-Islamism," has been used repeatedly throughout history and is still being used for economic and political purposes today. It leads people to believe in the idea of a simplistic dichotomous world that divides people into being for or against an ideal (Read, 2002). Anti-Islamism/Islamophobia, issues surrounding Muslims and Islam, and how media plays a role in forming their representations in the West will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

2.2.3 Representations of Turkish people through "Turks" living abroad

Turkish immigration to Brazil started at the end of the 19th century and continued to increase at the beginning of the 20th century. "Turkish immigrants" became a way to label all immigrants from Arab countries. These were mostly Syrian and Lebanese traders who started touring the large cities of Brazil to sell their products. When Arab immigrants arrived in Brazil, their (Arab) countries were still dominated by the Ottomans. The situation of deprivation and poverty led the Arab population to emigrate. Given the political situation at the time, Arabs had to travel with passports issued by Turkish authorities and as soon as they arrived in Brazil, they were called "turcos" (Turkish) – an irony and cruelty of history (Rodrigues, 2012).

> Raduan Murad and Jamil Bichara discovered America together: they came in the same boat as immigrants and landed in Bahia in 1903. On the south coast of the state, they were called 'Turks', a Brazilian way of designating all Arabs, whether they were from Syria, Lebanon or in fact, from Turkey itself. (Jorge Amado, renowned writer of folkloric Brazilian literature in his work *Bahia*, 1945)

"Turco" became a common way to address all Arabs in Brazil regardless of their origin, and foreign places, foods, clothes, music, and traditions from the Middle East were all branded as "Turkish culture." Even today, prevalent orientalist views continue to lead Brazilians to fail to acknowledge the immense diversity of Eastern cultures.

The history of Turkish people in Germany has a completely different historical background. Early in the 1950s, the lack of workers in Germany led to the recruitment of foreign labor. The initial idea was that foreign workers would stay only for a few years and then return to their home country. What nobody concerned themselves with was the potential of Germany becoming a primary destination for immigrants. Initially, most workers went to Germany without their family, and their living and working conditions remained very modest for a long time. Their goal was to send home a large part of their income, or to save it, so that they could later build a better life in their respective home countries. With time, the temporary stay of many workers became permanent and they remained in Germany with their families.

Unfortunately, the history of guest workers in Germany is a story of mutual misunderstanding and rejection originating from both sides (Trost and Linde, 2015). The newcomers usually did not consider it necessary to learn the foreign language, after

all, they were only temporary migrants. Today, around five million people of Turkish origin live in Germany. The vast majority of them went to Germany to join their families or were born there, but results of a survey conducted by *Die Zeit* in 2008, showed that every other person of Turkish origin still expresses the feeling of not being welcome or being a genuine part of German society (Akyol, 2011). There are major cultural, economic, religious, and political issues linked to this situation resulting in people sharing the same space but somehow living apart from each other.

Analyzing social problems, struggles of integration and their effects on education and job opportunities go beyond the scope of this paper. However, statements such as "Turks don't want to integrate, they don't want to learn German, they only stay among themselves, Turkish children lower the intellectual level of school classrooms, and Turkish teenagers are criminals" (Berangy, 2008) are a reflection of the many problems in social structures. These structural deficiencies play a role in forming negative views towards certain groups which can eventually lead to generalizations. By generalizing, judgmental images are created and disseminated, and whole groups continue to be branded by biased and collectivist perspectives of culture.

2.2.4 Orientalism and Islamophobia

Edward Said was one of the most important cultural figures of the late 20th century. In his 1978 book *Orientalism*, Said makes the influential argument that scholarly writing from America and Europe presents inaccurate, misleading, and stereotyped cultural representations of the East. He argues that "the Orient" is the stage in which the whole East is confined, and believes that the West's biased perceptions hinder a true understanding of Middle Eastern cultures (Said, 1978). The Orient has been often seen as one block, a homogeneous opposition of the West. Turkey and Istanbul do not escape these preconceptions, which are connected to the idea of an Islamic Orient and the numerous prejudices associated with it.

According to Said (2008), in addition to the biased and self-serving orientalist views created by the West, the anti-Muslim discourse in Western media became even stronger after 1979 with the Iranian Revolution and extended into the 1980s during the periodic crises over Libya and the Middle East. Negative perceptions of Islam as anti-democratic

and hazardous to Western values have been growing throughout the years (Said, 2008) as Islam continues to be repeatedly characterized as a monolithic, homogenized, and sexist religion (Korteweg, 2008; Mishra, 2007a). These views display symptoms of a self-centered understanding of culture, referring to Muslims as a uniform group of people without any differentiation and often framed as "heartless, brutal, uncivilized, religious fanatics" (Shaheen, 2009), "militants and terrorists" (Ewart, 2012; Ibrahim, 2010; Powell, 2011), and "motivators of societal problems and conflict stories" (Akbarzadeh and Smith, 2005; Bowe et al., 2013; Hussain, 2007; Ibrahim, 2010; Poole, 2002). Islam is presented from the perspective of the "'white man's world' and Muslims are categorized as 'them' and repeatedly presented as a threat to 'us'" (Osuri & Banerjee, 2004, p. 167 cited in Ahmed & Matthes, 2017, p. 222).

The Runnymede Trust's report (1997), *Islamophobia: A Challenge for All of Us,* studied the relationships between media, Muslims, and Islam looking into how media positioned itself reporting conflicts involving Muslims and Islam (Knott & Poole, 2013). It confirmed the persistent idea of a binary world divided into "the West" and "Islam" which acts as a reinforcing agent for "unreal perceptions" (Poole, 2002). The relevance of this topic in today's world is reinforced by several scholars in different fields who continue to engage in studying Islam and Muslim representation through various lenses of analytical inquiry (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017).

A recent study conducted by Saifuddin Ahmed and Jörg Matthes (2017) presents a meta-analysis of 345 international published studies from 2000 to 2015, in which the media's roles in the construction of Muslim and Islamic identity/identities were examined. The research shows that "Muslims tend to be negatively framed, while Islam is dominantly portrayed as a violent religion" (Ahmed & Matthes 2017, p. 219). Negative images connected to Islam and Muslims became even stronger after the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. Since then, a war against terrorism has been waged and with it also a misinterpretation of who and what these terrorist groups are. Dismantling the idea of a direct connection between terrorism and Islamism has shown to be extremely challenging, and even though many years have passed, stereotypes connecting them continue to be perpetuated (Said, 1979; Read, 2002; Pedro, 2011).

A recent article published in the *Washington Post* (October 17, 2018) discusses the

latest surveys conducted in the United States and Europe on this subject. The surveys posted the question "Are Muslim religious practices more intense than those of other religions and inherently dangerous to Western societies?" The surveys were carried out in fifteen European countries by the Pew Research Center. Results show that between 23 and 41 percent of respondents believe that "Muslims want to impose their religious law on everyone else" (Washington Post, 2018). A comparable survey in the United States revealed that 35 percent of respondents believe that "American Muslims are prone to extremism, and 41 percent feel that Islam encourages violence more than other faiths" (Washington Post, 2018). The hostility to Muslim religiosity in Western newspapers is an example of how global media has been recurrently portraying Islam, Muslims and the Middle East negatively, paving the way to unilateral, inaccurate, misleading, and stereotyped cultural representations of the East and, consequently, of Turkey and Istanbul.

2.3 SPECIFICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This chapter sets the boundaries of the research and provides an overview of the choices and limitations of this work. These are organized in three parts: Boundaries of the Research Subject, Limiting Concepts and Theories, and Research Methodologies and Field. The information in the table is discussed in detail throughout this paper.

2.3.1 Boundaries of the research

Boundaries of the Research Subject	
Interest	Understand how students in German and Brazilian society perceive Turkish people, Istanbul, and Turkey and which elements construct and bias these perspectives.
Topic	The *Istanbul Experience* and its impact on transforming perspectives towards Turkey and Turkish People: An Empirical Study on International Students from Bremen and São Paulo in Istanbul.
Aim	Find out which images students in Bremen and São Paulo currently (2020) relate to Istanbul/Turkey and Turkish people

	in Istanbul.
Preconceptions	In Bremen as well as in São Paulo, similar negative stereotyped images of Turkey prevail, which are probably formed by the media, prevalent Orientalist views, and the representation of Turkey in these respective countries through Turkish descendants.
Concepts and Theories	
Culture	Culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." (Tylor, 1870) "Culture is never perfectly shared by individuals in a population (no matter how, sociologically, the population is defined) it has to do with the ways in which culture is to be found 'in there', inside the individual." (Avruch, 1998, p. 18; supported by Asker Kartarı, 2019; Matsumoto, 1996; Spencer-Oatey, 2008) "Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behavior." (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 3).
Stereotype and Stereotyping	Stereotype: "a cognitive structure that contains a perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about a human group" (Hamilton & Trolier, 1986, p. 133). Stereotyping is the application of those beliefs in perception, judgment, and decision making (Judd & Park, 1993).
Orientalism	*Orientalism* can be defined according to Edward Said (1978) as the Western attitude to perceive Eastern societies as exotic, primitive, and inferior.
Research Methodologies and Field	
Focus Group	Students from Bremen and São Paulo living in Istanbul
Research Style	Inspired by *The Grounded Theory*
Interview Material	Semi-structured interviews
Material for the analysis	Primary source: interviews with students Secondary source: observation

2.3.2 Research questions

Through the research question "Which images do students in Bremen and São Paulo connect with Istanbul and Turkish people in Istanbul?", this study focuses on examining and comparing Brazilian and German students' perceptions towards Istanbul before and after their experience in Istanbul. To answer the research question, I aimed to build a solid foundation (through the following questions) to support it with evidence and examples from my interviews:

- ➢ Which stereotypes towards Istanbul, Turkey and Turkish people might still be prevalent today among Germans and Brazilians?

- ➢ To what extent were the expectations of Brazilian and German students towards Turkey fulfilled after their time in Istanbul?

- ➢ Is it possible to identify sources and channels through which students' stereotypes were/are built? If yes, what are these sources?

- ➢ What are the main factors by which students' stereotypes are influenced? (religion, politics, dress code, gender roles, etc.)

- ➢ How do different comprehensions of culture shape and uphold stereotypes and prejudices against Turks and Turkey nowadays?

3. RESEARCH METHOD/QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND SELECTED METHODOLOGIES OF DATA COLLECTION/ANALYSIS

The qualitative research method has firmly established itself in the sociocultural sciences as essential. It is the logical method of approach for this research since subjective interpretation patterns have shown to be better explored with the help of this method (Flick, 2007). Qualitative research is defined by the attempt to analyze issues in depth rather than to identify occurrences and quantify them. After selecting this method, it was important to establish a logical and sequential framework of data gathering to systematically follow the established criteria (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2009).

Concerning the selected method of data collection and analysis, I used elements of the *Grounded Theory* to build an outline that allows a transparent data codification and categorization. This chapter looks into each of these components and how they are implemented in this research.

3.1 THE PROCESS TOWARDS A REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS

Taking into account the danger of arbitrariness of qualitative research, Ines Steinke (2007) suggests that qualitative research must always adhere to certain criteria. She proposes seven principles to assure the success of qualitative research. I have attempted to apply them throughout my investigations. The first criterion is *intersubjective traceability* – the aim to make research processes transparent to readers. To achieve this, the researcher maintains detailed documentation of the research process, e.g., through a journal or written memos (Steinke, 2007). The documentation should include any preconceptions the researcher might have, and why and how particular methodologies are chosen (Steinke, 2007). This documentation helps the researcher to reflect on their decisions and decide if modifications should be made to the investigations.

The next criterion is the *appropriateness* of the chosen procedures. It includes reflecting on the research question(s), as well as on the choice of the research method, transcription methods, sampling strategy, methodical individual decisions, and criteria

evaluation (Steinke, 2007).

The third criterion is called *empirical grounding.* To fulfill this, researchers should ask themselves whether results are sufficiently supported by examples from the research process. This criterion secures the connection between theory and empiricism. *Limitation* helps to avoid generalizing the results of a singular study. Steinke (2007) points out that limitation can be achieved through methodological safeguards, such as case contrasting or the discussion of deviant, negative, and extreme cases (p. 330). *Coherence* is important for checking whether the statements in the research are consistent or not. Unanswered questions and contradictions are of particular interest (Steinke, 2007). The *Relevance* of the topic questions the contribution, usefulness, and importance of the research (Steinke, 2007). The last criterion touches upon the *Role of the researcher*, making clear their protagonism and responsibility as part of the social world and emphasizing the importance of constant consideration of one's preconceptions, opinions, and views and how these can influence the research process (Steinke, 2007). Thus, it is suggested that one uses tools such as a research diary (in which thoughts and decisions particularly concerning interpretations and subjectivity, are documented and carefully taken into account).

3.2 METHODOLOGIES OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

First presented by the sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), the *Grounded Theory* (GT) is a method that has received much attention in qualitative research. It is an instinctive approach that focuses on generating ideas and hypotheses from the data rather than having these specified beforehand. The GT offers a systematic collection of techniques and guidelines while preparing, compiling, conceptualizing, and analyzing empirical data. Although these techniques should not be "rigid [n] instructions or cooking recipes" (Strauss & Corbin, 1996, p. X), they facilitate transparency and limit arbitrariness in the research process and promise to make qualitative research more analytical and systematic. Glaser was a professor at Columbia University and a student of sociologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld, a quantitative and statistic-oriented researcher. Strauss taught and conducted research at the University of Chicago, an institution where qualitative studies have had a long tradition. These two different

scientific backgrounds encouraged them to synthesize views from divergent directions of research, leading them to achieve exactly what both expected from a grounded theory: to include a variety of perspectives, be open for new and unexpected findings, and aim to "close the embarrassing gap between theory and empirical research" (Glazer & Strauss, 1967, p. VII).

Since then, researchers have been developing, refining, and modifying this theory. Variations in the approach depend on the purpose and circumstances surrounding the research. A combination with other methods is – as Glaser and Strauss (1967) already stated in *Discovery* – always possible. Taking this possibility into account, I was inspired to use some of the techniques presented by this theory to construct my theoretical framework and analyze the interviews. The way I applied a "constant comparison of results" is an example of how I implemented *Grounded Theory*. Comparing and reanalyzing data to ensure constant modifications and analysis which work alongside the data, gave rise to new insights, and questions that revealed "gaps" in the investigation. These gaps were taken into account and, as much as possible, implemented in the following interviews. It was possible to do so for this research as I chose to work with semi-structured interviews, which allowed me to adapt questions according to each participant: "closing the gaps" but not losing focus on the topic.

Codification and categorization process

Inspired by Gibbs' model (2009), the analysis of the interviews in this investigation was conducted in four steps: selection, codification, generalization, and categorization.

Selection: While choosing the passages for the analysis, I did not search for keywords. I selected passages that contextualized students' arguments, allowing me to reflect and carefully interpret what the students wished to express.

Codification: A code is a way to define the content of the data one is analyzing. Specific words and whole sentences can be used as codes for the process of forming categories. I highlighted words and sentences linked with a common idea; this idea is the code (Gibbs, 2009). Codes can be taken directly from the interview passages "in Vivo codes" or paraphrased and generalized – which means that "generalizations" (see table below) can also be used as codes.

Generalization: Generic affirmations on an analytic and theoretical level; these are

always contextualized by evidence that supports each generalization.

Categorization: Through generalizations, I could retrieve and compare information between interviews. By grouping the generalizations and identifying commonalities, I could form categories.

The table below exemplifies the analytical process. A sample of the analysis can be found in the appendix.

Line	Selection	Generalization	Categorization
53	**What else surprised you?**		
54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64	I think alias of the big part, which is the mentality of the people here, I was imagining Turkish people to be mainly like the Turkish people that we have in Germany; and that was one hundred percent fake I was literally realizing that Turkish people in Germany is one thing, Turkish people in Turkey is totally another thing, there is no similarity at all, how both people can call themselves Turks? Because they are definitely not coming from the same country.	Turkish people in Turkey are completely different than Turkish people (and Turkish-Germans) in Germany	Perspectives towards Turkish people (Germany x Turkey)

3.3 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWING

The process of interviewing requires an environment to be constructed in so that the interviewee is not susceptible to hindering feelings such as discomfort, embarrassment, and boredom; nor plagued by inhibitions, internal distractions, and disinterest. In this regard, Trautmann (2010) suggests that interviewers develop questions that are short, clear, and result in narration. Questions should focus on "how" things are happening and "why" they are happening instead of simply "what" is happening. Starting the interview with an informal conversation, a "warm-up" or an "icebreaker" is not only recommended but necessary. A warm-up question is in no way a meaningless introduction to the interview; it can, and probably will reveal a great deal about the person being interviewed. In qualitative research (such as this), the answers to warm-up

questions and icebreakers are usually not evaluated since they can extensively increase the length of the research (Trautmann, 2010).

As this research aims to capture the views towards Istanbul and its citizens, I chose to use semi-structured interviews as it is often chosen in qualitative research to collect data and inquire about subjective perspectives (Helfferich, 2009). A strict and committed sequence does not have to be followed. It is a semi-standardized form of interviewing characterized by a flexible structure that allows freedom to participants and interviewers, similar to casual conversations (Helfferich, 2009, p. 180).

Researchers must be particularly cautious in maintaining a neutral position during the interviews. Insisting on a question or posing a counter-question must be done with care. A suggestive question can bias the interview and compromise the whole analysis (Trautmann, 2010). It can also create an unpleasant and possibly hostile atmosphere, making the interviewee feel confronted and attacked.

3.4 THEORETICAL SAMPLING, FIELD/FIELD ACCESS, AND INTERVIEWS' CONDITIONS

The theoretical sampling determines who will be interviewed and where the data will be collected (country, city, region). Taking part in the Double Degree Program of the *University of Bremen* and *Kadir Has University* provided me with the perfect conditions to build the theoretical sampling for the research. I had easy access to the *Kadir Has University* students and to students of different universities in Istanbul. Furthermore, being a student and participating in several students' activities had a positive impact on the quality of the interviews, as students felt comfortable talking to me and opening up about their personal experiences.

My theoretical sample consisted of eight German and Brazilian students living in Istanbul for at least six months. The six month time period in Istanbul was an important requirement as I wanted to record statements from students who were still not limited by first impressions. A second requirement was the origin of the participants: I decided to not include students of Turkish descent in the interviews, as they may have had a personal and emotional attachment to the subject, which might compromise their

responses.

Aiming for diversity, I chose to interview students from several academic areas, since different fields can produce different perspectives. Students from social sciences, for instance, can approach societal issues differently than students from natural sciences. These perspectives can reflect on their personal experiences and on how they perceived facts in Turkey. The participants were between the ages of 22 and 32 years and the interviews were conducted with male and female students.

Interviews took between 30 and 60 minutes and were conducted either via Skype or in a quiet and private space. I started the interviews with warm-up questions, which helped to create a relaxing and informal atmosphere. I let students talk freely even when their responses did not seem to be directly related to the question posed. There was no time limit for the interviews (or the warm-up questions). Making students feel that they were in a safe space was very important to me. I wanted to make sure that once the interviews started, participants had as little inhibitions as possible and could answer the questions honestly without feeling negatively judged or psychologically evaluated. Most students spoke freely and openly about Istanbul, explaining why they chose to come to this city, and how they felt in Turkey. The interviews developed naturally as friendly and casual conversations.

3.5 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you decide to come to Turkey? Did you always want to come here, or was it something that happened "spontaneously"? (Think about the reasons why you did or did not want to come.)

2. Which thoughts did you connect to Turkey before coming here? (What were your feelings and expectations regarding the country, people, cultures, politics, religions, etc.?)

3. Through which channels did these images emerge? (How do you think that the thoughts and ideas that you had of Turkey were formed? Give examples.)

4. After your time in Istanbul, has the city reinforced or dismantled your expectations? How? Feel free to give examples.

5. Before living in Istanbul, did you make a distinction between Istanbul and other cities in Turkey? If yes, how? Which thoughts did you previously connect to Istanbul?

6. Thinking about your family, friends, and the people that you know in your home country, do you think they differentiate between Istanbul and other cities in Turkey? If yes, how? (What kind of images do you think people connect to Istanbul in your home country? Are these different from the ideas connected to the rest of Turkey?)

In case the participant connects their preconceptions of Turkey and Istanbul to the topic of religion and Islam, I will also ask the following questions:

7. Which images do you think people connect to Islam and Muslims in your home country? If you feel comfortable, please elaborate on the topic and give your personal opinion about your expectations of it. How do you think that these images were formed? Through which channels? Give examples.

8. Did your views about Islam, Muslims, and the place of religion in Turkish society change after your time in Istanbul? How?

9. Based on your experiences in Istanbul, could you summarize your opinions before and after your time abroad?

10. Would you like to add anything related to the topics that we talked about?

4. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: THE *ISTANBUL EXPERIENCE* AND ITS IMPACT ON TRANSFORMING PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS TURKEY

An Empirical Study on International Students from Bremen and São Paulo in Istanbul

This section presents and discusses Brazilian and German students' perspectives towards Istanbul/Turkey building a comparison of their perceptions before and after their time in Istanbul. Students' views are presented, interpreted, discussed, and contextualized in the next four chapters: 1) restrictions and advertences concerning data and data collection, 2) data analysis/presenting results and findings, 3) discussing and contextualizing results, and 4) locating results in the research field.

4.1 RESTRICTIONS AND ADVERTENCES CONCERNING DATA AND DATA COLLECTION

The following paragraphs address the difficulties faced during the investigation and how these might have influenced the results of this research. Acknowledging them is important to a more honest and objective evaluation of the data.

Face-to-face vs. Skype interviews: Interviews were conducted individually either at the participant's home or in a café. The casual setting created a relaxed atmosphere, resulting in friendly and natural conversations. Initially, I wanted to conduct all interviews face-to-face. Unfortunately, some students had to leave Istanbul, and because of the Covid-19 crisis, the remaining interviews had to be conducted via Skype, in which I perceived students to be less talkative than in the face-to-face interviews.

Turkey = Istanbul: The participants referred to Turkey and Istanbul interchangeably as if country and city were the same. However, students' intentions usually became clear within the interview context.

The language barrier: I decided to conduct the interviews in English to avoid translating students' statements, which could affect the authenticity and originality of the research. On the one hand, this allowed me to use students' direct quotes, which enriched the discussions; on the other hand, English was not the students' first language,

and the degree to which they were comfortable with the language varied from student to student. I did not notice that students felt inhibited or restricted to express their thoughts, but there is a possibility that responses were limited because of the language.

Gender discrepancy: I planned to conduct interviews with both genders equally, which eventually was not possible. Nonetheless, I could profit from this situation as one of the main criticisms in the interviews was gender inequality, namely, the role of women in Turkish society. Female students' personal experiences contributed significantly to the discussions in the research.

Turkish students: During my semesters in Istanbul, I had the chance to talk to many Turkish students who had lived and studied abroad. My intentions were to add their views to this research. Unfortunately, I was not able to analyze these conversations properly as it would have exceeded the scope of this paper. It would be interesting to look into how stereotypes towards Turkish people affect Turkish students while they are abroad, and in which ways their experiences confirm or refute the results of this research.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS: PRESENTING RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Conducting the analysis, I kept in mind the concept of relativism. Relativism "is the idea that the reality we perceive is always conditioned by our experiences and our culture" (Willis, 2007, p. 49). This made me aware of the difficulties and challenges that I might face in the process of data analysis while being biased by my own culture and experiences. To avoid hasty and unjustified conclusions, I made use of two main instruments: deep and extensive reflection, and participatory action.

Inspired by guidelines provided by Willis and Schmidt (Schmidt, 2010; Willis, 2007), I conducted the analysis systematically, constantly reviewing questions and revising results. In addition to that, I analyzed the interviews with the collaboration of a group of students from the *University of Bremen*. Although time-consuming, analyzing the data in groups was a good way to reflect on the ideas introduced by the participants, and the group discussions helped in the construction of codes and generalizations resulting in the final categories presented in the next chapters.

This chapter aims to display the final results as transparent and comprehensive as possible. This will be done in two steps. First, I decided to provide an overview of the interviews' outcome in the form of four tables. Each table corresponds to one category, summarizing the main concepts within this category. Second, after each table, students' statements and generalizations substantiate the concepts presented. Thus, the reader can trace the origin of the information in the tables and link them back to the exact passages in the interviews.

The analysis was conducted in two levels: horizontally (how students' perspectives changed/did not change before and after their experiences in Istanbul), and vertically, looking into if/how the geographical location biased students' opinions and perspectives when comparing Brazilian and German students' statements.

Levels of analysis:

Country
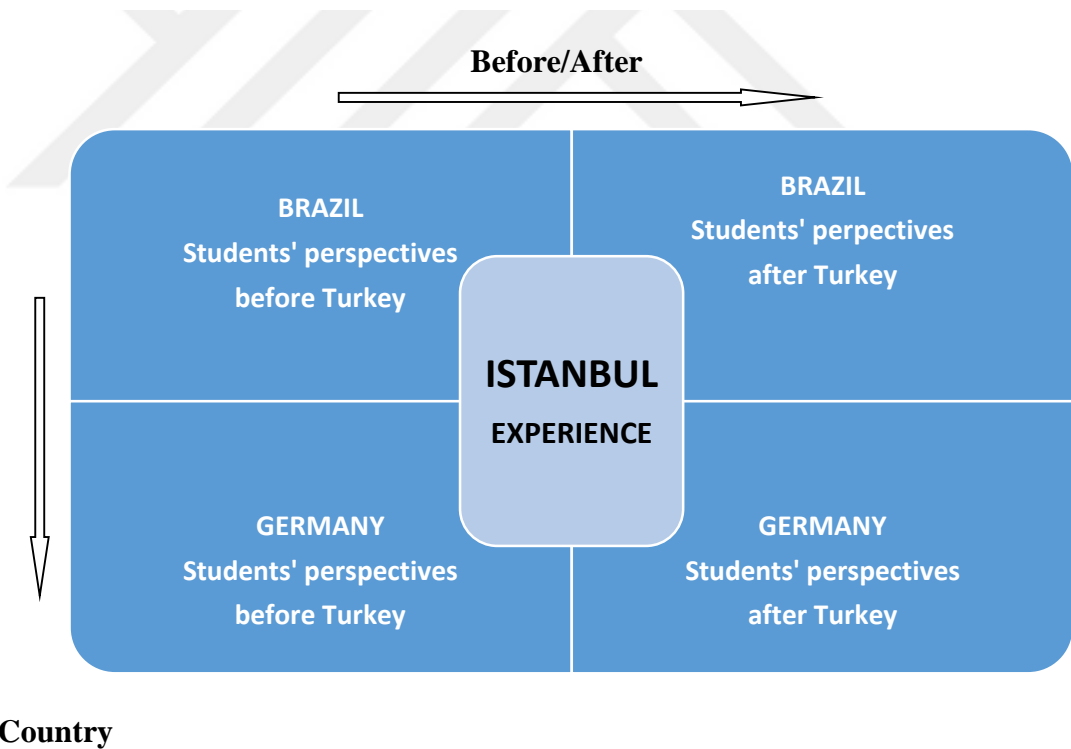
Tables:

By means of the tables, the differences and similarities between Brazilian and German students' perspectives can be easily visualized. These perspectives were classified into

positive and **negative** and are represented by different symbols and colors: **(+)** stands for students' positive views and **(-)** for students' negative perspectives. In each category, the "ruling" perspective (positive or negative) will be placed at the top of the column. Direct connections are traced between columns aiming to make changes easily recognizable; for instance, if students' opinions changed from "Turkish people were conservative" to "non-conservative/liberal," these words are located in front of each other so that the reader can visualize this alteration.

I use abbreviations to keep students' identities anonymous. The letter "B" stands for "Brazilian students" and "G" for "German students." The numbers after the letters correspond to each participant, while the number after the comma corresponds to the lines in the transcriptions, e.g.: (B1, 27-30) is a Brazilian student, interview number 1, and her/his direct quote can be found in the transcriptions between lines 27 and 30. The four main subjects/categories that emerged from the interviews are:

➢ Category 1: Turkey and Istanbul

➢ Category 2: Turkish people

➢ Category 3: Islam

➢ Category 4: Women in Turkish society

4.2.1 Category 1: Turkey and Istanbul

CATEGORY 1: ISTANBUL/TURKEY			
Brazil		**Germany**	
Before	**After**	**Before**	**After**
- conservative (-) - extremely religious - homogenous culture - monolithic East - not welcoming - exotic - not attractive to live - closed - dictatorial system	- liberal (+) - religious - diverse cultures - distinctive - welcoming - beautiful - home - controversial	- conservative (-) - homogeneous - unattractive for Germans who do not agree with its political views - completely different - not good to live - poor - uncertain - frightening, scary - nationalist - dirty - strange - unknown - patriarchal and religious society	- liberal (+) - diverse - politically and sociologically controversial - familiar - home - technically advanced
- rich history (+) - rich culture - cosmopolitan - different - touristic	- weird food habits (-)	- diverse city (+) - diverse religious practices - great for vacation - huge - revolutionary environment - subcultural vibe	- conservative (-) - religious - authoritarian

Category 1: Istanbul/Turkey

Brazilian students' initial views of Turkey and Istanbul were overwhelmingly negative. Both city and country were seen as part of a monolithic East branded by a homogeneous Eastern culture characterized by extremisms, conservativism, and a strict religion. These views were created mainly through a lack of information and media influence. The results show students' several hesitations (fear, doubt, disinterest) regarding living and studying in Istanbul. However, after the students' experiences, they were astonished by how their preconceptions were far away from the reality that they experienced (B2, 48-49) (B2, 66-68). Istanbul is eventually addressed as "my home, my second home" (B2, 16-17) (B2, 177) (B2, 182-184) (B3, 336-337) (B4, 157-161). The following statements provide a more complete view of the students' perspectives.

Brazilian students' views before the *Istanbul Experience*

- people from the Americas have many (negative) preconceptions about Turkey (B4, 23-24)

- Turkey is reduced to the ideas of an extremely conservative religion and Muslims: compulsory hijab, being covered, very strict dress code, no public contact between men and women, conservative, religious (B2, 35-48) (B1, 137) (B4, 43-49)

- feelings towards Turkey: conservative, being afraid, apprehensive, having doubts, non-conform sexualities being publicly repressed (B3, 253-255) (B4, 25-31) (B4, 43-49) (B4, 154-156)

- seen as a monolithic East, Turkey = South Arabia (B1, 26-31) (B1, 113-115) (B3, 99)

- coming to Istanbul not as a first choice but as result of external forces: scholarship, Turkish boyfriend, visa (B1, 2-5) (B1, 8-9) (B2, 2-5) (B3, 2-18) (B3, 20-27) (B4, 2-3) (B4, 18-20) (B4, 11-15)

- a place for vacation but not to live (B2, 5-8) (B2, 10)

- Istanbul: different, rich culture, exotic, beautiful, long history (B1, 15-18)

Brazilian students' views after the *Istanbul Experience*

- "real Turkey" is beautiful, rich architecture, connected to religion, safe (B1, 140-141) (B1, 233-239)

- Turkey/Istanbul = home, second home, in love with the city, amazing, huge, above expectations (B2, 16-17) (B2, 177) (B2, 182-184) (B3, 336-337) (B4, 157-161)

- time in Istanbul dismantles stereotypes, previous expectations of Turkey/Istanbul do not match the reality (B2, 48-49) (B2, 66-68)

- Istanbul and Turkey presents paradoxes: liberal x conservative depending on the region (B2, 58-61) (B1, 64-67) (B3, 101-107) (B3, 256-262) (B4, 39-40)

- openly gay = no problem no explicit homophobia (B4, 57-60)

- strange food habits: bread with everything, heavy breakfast, ayran, yogurt with everything (B1, 143-146)

In the German students' interviews, the list of adjectives describing Turkey and Istanbul included basically the same attributions mentioned by Brazilian students. However, these were complemented by further aspects concerning Turkish politics. Similarly to Brazilians, the negative views towards Turkey emerged from a lack of information, misinformation, and the media. Also, playing a decisive role in the formation of perspectives were students' interactions with Turkish-Germans and Turkish descendants in Germany. After living in Istanbul, students' opinions changed from "just a place for vacation" to "a place I feel welcome and call home" (G1, 27-35) (G2, 27-39) (G4, 216).

German students' views before the *Istanbul Experience*

- living in Turkey not as a first choice, but rather as a result of external forces: scholarship, good weather, cheap. It is not a top destination for German students (G1, 2-10) (G2, 20-21) (G1, 24-25)

- feelings towards Turkey: conservative, afraid because of the politics, apprehensive, doubts, scared of punishment because of opposed political opinions. Turkey is seen as a super-nationalist and a homogeneous country that reflects the way of thinking of its leader. Germans who do not agree with the politics do not want to come to Turkey to avoid supporting the country's economy (G1, 11-15) (G2, 13-21) (G1, 43-51) (G2, 82-83) (G2, 98-99) (G2, 174-180) (G2, 337-339)

- no desire to come to Turkey mainly as a result of the contact with Turkish-Germans in Germany which gives the impression that someone already knows Turkish culture too well, "the Turkish culture" is unattractive (G1, 183-188) (G1, 183-188) (G1, 192-193) (G2, 24-26) (G4, 154-156)

- expectations towards Istanbul: a revolutionary environment, subcultural vibe, diverse religious practices, the biggest quest, different language, different culture, urban life,

hyper life, huge, more westernized, good English (G3, 61-70) (G4, 2-12) (G4, 27-31; 37-42)

- Turkey is a touristic attraction for Germans, but tourists do not get to "really know" the people and the cultures in Turkey: it is known mainly as a good place for vacation (G1, 27-35) (G2, 27-39)

German students' views after the *Istanbul Experience*

- Istanbul is the premium version of Turkey: huge and diverse "a melting pot of cultures" (G3, 8-10) (G4, 14-17)

- living in Istanbul makes one recognize their racism and prejudices against Turkey created by "a German perspective" that Turkey is just poor (G4, 43-52)

- astonished by technical progress – great metro system (G4, 43-52)

- potential for revolution, controversial, it can be conservative or liberal depending on the area (G1, 239-245) (G3, 80-82)

- love for the city, it feels like home (G2, 342-343) (G4, 216)

- living in Istanbul partially confirms media stereotypes about Tukey (Turkey becoming increasingly conservative, religious and authoritarian in the last years) (G2, 199-201)

4.2.2 Category 2: Turkish people

CATEGORY 2: TURKISH PEOPLE			
Brazil		**Germany**	
Before	**After**	**Before**	**After**
- conservative **(-)** - close-minded - xenophobic - "like any other Middle Eastern" - rude - homophobic - extremely religious	- liberal **(+)** - open-minded - love foreigners - diverse and unique - nice - LGBTQ* friendly - not religious - warm - super welcoming - demonstrate love, caring	- conservative **(-)** - not interested in other cultures - uneducated - bullies - religious - misogynistic	- not conservative **(+)** - interested in other cultures - open-minded - nice - diverse - controversial - relaxed - international - likable - cool - helpful - loving - caring - different from Turkish-Germans
- welcoming **(+)** - warm - loud - "like us" - value family	- no negative attributions **(-)**	- relaxed **(+)** - not strict in daily situations - loud - beautiful	- no negative attributions **(-)**

Category 2: Turkish people

The results in this category resemble results in category 1. Although Brazilian students' perspectives were initially composed of mostly negative attributions, these changed positively after their experiences. Previous descriptions were marked by adjectives such as extremely religious, conservative, close-minded, xenophobic, and homophobic, which were replaced by entirely positive characterizations.

Brazilian students' views before the *Istanbul Experience*

- Turkish people are seen as close-minded, conservative, xenophobic, rude (B3, 32-40) (B3, 264-266) (B4, 163)

- Turkish people pictured as part of a monolithic East, in which Arabic people, Turkish people, Algerians, Tunisians, and Lebanese are perceived as "all the same" and marked by negative attributions. The Middle East is considered to be a homogeneous block that carries a bad reputation in Brazil (B2, 122-131) (B2, 127-131) (B3, 128-133)

- no real encounters with Turkish people in Brazil but many interactions online. Turkish people seemed to be nice (B1, 33-36) (B1, 111) (B1, 171) (B1, 195-197) (B3, 128)

Brazilian students' views after the *Istanbul Experience*

- open-minded, liberal, not religious, not informed about LGBTQ* issues but friendly, respectful, and willing to learn (B1, 62-63) (B4, 57-60) (B4, 61-66)

- they make you feel at home, have good intentions, want to help, they are "like Brazilians" (B3, 266-270) (B4, 138-148)

- Turkish people are super warm, super welcoming, demonstrate love, caring, open to new relationships with people of different cultures and curious and friendly towards foreigners (B4, 164-168) (B4, 169-173)

The interviews with German students showed similar results. However, these emphasized the unfairness and inequality by which women are treated in Turkey. German students had very negative perceptions towards the topic of gender relations and, after their time in Istanbul, these views were intensified by a large number of personal examples in which students characterized Turkish men and their behavior negatively. Despite the negative characterizations, opinions about Turkish people were composed basically of only positive ascriptions.

German students' views before the *Istanbul Experience*

- negative images of Turks began with the immigration in the '60s (G1, 175-178)

- Turkish-Germans have a bad reputation and this is transferred to Turkish people in Turkey. It is the main reason why people in Germany have negative images of Turkish people (G1, 183-188) (G1, 183-188) (G1, 192-193) (G4, 154-156)

- Turkish people are perceived in Germany as conservative, uneducated (owners of doner kebap shops), not interested in other cultures, and bullies molded by patriarchal and religious values (G1, 259-260) (G2, 192-194) (G2, 352-354) (G4, 226-233)

- Turkish-Germans are "tourists" in Germany and do not know where they belong, they have problems integrating (G1, 194-201) (G4, 68-77)

- women are treated submissively **by men** because of a patriarchal and religious society (G1, 100-104) (G2, 352-354) (G1, 287-290)

- Turkish people are calm, relaxed, not strict in daily situations, loud, and beautiful (G1, 67-71) (G1, 259-260)

- positive experiences from meeting Turkish people from Turkey in other countries outside Germany (G3, 12-28)

German students' views after the *Istanbul Experience*

- knowing German-Turkish people in Germany does not mean that one knows Turkish culture and how they live in Turkey (G1, 16-23)

- Turkish-Germans are completely different from Turkish people who do not correspond to stereotypes (G1, 183-188) (G1, 189-191) (G4, 54-63)

- they are diverse, controversial, respectful, nice, open-minded, not conservative, relaxed, international, interested in other cultures, likable, cool, helpful, loving, caring (G1, 261-264) (G2, 86-97) (G3, 258-259) (G4, 65-67) (G4, 78-90) (G4, 221-225)

- people are all basically "the same" everywhere. There are basic similarities in humans independent of societal differences (G2, 344-351)

- even though Turkish people are not under compulsory religious duties anymore, these still bias the way they think, for instance, women's role in society (G4, 269-276)

- Turkish people in Istanbul have a huge knowledge about the Middle East but little knowledge about Europe (G4, 93-103)

- women are treated submissively **by men** who do not respect women's individual boundaries (G1, 94-99; 105-108; 265-268) (G2, 203-211) (G2, 364-365)

4.2.3 Category 3: Islam

CATEGORY 3: ISLAM			
Brazil		**Germany**	
Before	**After**	**Before**	**After**
- very conservative (-) - strict dress code - compulsory hijab - religion of every Turk - strict rules - homogeneous way of thinking and living - rude - isolated - judgmental - pressures people - dangerous - violent - terrorist - homophobic	- conservative (+) - no compulsory dress code - not everyone is a Muslim - chill - many ways to interpret and live Islam - not intrusively trying to convert people to Islam - respects other religions - not violent - "normal people"	- honest (+) - good behavior - do not hurt anybody - respectful - sensitive - religious diversity - accepting	- expected/imposed on people (-) - prison - strict dress code for women and headscarf as act of submission to men - only to keep appearances - sexist - racist - misogynistic - do not accept other religions
- no positive attributions (+)	- misogynistic (-)	- strict rules (-) - compulsory headscarf	- unite the country (+) - freedom when not imposed - headscarf: empowering - diverse and has many levels - accepting of other religions

Category 3: Islam

This category presented the biggest contrasts. Islam was connected to students' views across all categories. Acquiring knowledge through personal experiences was the key to the positive changes in students' perspectives. The Brazilian students had initially very negative views on the subject; not even one positive characterization was attributed to Muslims or Islam. These views suffered a dramatic change and personal interactions successfully deconstructed students' stereotypes.

Brazilian students' views before the *Istanbul Experience*

- everyone is a devote and conservative Muslim in Turkey and Muslims pressure people to accept their faith, a judgmental and "hardcore strict" religion (B3, 137-148) (B1, 50-52) (B1, 149-151) (B3, 118-125) (B3, 272-276) (B4, 174-179)

- there are strict dress codes and religious rules that must be followed especially by women, for instance, the "obligatory use of headscarf" (B1, 51) (B1, 149-151)

- Islam is perceived as a religion set apart from any other. This expresses ideas of rudeness, isolation, conservatism, extremism, terrorism (B2, 76-83) (B2, 89-91) (B2, 107-108) (B4, 110-112)

- connected to two main words: terrorism and conservativeness (B4, 114-118)

- all neighborhoods in Istanbul are "branded" by Islam (B4, 174-179)

- common images towards Turkey are the result of how people see Islam: dangerous, conservative, homophobic, violent (B4, 101-105)

Brazilian students' views after the *Istanbul Experience*

- living in Istanbul dismantles stereotypes and negative images changing perspectives about Islam through personal experiences and the acquisition of credible information (B1, 71-72) (B2, 92-101)

- in Istanbul, Islam is different. People are "normal", they wear "normal clothes," and it has shown to be not a religion that everyone must follow and if they follow it, they do not have to be super strict about it (B1, 53-56) (B1, 153-158)

- current ideas about Islam: good people, "normal people," chill, respecting other religions, nice, not pushy, not trying to convert you, ready and happy to share their values, beliefs, history, and culture (B2, 89-91) (B3, 149-151) (B4, 183-193)

- Islam is diverse in respect of how people should follow, interpret, and live the

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religion (B3, 154-159) (B3, 276-282)

- Muslims cannot be branded by the way they dress. Girls' dress codes do not reflect how religious they are (B3, 151-153) (B3, 159-164) (B3, 159-168)

- different depending on the neighborhood/geographical location (B4, 180-182)

German students showed initially a balanced opinion of Muslims and Islam. The positive attributions listed by the participants remained throughout their stay in Istanbul, however, these were complemented by negative adjectives regarding specifically the effects that religion seems to have in the role of women in society (discussed in the next point). I would like to highlight two important changes in students' perspectives. First, they started to understand the diversity of Islam and how people have the freedom to live the religion according to their interpretations; there is not a single way to follow Islam. Second, students could identify the complexities behind subjects, for instance, the use of a headscarf is not automatically an act of submission, but it can also be a beacon of independence and empowerment.

German students' views before the *Istanbul Experience*

- preconceptions about Muslims: pray five times a day, do not eat pork, honest, good behavior, do not hurt anybody, respectful, sensitive (G1, 113-122)

- expectations towards Islam in Istanbul: not many people would be religious but there are a lot of religious people in Istanbul and religion is still very important to them (G1, 127-129) (G2, 367-368)

- expectations towards Islam in Istanbul: a free and peaceful environment in which different religious opinions could be expressed and coexist with acceptance and respect, religious diversity (G3, 99-105)

- headscarf as a visible symbol of professing Islam (G3, 261-262)

- people do not reflect about religious traditions, they are just "not able to" understand it (G1, 236-238)

- a lack of understanding towards people who blindly believe religion and follow religious rules without questioning (G4, 237-239)

German students' views after the _Istanbul Experience_

- in the beginning, Islam seemed to be diverse and accepting but it was only an illusion (G3, 83-87)

- Islam supports the idea of men treating women submissively (G1, 100-104)

- Islam imprisons and has negative effects on destroying peoples' faith when imposed on them (G1, 212-221)

- the government needs to present Turkey as a very religious Muslim country to hide the fact that religion has been losing its status in Turkish society (Istanbul) (G2, 287-322)

- it is important to keep appearances at a societal level but on a personal level actions do not coincide with people's hypocritical performances (G2, 360-373)

- a lot of prejudice and lack of empathy between religious and non-religious people, as well as, between religions (G3, 87-97) (G3, 105-106)

- it presents many sexist and racist ideas that hinder people from thinking for themselves and accepting other religions (G4, 242-253)

- wearing the headscarf is empowering when not imposed (G1, 223-232)

- Islam is empowering and gives freedom when lived voluntarily (G1, 223-232)

- the symbolism of using headscarf changed from "imposed" to "empowering" (G1, 223-232)

- controversial and diverse, many levels and shapes – Freedom x prison: freedom when it is a choice and you find your way. Prison when it is imposed. (G1, 280-285) (G3, 262-265) (G4, 104-108)

- changes in a personal level, more understanding and accepting of religious people and their beliefs (G4, 239-242)

4.2.4 Category 4: Women in Turkish society

CATEGORY 4: WOMEN IN TURKISH SOCIETY			
Brazil		**Germany**	
Before	**After**	**Before**	**After**
- conservative (-) - submissive - serving men - dressing modestly - afraid - pressured	- submissive (-) - lower level - suffer prejudices - judged - dependent on men - restricted	- misogynistic (-) - suppressed - not self-confident - accepting of their submissive role	- misogynistic (-) - suppressed - maintain the status quo on gender roles - inequality in society and family - psychologically and physically tamed and restrained - ambivalent and problematic situation - must fulfill clichés - men do not respect boundaries - do not have freedom to be diverse in her appearance and way of dressing - easy target - responsible for the household - expected to marry, to be fulfilled - femicide is a real issue
- no positive attributions (+)	- competitive (+) - liberal - independent - strong	- no positive attributions (+)	- beautiful (+) - strong - confident to challenge old dogmas - leading positions in companies more than in Germany

Category 4: Women in Turkish society

Gender relations were heavily criticized. Initially, both in Brazil as well as in Germany, not even one positive ascription was given to the status of women in Turkish society. Previous characterizations were comprised of a wave of disapproving words such as misogynistic, suppressed, unequal, psychologically and physically tamed, restrained, and submissive to men. Statements were mostly from female students, which makes them even stronger considering that participants not only observed but also experienced life as a woman in Istanbul. Unfortunately, their experiences seem to have confirmed a list of preconceptions that were supplemented by adjectives such as feeling uncomfortable, diminished, invaded, and disrespected.

Brazilian students' views before the *Istanbul Experience*
- carry the characteristics and stereotypes of a monolithic East: conservative, exotic, women are not allowed to drive, compulsory hijab, being covered, very strict dress code, no public contact between men and women, conservative, pressured, very religious (B1, 28-31) (B1, 51) (B2, 35-48) (B3, 118-125) (B3, 272-276) (B4, 195)   - strong but submissive, serving men (B1, 204-217)   - dressing modestly, diminishing themselves, afraid of being different (B3, 171-183)   - housewives, controlling, dramatic, competitive when it comes to "finding a man," petty, hard to be friends with (B3, 298-311)   **Brazilian students' views after the *Istanbul Experience***   - Turkish men are annoyingly insistent with foreign girls, especially online; they "hunt" foreign girls (B1, 83-85) (B1, 88-89)   - on the Internet, Turkish men behave differently than in real life (insistent, annoying, and disrespectful). They are "more respectful" when they want something from you but they "still think like a man" (B1, 98-100) (B2, 156-163)   - Turkish men are misogynistic and spoiled (B1, 207-208)   - women here and in Brazil are treated at a lower level than men and are expected to serve them (B1, 204-217)   - there are many prejudices against women in Turkey: hard to be in a high position at work, not allowed to go to Mosque, used as an accessory to men (B2, 139-140) (B2, 141-154)

- different places and different institutions provide students completely oppositional experiences in Istanbul. Turkish course (with people from more strict Muslim countries): feeling judged, conservative people. University: dressing freely (B3, 183-195) (B3, 203-207)

- many women expect to be supported by men (B1, 218-227)

- "normal people," "normal clothes," women cannot be identified as Muslims by the way they dress, the dress code does not reflect how religious they are nor how they interpret and follow Islam (B1, 153-158) (B3, 151-153) (B3, 159-164) (B3, 159-168)

- diverse about the dress code, and about how to follow Islam (B3, 154-159)

- in real life, Turkish men are more respectful than online (B1, 76-82) (B1, 93-95)

- feeling safe and secure as a woman in Istanbul (B2, 139-140)

- previous ideas of dressing restrictions do not correspond to the reality of the whole Istanbul (B3, 196-199) (B3, 199-207) (B4, 196-198)

- supportive of each other, competitive for grades and not for boys (B3, 311-325)

German students' views before the *Istanbul Experience*

- Islam imprisons women and has negative effects imposing rules on them (G1, 212-221)

- women are forced to dress a certain way and headscarf is imposed on them, to submit them (G1, 233-235)

- Islam "teaches" men to treat women submissively (G1, 100-104)

- a patriarchal and religious society (G2, 352-354)

- Turkey has the reputation of not being women-friendly (G3, 190-191)

- women are suppressed, not self-confident to stand against things that they don't agree with; but they are confident/brave to assume peacefully the roles imposed on them (G1, 287-290)

German students' views after the *Istanbul Experience*

- men seem to be respectful as long as they set the boundaries, they do not respect or understand personal boundaries set by women (G1, 265-268)

- men think that "being persistent" with a girl is not seen as a bad thing, it is even desired (G2, 203-211)

- men still treat women submissively and with inequality (G1, 94-99) (G1, 105-108) (G2, 364-365)

- women can feel comfortable or uncomfortable in Istanbul depending on the area that she is at (G1, 72-83)

- Turkish people are not used to how diverse a woman can be in her appearance (G1, 83-94)

- Turkish men make foreign women feel uncomfortable, sometimes scared, and perceive them as an easy target (G2, 203-211)

- women are expected to be housewives, to take care of the children while men are not expected to do anything at home (G2, 212-231) (G2, 232-234)

- women who are not married are seen as unfulfilled, unsuccessful and unaccomplished in life. Women wanting to be accepted in their social groups need to find a husband (G2, 235-243)

- women wanting to find a husband limit themselves restraining/hiding their goals in life to "find and be accepted by a man" (G2, 244-252)

- the persecution towards acts of rape and violence against women are positively biased in court by "fake performances of good behavior and good clothes" worn by the accused person on trial (G2, 253-259)

- guilt is often shifted to the woman (G2, 259-266)

- femicide is a real issue in Turkey (G2, 267-270) (G3, 191-198)

- retraining women's demonstrations in Turkey based on the fact that many people (men and women) are comfortable/and in agreement with their current gender roles, and want to keep the status quo (G2, 271-283)

- the negative way women are treated in Turkey, makes them start doubting themselves, seeing "the problem" in themselves, "blaming"/making women uncomfortable with themselves for what they dress. It restrains and "tames" them in a physical and psychological level and makes them start perceiving their "new behavior" as normal (G3, 201-211) (G3, 212-221) (G3, 153-168)

- women in Turkish society "must" fulfill many clichés. They have a role which is ambivalent and problematic: seen only as mothers, suffering from inequality in society and in the family, restricted, responsible for the household, having to obey a dress code (G4, 261-270) (G3, 180-186) (G3, 270-272)

> - even though women are suppressed, they are surprisingly beautiful, strong, and confident to challenge old dogmas (G1, 291-294)
> - women in Turkey have leading positions more than in Germany (G3, 188-189)
> - there is a vibrant feminist movement in Istanbul to fight against the status quo (G3, 169-173)

Despite women's struggles, students could closely observe and even participate in demonstrations and organizations that contribute to the process of women's liberation in Istanbul. Nowadays, women in Turkey occupy more leading positions than women in Germany (Kartarı, 2019); and there are several vibrant feminist movements being organized not only in Istanbul but in many parts of Turkey. Women have been fighting for independence, recognition, and safety, challenging old dogmas, and striving to change the status quo.

4.3 DISCUSSING AND CONTEXTUALIZING RESULTS

The previous chapter showed in detail how the *Istanbul Experience* positively influenced students' views. In the next pages, I will be looking into how the aforementioned categories are interconnected, discussing students' statements through five main stereotypes on which students' narratives were based. The following discussions will be based on the theories introduced in the theoretical section of this work and will be contextualized and exemplified through students' quotes extricated from the interviews. The most frequent stereotypes were:

> ➢ homogeneous – a whole city/country which thinks and lives alike
>
> ➢ exotic – different from the West, "oriental culture"
>
> ➢ conservative – close-minded, dangerous, xenophobic, homophobic
>
> ➢ religious – Islam = strict, conservative, misogynistic
>
> ➢ sexist – patriarchal, misogynistic

Turkey and Istanbul have often been seen as part of a monolithic East and a homogeneous and unified Eastern culture. Back in 1978, Said discoursed about how the

Orient has been repeatedly perceived as one block, a stage, in which the whole East is confined. Students' interviews confirm Said's thesis, showing that even today, Turkey and Istanbul neither escape the preconceptions that brand the East as a whole, nor the latent images associated with an Islamic Orient and the numerous pessimistic characteristics connected to it. "The Orient," Muslims, and the Middle East have been generally put into one category that follows to an ideology based on the exotic, on the oppositional, and on extremism, terror, and intimidation. Brazilian students showed to be massively unaware of the numerous differences that Middle Eastern countries hold.

A monolithic East

We receive very few information, for example, we see news about Saudi Arabia and other places and we associate it with Istanbul. That is why I think, we create these images. (B1, 181-183)

I thought women couldn't drive. It was something like Saudi Arabia, very conservative, exotic, like everything, their habits, their food (…). (B1, 26-30)

(…) [Brazilians] put together Arabian people, Turkish people, Algerians, Tunisians, they are all the same people (…). (B2, 122-124)

German students were more conscious of the diversity in the Middle East, nonetheless, Turkey is still perceived as a uniform country characterized by stereotypes of radicalism and conservatism. Turkey has been mostly seen as a German holiday paradise that offers natural beauties, good weather, and financial advantages for tourists. Despite a large number of Germans visiting Turkey every year, they usually remain confined to their role as tourists which keeps their "cultural growth" limited to a superficial level resumed to tourist attractions.

Stereotype 1: Homogeneous

I mean, I was aware that Istanbul is not representative of whole Turkey for sure, but to be honest, I didn't know any other cities in Turkey. I knew that Ankara was the capital and maybe Antalya because it is this German holiday paradise with all-inclusive tourist attractions. But no, I didn't know anything else about Turkey, I would say. (G3, 46-51)

It is crazy that when I told in my workplace that I wanted to go to Istanbul, one of the women who was working there said: "did you change sides, and are you supporting the president of Turkey now?" This was crazy for me. This showed me that some people just don't think about a country, I mean, about the people in the country. I think people

definitely generalize it. (G1, 147-152)

Maybe I could say that before coming here I perceived Turkey as more a unitary thing, and after coming here, and it makes totally sense now, I would expect it of every country I go to, it is really diverse and we cannot say it is like this or it is like that. (G2, 98-101)

(…) my parents had the whole Turkish population as one thing, and only one thing, and that one thing at the moment, would be a population that follows the leader, because the president was, I think still at the last election, elected with the biggest majority, he has a lot of support from the citizens. (G2, 154-159)

"Exotic/different," "conservative/dangerous," and "religious" are stereotypes that were constantly mentioned in the interviews. All of them refer back to a performative image created through the West to objectify the East contributing to a polarized world and to processes of othering that reassure imaginary incompatibilities between "the West" and "the East," between "we" and "they." According to Said (1979), the West invented a colonialist construction of the "other," namely, "the Orient," with images of it that do not correspond to reality: "The Orient was almost a European invention and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said, 1978, p. 24). To exemplify this point, let's examine the three stereotypes mentioned above.

Stereotype 2: Exotic/different

I thought if I go to Turkey it will be so different, a very different experience, it is so rich culturally, exotic as we think, it is beautiful, has a very long story, that is it. I think the most I was like: "how am I gonna find it there?" because it may be so different from what we know. (B1, 14-18)

Well, actually it was not my first option, my first option was Helsinki in Finland, but my university in Brazil gave us some options and then Istanbul seemed to be an interesting option in terms of living, and I don't know, I think I would be more interested in a different culture. (B4, 2-5)

I actually didn't decide to come to Turkey, I just decided to go somewhere with my best friend. We were checking on the Erasmus page where we could go, it was Sweden or Istanbul/Turkey. So we decided to come here because we thought **the culture** is completely different. (G1, 1-6)

Students mention that, initially, they had no interest in going to Turkey; and studying in Istanbul was a result of external forces "a scholarship, a Turkish boyfriend, the only

choice from my university," rather than a well-considered decision. They would "have rather gone to Helsinki," or "another European country," but eventually opted for Turkey as they also wanted to experience a "different" culture. What does "a different culture" in this context mean? Do other countries also not present a different culture? Why was Istanbul perceived as the most different of all, when students claimed that they knew so little about the city before living there? Looking at how students initially described Istanbul as "exotic and different," these words reaffirm the Westernized and stereotyped way of portraying the East as something mysterious, glamorous, but nonetheless, unusual, oppositional, and strange to the "civilized West."

The next descriptions were "conservative/dangerous." The idea of being conservative was linked to adjectives such as close-minded, intolerant, strict, and prepared to impose own ideas through violence and disrespect to others. The negative feelings, the apprehension, and the anxieties that the word "dangerous" refers to was attributed to the perception of Turkey as "super conservative," namely, full of xenophobic, homophobic, and violent people. All students expressed these views, but they were more intense among Brazilian students.

Stereotype 3: Conservative/dangerous

They would say: "you are crazy to go to this country, too conservative;" it must be very dangerous, I think you hear this a lot in Brazil: "I want to go to Turkey but I am afraid, it is a very dangerous place. Isn't it in war? Is there no bombs there?" (B1, 105-108)

My parents were worried about it, even more worried than me, especially because I am gay. When I told them that I was going to Turkey they were like "why Turkey? They live in a dictatorship." They thought it could be kind of dangerous to be there especially as a gay man, they were very worried about it. (B4, 77-81)

(…) as a gay man, I was very afraid of my sexuality in Turkey, how would be the reactions towards homosexuality, so this was something that was making me feel worried. I thought that I wouldn't be able to show affection in public. I honestly believe that most of my pre-concepts were involved with my sexuality. (B4, 47-53)

When we hear about Islam, a lot of people here [in Brazil] would think it is dangerous, war, the society is super conservative, you cannot be gay otherwise they will kill you. (B4, 98-100)

I think the main idea that I connected before talking about Turkey and Istanbul, it was very conservative: women had always to wear the hijab and that everyone here was religious. (B1, 149-151)

> (…) "people are so conservative, and everywhere, they are going to treat you weirdly. Because you are a foreigner." Like, for example, I had my boyfriend: "his family won't accept you because you are a foreigner. They will treat you so badly," and all these ideas. So I was a bit scared when we first moved here. (B3, 36-41)
>
> Not only because of my sexuality but also because I tend to have a more radical political opinion that might not really be compatible with the Turkish government and they [his parents] were afraid that things might happen to me actually. (G4, 143-146)
>
> Yeah, I had this idea that it would be very conservative. I was a bit worried like "what am I going to be wearing at street?", "Am I going to be able to walk alone, or will I have any issues regarding that?" (B3, 44-47)
>
> The news always write: this person is in prison now because he tried to go to a demonstration or something like this. Especially one of my friends was like "you can't go there, you will end up in prison for sure." (G1, 161-165)

The third stereotype strengthening the view of Turkey as a uniform culture was "religious." Islam was the main source of the students' negative perceptions. Ideas of conservatism, rigorousness, and gender inequality were linked to the preconceptions towards this religion. The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, together with incidents in other parts of the world, such as Jyllands-Posten and Charlie Hebdo cartoon controversies, demonstrate a simplistic public understanding about Islam and corroborate to increasingly anti-Muslim sentiments (Ahmed, 2012; Akbarzadeh & Smith, 2005 cited in Ahmed & Mattheus, 2017, p. 220).

The stereotypes and misconceptions of Turkey and Istanbul (as monolithic, homogeneous, conservative, and dangerous) find their roots in how Islam has been stereotyped and negatively portrayed. This affects the images of Turkey/Istanbul which are often reduced to "an Islamic country/city." These limitations become explicit in Brazilian students' statements. German students also make a direct connection between Istanbul and Islam, but in their statements, religion was rather linked to fervent criticism concerning gender roles and the repression of women.

Stereotype 4: Religious

> (…) it is more in terms of religion, this is the main reason why these preconceptions exist, these cultural differences based on the main religion of the country. (B4, 97-105)
>
> Most people, they relate the Islam to conservativeness and to the terrorist attacks, these

are the ideas the most people have. I read a lot of things so I knew that Islam is not the same as terrorism, of course I knew it, but I had this idea that Islamic countries probably would be more conservative in some ways. (B4, 114-118)

One of the first connections that come to mind is Turkey and religion. Based on myself, I would say "Muslims" first of all. (B1, 137)

Yes, before I thought that everyone was Muslim, not everyone in fact, but most of the people, very strict with their clothes, or going to pray all the time, this kind of thing. (B1, 50-52)

My mind about Islam changed a lot. Also about Muslim people. I thought that they were rude, living between them, closed, but no, they are really good persons, they are normal persons. (B2, 79-91)

(…) I changed my mind too much, I can see in another way now. Before I was like "Muslim, terrorist" but now, it changed, now I don't see it this way. (B2, 106-108)

Religion in Turkey does not only affect the image of Istanbul internationally but also its citizens on a personal level. It has shown to be decisive in gender societal interactions, keeping the status quo of a sexist and patriarchal society and endorsing inequality in gender relations. Brazilian and German female students talked about their personal experiences in Istanbul and how their interactions with Turkish men made them feel uncomfortable and disrespected on many occasions "they ignore our boundaries and respect only the boundaries that make sense for them" (G1, 267-268).

According to the participants, Turkish sexist and patriarchal ways of thinking result in misogynistic behaviors, pushing women to involuntarily give in to performative attitudes of submission. Students report how they started changing the way they dressed, not because they saw anything wrong with it but just to avoid "calling men's attention." They also talked about probably becoming more introverted and reclusive considering that being open-minded and friendly seemed to be misinterpreted by men. The table below lists some of the students' experiences.

"Stereotype 5:" Sexist/Misogynistic

To be honest, this issue was the first thing where I was disappointed when I came here for the first time. I told you, I came here with quite positive expectations and images and then it was something that I really felt. It has changed over the years but at the beginning, I felt very much that being a woman here, being a young woman here especially, was something that was very visible when walking down the street. It was

very common to get some kind of comment that I would perceive as too much. This was something that I was not so prepared for, and I had also some experiences that I found even worse but I was still lucky, I would say, men, touching me in public when I didn't want it. This was all something that in the beginning I didn't know how to handle it, but now, I don't know, I haven't experienced it in a long time and I wonder if my expression has changed, that I am not that approachable anymore, or if in society something has changed. (G3, 153-167)

Another thing definitely was how women are treated here. Can I just come here with my normal T-shirts? Should I hide my skin, for example? Would the people look in a different way to me? This was also kind of a question. (G1, 53-56)

I think they are "respectful," for example, the men are really kind when they want something with you before they lose their interest, but they are really kind… So, I think yes, they have "respect" but they still think like a man, it is normal, they have a man head. (B2, 159-164)

(…) and then when I got to know some boys here, men, it happened to me two times, that they tried after a really short time to give me the feeling that I belong to them, or that they can rule me or something like this. I had never experienced something like that in Germany that fast, and I also thought about it for a while and my conclusion is that because they grew up here, maybe also because of the religion, even though they are not religious anymore, or don't believe in Allah for example. They still have these norms, the standards in their minds and they think that they can treat women like this, as just a thing, and not as a human with their own decisions for example. And yeah, for me it is really easy to go back to Germany and I can just say "no, I don't want this," but I feel so sorry about the women who live here. I don't want to say that it is for every woman the same, or that every man is like this, but I already saw it a lot of times. (G1, 94-108)

(…) misogynistic, the men rule, they are very spoiled by their mothers, a boy living as a grown man and the women are expected to serve them, and I still see it that way. (B1, 207-209)

In general, it has happened to me here more often than in Germany that people just approach me in public, men. Or they don't even approach me but they follow me, which is scary... It was scary, but I still didn't feel unsafe, and I feel like there is maybe more of the idea that it is likable if you are persistent instead of it is kind of scary. And at the same time for me as a white girl, it happens, I am perceived differently by Turkish men, more of an easy target, I guess. (G2, 203-211)

I can tell stories that I have heard, for example, a girl from Germany that I studied with last semester, she told me that her Erasmus buddy went to her house to hang out with her, and the girl had an older brother, a brother that is at least 15 or 16 years old, like he is not a child anymore. When she comes home her mother is doing everything in the house and the father and the son they come home and they sit on their phone or watch TV, they just sit and chill while the mother is like around doing that and doing that, and the mother expects her daughter, the friend of my friend, to help but not the son … She also said that she and her friend, they take a gender class together, they talk about that

stuff, and how it is not ok to expect it only of women, or assume that women are better at caretaking and cleaning and whatever, and she also sometimes says to her mom like "just tell them," but her mom is like "no, no" it is my job. So, the friend of my friend at the end does help her mom because she doesn't want her mom doing all the work, she is just constantly working but the mom doesn't want to ask the men in the family for help, because it is not right or whatever. (G2, 212-234)

Another thing that the same friend told me, she was sitting at a café and some Turkish woman started talking to her, they started having good conversations. The woman was around 30, and the woman told her that for Turkish women, the most important thing that is given, that society expects of you, is finding a husband. You can do everything else and be super successful, people will be like "you are not married yet, you are failing in life" like "what is wrong with you?" For them, they feel like in order to be accepted by their communities they need to find a husband, and because of that a lot of Turkish women just want it (the woman told my friend). They change a lot, they do this and do that, so that men will think that they are in a certain way and will like them and will want to marry them. And as soon as they are married, they can start to be themselves, but because it so important to get married and because it is apparently not so easy to lock down a man, they feel like they cannot be themselves to achieve this. These are rather views I have been given, and I think that both of these stories highlight life in Turkey as a woman. (G2, 235-252)

Even though there are differences in the intensity in which Brazilian and Germans students expressed their preconceptions, in summary, both groups presented similar perspectives and even used the same adjectives in their descriptions. This leads us to the question "How do these two groups of students, born and raised in different countries, and culturally so distant to each other, manifested similar views?" Analyzing students' statements, two main factors were confirmed to be central in shaping students' views: media and personal interactions.

Media and personal interactions (de)constructing students' stereotypes

Brazilian media has been considered to be extremely manipulative and studies have pointed at it as one of the major sources reinforcing and maintaining stereotypes (Araújo, 2016; Silva, 2009; Viana & Bentes, 2011). News, commercials, and soap operas continue to spread biased images, in which the Middle East is constantly negatively portrayed. Brazilian soap operas are one of the most popular types of TV programs in Brazil reaching groups of all genders and ages. As such, they have a special position in society dictating trends, encouraging changes, and upholding or questioning labels of particular groups.

"Salve Jorge," one of the recent Brazilian telenovelas (2013), reports the story of a girl who moves to Istanbul because of a great job opportunity. Once she gets to the city, she is robbed, deceived, stripped off her rights, and forced to work as a prostitute. In addition to the gloomy plot, the soap opera presents a stereotyped, misguided, and fictional image of the city of Istanbul, but to Brazilians who have not many references to Turkey, this seems to have been enough to perpetuate unenthusiastic and homogeneous orientalist images towards the country. All Brazilian students mentioned the soap opera in their interviews confirming how it biased their perspectives. In addition to that, students mentioned that they had never had contact with Turkish people while living in Brazil, in other words, there was no personal interaction to question or contradict the stereotypes disseminated by the media.

Media and the lack of personal interactions building Brazilian' students perspectives

Because in Brazil we don't have much information about it, so for example, people just throw something on the television like this telenovela, and you start to think like this. (B2, 122-115)

Because at first, I had no idea about Turkey at all. Then there was the soap opera *Salve Jorge*. That's the closest I got before. (B3, 30-32)

The telenovela was talking about Morena [that was the name of the protagonist] who is a girl that one other woman said "I found a job for you to be a model in Turkey and we will go there, stay for just three months, after that you will come back to Brazil and you will get good money and *bla bla*," and then she left Brazil to come to Turkey and when she came to Istanbul, it was to be a prostitute, like a forced prostitute, so it was bad. I remember a scene there, where the woman just took her passport and said "you will never see your family again, never", and she was like "oh my God!" (B2, 19-27)

Do you remember the guy in the telenovela, he lived in Cappadocia, he worked in Grand Bazar and went there by bike. (B1, 174-175)

And also, there is a YouTube channel actually *Sobrevivendo na Turquia* [Surviving in Turkey]. It is a woman who was married there. Then she divorced her husband but they have a kid. So she cannot go back because the kid is still not at a legal age. She cannot move without the kid, what she hates about Turkey so much, and everything she says makes it a bit scary. Actually, it is all like "they will treat you badly; you are never going to fit in." (B3, 54-60)

I think global Media is controlled by North America and Western Europe. I think the things that we receive mostly come from Western Europe and they are super Islamophobic in many ways. They spread some news that makes people feel afraid. Because of the existence of some groups, some terrorists, people tend to think that

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everyone is like this, everywhere it will be like this, of course, it is not. (B4, 106-112)

Opposed to Brazilians, Germans are geographically close to Turkey and in contact with people of Turkish descent in Germany. If in Brazil, the lack of interaction played a negative role in forming images of Turkish people, in Germany the abundance of interactions seems to have caused even more damage. The Turkish descendants in Germany, (the ones that students had contact with), were completely different from Turkish people in Turkey. While in Turkey Turkish people were described as nice, open-minded, friendly, caring, diverse, loving, cool, and helpful, Turkish descendants in Germany were frequently characterized by all the oppositional adjectives.

Media and personal interactions building German students' perspectives

I think alias of the big part, which is the mentality of the people here, I was imagining Turkish people to be mainly like the Turkish people that we have in Germany. That was one hundred percent fake (…) I was literally realizing that Turkish people in Germany are one thing, Turkish people in Turkey is totally another thing, there is no similarity at all. How both people can call themselves Turks? (G4, 54-60)

I think that with the people, the Turkish-German people in Germany, you have sort of the feeling that you already know Turkey, which I think is completely wrong and I am really glad I came here. (G2, 24-27)

Also, a friend of mine [from Germany] came here and after one hour he said: "oh my god Turkish people are so nice and completely different than what I expected." That is crazy actually. (G1, 189-191)

The only contact I had was with the people in Doner shops, but I am not even really sure if they were Turks. This is the only contact that I had, but it is not real interaction, I would say. (G3, 123-125)

During school time I was also bullied by a lot of fellow students, and all of them were Turkish, so my image of Turkish people was shaped by that, "people who like to bully, who like to harass somebody else," this was my image of Turks before I came here (…) I was 14 to 15. (G4, 227-233)

I think it must be from Media, because like me, my parents and grandparents, they live in towns where they don't have any contact with Turkish people in their everyday lives. So, they don't know any Turkish people, it is coming from the media. And maybe even this kind of racism is from the colonial narrative, you know? The foreign man who is a threat to the white woman, I don't know, but I think it is something like this. (G3, 144-150)

I feel like the only thing that you hear about Turkey in Germany are bad things. The news always writes "this person is in prison now because he tried to go to some

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demonstration" or something like this, especially one of my friends was like "you can't go there, you will end up in prison for sure." (G1, 160-165)

To be honest I think the only idea that I had about Turkey before that was mostly through a movie by Faith Akin. (G3, 19-20)

Despite the negative views presented and discussed in this chapter, students' experiences were successful in dismantling stereotypes. Students, who at the beginning were very reluctant to go to Istanbul, at the end of this experience declared their love for Istanbul and were grateful for having made this decision.

The Istanbul experience stripping down stereotypes and prejudices

I can see things better now (…) it is really different than what I was expecting. (B2, 66-68)

Now I see it as my home, I have my friends, my work, my house. (B2, 76-77)

It is my love. I love Istanbul! You can find everything in Istanbul, you can find fun, religion, friends, international people, you can practice languages, you can do everything you want. (B2, 179-181)

Although it was not my first option, nowadays I have the feeling I could have not made a better choice. (B4, 8-9)

My main fear was about my sexuality. I could explore my sexuality in Turkey, it was very nice, it was very cool, I met super nice guys (…) This really changed my mind. (B4, 134-137)

(…) it is my second home, I love this city, everything is so amazing. (B4, 157-158)

Observing the positive changes in students' perspectives, this process can be linked to the four steps of culture formation presented by Kartarı (learning/perceiving/processing/ understanding). He discourses about how each step equips an individual with the material through which *culture* can be understood and built on (see Chapter 2.1.1). Looking at his model, I can recognize each of its elements playing a role in how students' perceptions changed. Students had the opportunity to realize the variety in cultures, identify divergences in their previous perspectives, learn from them, and process the new information which led them to question and challenge preconceptions. This resulted in acknowledging and comprehending the complexity of cultures broadening students' horizons and deconstructing stereotypes.

4.4 LOCATING RESULTS IN THE RESEARCH FIELD

This chapter briefly looks into the most recent studies regarding the topic of stereotypes towards Turkey (in Germany and Brazil), showing how this investigation might contribute to previous studies. I will be pointing out two recent studies in Germany; the first one by *Stereotype International – Duisburg-Essen (SI.DE)* (2016), and the second one by Necla Mora (2009).

Stereotype International – Duisburg-Essen (SI.DE). SI.DE is a project at the University of Duisburg-Essen that deals with the ascertainment and investigation of stereotypes in the German-Russian and German-Turkish context. I will be looking into the data concerning the German-Turkish relations. The study by Mora (2009) analyzes German headlines and news on the topic "Representations of Turkey and Turks."

With 2042 people interviewed in Germany, the *SI.DE* project is the first study that collects statistically valid and meaningful statements concerning the role of stereotypes in intercultural relations between Germany and Turkey. It was built in collaboration between the Institute for German as a Second and Foreign Language of the University of Duisburg-Essen, the Center for Turkish Studies and Integration Research in Essen, the Marmara University of Istanbul, and the Bahçeşehir University Berlin, and thirteen other Turkish universities.

The data was collected based on a 140-character list through which the respondents could characterize Turkish people. The study collects data from three different groups: Germans, Turks, and Turkish-Germans. It revealed many similarities in how these three groups characterized Turkish people, for instance, as hospitable, attached to traditions, family-focused, and nationalist. However, one topic differed dramatically among these groups: religion. While Germans and Turkish-Germans characterized Turkish people as extremely religious (numbers 1 and 4 in their lists), this appears very low in the list of the Turkish participants. This shows how Islam continues to be a convoluted subject splitting opinions which usually complicates the process of integration.

The results of *SI.DE* corroborate with the study conducted by Necla Mora (2009), in which she analyzed headlines and news in German headlines and magazines such as *Die Tageszeitung, Die Welt Online, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Die Frankfurter Allgemeine*

Zeitung, and *Spiegel Online* in the period between 2008 and 2009. She conducted her investigation looking into articles that responded to the keywords "Turkey and Turks." Results show that in all newspapers and magazines, Turkey and its citizens were often negatively represented (Mora, 2009, p. 621). *Die Welt,* a popular German newspaper, presented headlines with keywords such as 'terror,' 'prohibited,' 'headscarf,' 'prohibition of alcoholic beverages,' 'murder,' 'Turks are not able to adapt to Europe,' 'there is still a problem of integration even in the 2nd and 3rd generation,' and 'they are unskilled youngsters' (Mora, 2009, p. 621). The photographs used in *Die Welt* showed Turkish women wearing a headscarf, long dresses, and pictured only with other women, "fat, rugged and aimless" (Mora, 2009, p. 621).

Mora affirms that in the news the images are no different, and Turkish men are linked to words such as terror, murder, and violence (Mora, 2009, p. 622). I will not list all the adjectives found in Mora's work, but her study provides a meticulous catalog of adjectives connecting them to each newspaper and magazine. The outcome of Mora's research is that in *Die Tageszeitung,* as well as in *Spiegel Online, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Die Welt*, and *Die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* Turkey and its population continue to be repeatedly negatively represented (Mora, 2009, p. 623).

Concerning the study of stereotypes towards Turkey and Turkish people in São Paulo/ Brazil, there is, so far, no investigations that specifically focus on this topic. There are studies speaking about Brazilian orientalist views towards the East in general, but none explicitly concerning how Brazilians see Istanbul or Turkey. Most studies focus on the role of Islam shaping Turkey, as religion seems to be the main identifier of Turkey and Turkish culture. Considering the lack of investigations regarding this subject, I truly believe that this paper can be an asset for further studies in this field.

5. CONCLUSION

This work examined Brazilian and German students' perceptions towards Istanbul and Turkish people both before and after their experiences in Turkey. Through the research question "Which images do students in Bremen and São Paulo connect with Istanbul and its Turkish population?" this investigation sought to find out how students might characterize Istanbul and Turkish people in 2020. This study was comprised of eight individual semi-structured interviews with international students (four from Bremen and four from São Paulo). It does not attempt to depict perspectives of entire groups of people but endeavors to raise questions, suggest challenges for further research, and draw attention to the importance of ethnic backgrounds, gender, religion, and culture in the construction of individual perceptions.

The results revealed that Istanbul and Turkish people were still initially characterized by recurrent negative stereotypes. However, after experiencing Istanbul for some time, students' views radically and positively transformed and they began to understand the diversity and individuality of cultures. The results can be summarized as follows:

➢ Students, independent of country, age, or gender, initially presented overwhelmingly negative images and stereotypes towards Istanbul and its Turkish population. The negative images were based on two main factors: previous students' interactions with Turkish people (especially in Germany), and the influence of international media spreading distorted, misleading, and one-sided images.

➢ Students' previous perspectives related mainly to the topic of religion. Prejudices against Islam generated stereotypes and pessimistic views that are consistently conveyed to Turkish society and Turkish people. The formation of stereotypes and negative perspectives of Turkey is intertwined with representations of Islam worldwide.

➢ Students' descriptions addressed groups as a whole. Students showcased a tendency of expressing culture as a collective feature disregarding diversity and individuality (this instigates the perpetuation of stereotypes).

➢ Students' experiences in Istanbul changed their views radically. Stereotypes

were deconstructed, and Istanbul was then characterized by enthusiastic and positive attributions, together with a strong sentiment of affection.

The outcome of this research reinforces the current social relevance of this investigation. The questions: "To what extent were the impressions of Brazilian and German students towards Turkey fulfilled, re-signified, or dismantled after their time in Istanbul? Is it possible to identify the sources and channels through which students' stereotypes were/ are built? If yes, which are these sources? What are the main factors to which students' stereotypes relate (religion, politics, dress code, gender roles, etc.)? How do the comprehensions of culture shape and uphold stereotypes and prejudices against Turks and Turkey nowadays?"; and the answers (provided in the following paragraph) gave this research its grounding.

Despite the many qualities of **Turkey and Istanbul**, students' confirmed how international media, news, movies, series, etc., still focus on displaying inaccurate, misleading, and stereotyped cultural representations of Istanbul. These are adorned with orientalist views of a monolithic East characterized by the exotic, mysterious, and different, as these characteristics seem to be what attracts spectators. Before the *Istanbul Experience*, students thought Istanbul to be conservative, unattractive to live in, and extremely religious. After their semester, they characterized Istanbul with words such as liberal, diverse, welcoming, and 'home.'

Concerning the views towards **Turkish people**, these were initially connected to standardized radical images of Muslims and to a uniform Middle East branded by prejudices following an extreme and terrorist ideology.

Among Brazilian students, Turkish people were branded conservative, close-minded, and intolerant. Such sentiments were shared among German students, despite the geographical closeness between Germany and Turkey and a tendency to see Turkey as a mere holiday destination being prevalent. And owing to a large number of Turkish-Germans and people of Turkish descent living in Germany, German students expressed feelings of already knowing Turkish people, resulting in automatic transmission of negative characterizations to Turkish people in Turkey.

However, German students categorically affirmed that their assumptions were mistaken, and Turkish-Germans in Germany have "nothing in common" with Turkish people in

Istanbul. Ultimately, both Brazilian and German students reported friendly and 'incredible' experiences with Turkish people in Istanbul. Their characterizations transformed from conservative, close-minded, uneducated, extremely religious, and xenophobic to liberal, open-minded, welcoming, diverse, accepting, and caring.

Muslims and Islam was a scandalous topic. Brazilian students initially had very negative views of Islam and Muslims, but these changed. Muslims were seen as very conservative, very religious, violent, homophobic, and judgmental, but were then described as accepting, respectful, and diverse. German students, on the other hand, had initially positive views towards Muslims (honest, respectful, sensitive, diverse), and although these positive qualities remained, the list of negative characterizations grew after the students' time in Istanbul as they described Muslims as hypocritical, sexist, and misogynistic.

It is important to point out that the negative characterizations were specifically directed towards **Turkish men** in Turkish society. Men's behavior was harshly criticized by German and Brazilian students alike, as well as how Islam seems to be interpreted to uphold and support men's misogynistic attitudes towards women. Students of both countries mentioned their reservations towards the **gender relations** in Turkey. They expressed severe criticism about the role of women and how these seem to suffer under a culture of submission and inequality. After students' experiences in Istanbul, these criticisms became even harsher as this specific preconception was confirmed to them and surpassed their expectations. Gender relations and women's roles in Istanbul were initially described as submissive, suppressed, unfair, and conservative, and subsequently intensified by characterizations such as misogynistic, abusive, and 'intentionally keeping the status quo' and inequality.

Nonetheless, Istanbul in its entirety brought to light compelling evidence about how personal interactions and the contact with the reality of cultures can successfully deconstruct established stereotypes and promote a better appreciation of individual characteristics, strengthening relations between different genders, ethnicities, religions, and countries. Being aware that culture is never static but a dynamic set of ongoing practices revealed to be one of the keys to students' development and cultural growth.

Comprehending the intricacies surrounding cultures contributed directly to the

demystification of stereotypes, unfolding the uniqueness that characterizes each culture and each individual exclusively. While observing Turkey from a distance, students dueled in limited and one-sided images acquired through biased sources. Once they immersed themselves into the new culture, they were equipped with the knowledge and personal experiences to progressively uncover the "invisible meanings" behind the "physically visible aspects of culture" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 8).

The results of this investigation and students' statements also reflect my own experience. Initially having little to no knowledge of Istanbul, the city and its people revealed themselves to be diverse, friendly, welcoming, and open-minded. This "unexpected reception" made me aware of my own concealed prejudices and stereotypes. Analyzing students' interviews, I could recognize the positive changes and transformative perspectives that were promoted in each student individually, enabling personal growth, facilitating respect, and promoting successful communication between different cultures.

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APPENDIX: SAMPLE OF THE ANALYSIS

LINE	SELECTION/CODIFICATION	GENERALIZATION	CATEGORIZATION
1	**Why did you decide to come to Turkey?**		
2	I didn't plan to come. I was just looking around Europe to do	Coming to Turkey and living in Istanbul	
3	babysitter and I found A* [she worked for A* as an au-pair]. I	not as a first choice, but rather as a	The attractiveness of
4	found A*, who is a German girl who lives in Turkey, to be a	result of external forces	**Turkey & Istanbul**
5	babysitter here, and I came. Just this. And of course, Turkey was		
6	one of my destinies but I didn't want to live here, I didn't think	Before Istanbul: Seeing Turkey as a	
7	about living here before, I just wanted, for example, to come and	place to visit but not to live	
8	stay for a short time, but I am here, I am still here [...]		

LINE	SELECTION/CODIFICATION	GENERALIZATION	CATEGORIZATION
11	**Why?**		
12	Because like in Brazil there was one telenovela that talked bad	Brazilian telenovela [Salve Jorge]	
13	things about Turkey, showed the bad things that have in Turkey	influenced images of Turkey negatively	**Media** shaping perspectives
14	and I was a little bit afraid about it. If I was planning to come, I	making women concerned and afraid	
15	was planning to come just for travel, not to live.	of coming to Turkey	
16	After some time I started to love Istanbul, to love Turkey, but at	After Istanbul: loving this city	**"Time"** changing the views of
17	the beginning I was like, it will be for a short time.		**Istanbul**

LINE	SELECTION/CODIFICATION	GENERALIZATION	CATEGORIZATION
18	**What kind of bad things did the telenovela show?**		
19	The telenovela was talking about *Morena* [that was the name of		
20	the protagonist] who is a girl that one other woman said "I found	Brazilian telenovela makes women	

21 22 23 24 25 26 27	a job for you to be a model in Turkey and we will go there, stay for just three months, after that you will come back to Brazil and will get good money and blab bla," and then she left Brazil to come to Turkey and when she came to Istanbul, it was to be a prostitute, like a forced prostitute, so it was bad. I remember a scene there, where the woman just took her passport and said "you will never see you family again, never", and she was like oh my God!	concerned and afraid of going to Turkey The telenovela depicts women being deceived and forced to work as prostitutes in Istanbul	**Media** shaping perspectives

32 33 34	**When you decided to come to Turkey, which thoughts came to your mind? Which images did you connect to Turkey before coming here?**		
35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49	The first thing: I was thinking that everyone, every woman should use hijab, but no, it is not true. I was thinking "Oh my God," I should walk on the street "closed;" it is strange. And after, when I was preparing my bag, I was just putting my long clothes, long pantalons [pants], not tight, and I was thinking like that, I should take my "good clothes," I don't know, my large clothes; and I came like this, only with large clothes to Turkey. And I was imagining like this, I was also imagining that people were really religious and everything should be like (..) men and women should not be at the same place together, I was thinking this kind of stuff. But A* explained everything really good; so when I came she said "P* this works like this: you don't have to use hijab, you can use short clothes if you want, you can talk to men, it is not a problem, you can have Turkish guys as your friends, it is ok." With time I learned; now it is ok.	Preconceptions before time in Istanbul: compulsory hijab, being covered, very strict dressing code, no public contact between men and women, conservative, religious Time in Istanbul changing perspectives	**Women & Islam & Turkish society** **"Time" changing perspectives**

CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information
Name and Last Name   Samuel Xavier
Place and Date of Birth   São Paulo, Brazil, 26.04.1982

Education
2018-2020   MA Double Degree "Transcultural Studies/
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2014-2018   M.Ed. "English-Speaking Cultures" and "Spanish";
                            grade: 1.60 (scale: 1.0 [highest grade] to 4.0
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2008-2013   BA "English-Speaking Cultures/English Studies"
                            (major) and "Spanish Studies" (minor); grade: 1.78
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                            grade]); University of Bremen

Foreign Language Competence
                            Brazilian Portuguese (Native speaker)
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                            Turkish (A2)

Professional Experience

06/2018 – present   Language coach; preparing several students in Portuguese,
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01/2009 – 08/2018   Teacher; teaching courses in English, Spanish, German, and
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01/2017 – 05/2018   Language coach; teaching German at KMH-Kammann Metallbau;
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09/2015 – 10/2015   Teacher; language and music teaching at Tasta-Tour Musik-
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05/2015 – 06/2015   Freelance interpreter; interpreting German teachers in a
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                     Europaschule; Syke, Germany – Sevilla, Spain

10/2014 – 04/2015	Language coach; teaching Business English at Roess Nature Group; Twistringen, Germany
01/2013 – 12/2014	Tutor for English and Spanish at Lukas Schule (Realschule/ Gymnasium), and Oberschule Petermoor; Bassum, Germany
09/2010 – 08/2011	Teaching Assistant for German and Portuguese; tutor at the Multilingual Writing Center (German and Portuguese), and coordinator for the Dickinson German Club and Dickinson Portuguese Club; Dickinson College; Carlisle, Pennsylvania, United States
2009 – 2011	Interviewer for "Cultural Care Au Pair" (EF Foundation); interviewing prospective students and assessing their suitability for the program; Bremen, Germany
08/2009 – 09/2009	Teacher; teaching courses in German at Friends Language School; São Paulo, Brazil
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06/2008 – 07/2008	Receptionist; Ingenieurbüro Fluchtmann; Mettingen, Germany
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