

Introduction:

For the SOW interview, I had the chance to interview Adedolapo and Ariam. Adedolapo is currently a junior majoring in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology with a minor in public health at Boston University. Adedolapo was born in Nigeria and spent his childhood and his adolescence growing up in Kwara, Nigeria. He moved to the U.S 4 years ago back in 2018 to pursue his education in an American University. Ariam has a similar story, she is a freshman majoring in Business administration in the Questrom school of Business at Boston University. Ariam was born in Eritrea and first moved to Dubai when she turned 2 years old. She spent her childhood in Dubai and recently moved to the US to be more precise she moved last semester (Fall 2021). This interview was conducted through zoom because it was the most convenient for everyone considering our schedules. One challenge encountered was to find a time to meet that worked for the both of us. Fortunately, Spring break gave us the opportunity to meet without trouble while I was back home in New Jersey, and they were both in Boston.

Interview Protocol:

Our Research topic was focused on breaking up from traditions, so our conversations were focused on what traditions mean to them and their family. We focused on assimilation of American traditions considering they have their own and how easy/hard has it been to find their place in a country that may question or not understand their culture and traditions. The questions also focused on the differences between American traditions and their traditions. The questions I used included:

1. Are traditions important to you, why or why not?
2. What are some traditions you grew up with?
3. What holidays do you celebrate outside the US? How do you celebrate them?
4. Do you celebrate the same holidays in Boston? How do the traditions look different when you celebrate them in Boston?
5. Are there any traditions you haven't been able to carry on or don't want to carry on?
Why?
6. Was it difficult transitioning to new traditions when you came here for school?
7. Have you been able to find a community of people in Boston who have similar traditions?
8. What were other people's attitudes towards your traditions? Do they have any stereotypes or misconceptions?
9. How have your views of traditions changed from past generations? Example: taboos or superstitions
10. Have these differences caused issues between you and your parents/older generations?
11. What has your education taught you about your tradition here? Are they portrayed accurately and authentically?
12. Have you experienced people cutting you out because you have different views on traditions? (more or less traditional)
13. How has food played a role in your traditions?
14. What identities are related to your traditions? I.e. religion or nationality or anything else, could be multiple for one tradition

15. Do you plan to carry on the traditions you do now to your kids/people you know in the future?
16. Do you share your traditions with people not from your culture/religion/etc? Why or why not?
17. How did your traditions shape you into the person you are today?

While interviewing them I also try to make it less stressful by making them feel comfortable and understood since as an international African student myself I could relate to most of what was mentioned. I also included some fun questions for them such as:

1. What movie/Tv show have you been watching recently?
2. Are you taking any interesting classes this semester?
3. If you could meet any celebrity and have dinner with them, who would it be and why?

The questions were chosen to help us get a better understanding of how different or similar their traditions are to American traditions. These questions were also chosen to know how as international students they are/were able to assimilate and adapt into this new country. They also helped understand the relationship between them as a person and their family. How their family has shaped them and what role have traditions played in that as well. These questions were intended for them to open up about their traditions and their life as international students in a different country. The questions were chosen to make them share their stories without feeling uncomfortable during the process or oversharing information.

Interview:

The topics covered in this interview ranged from growing up around family members, neighbors, and friends that share the same traditions as them to moving to the US where not as many people share the same experiences and traditions. One interesting thing between these 2 interviews was how they both described the traditions differences they experienced in Nigeria for Adelopa, and Eritrea and Dubai for Ariam. Family and food were the two most mentioned when it came to how they identify traditions and cultures. Ariam brought up how her mother will cook eritrean food while they were in Dubai. Sometimes, she will make someone from Eritrea ship the ingredients to them for them to cook their traditional food during their special holidays. She named a few food names that they mostly make and how they share it together. Friday was considered as a family day where they eat together and spend time together. Since she moved, she did not have a chance to have a family day. One thing that surprised me was when Ariam mentioned that personally for her it was not that hard to adapt since she went to a school that is pretty much really diverse back in Dubai. It was something she was used to while on the other hand, Adedolapo mentioned that it was harder for him especially when it came to the American school system. He mentioned how back in Africa, respect was a huge part of the tradition which in a way is different from the US. He told me that here the professors were a lot closer and willing to help the students. They have office hours, you can talk to them about anything and it is almost like there is not that huge age difference. While back where he is from, professors are considered as elders, people you owe total respect to and you should address them in a certain way like you cannot call them by their name. Age was also mentioned as being a big part of traditions, always respect people older than you even if it is just by month. Ariam and Adelapo had a lot of traditions in common, for example, the importance of family and food. They both

mentioned how important it is to always eat with each other every day or most days. Being able to enjoy their cultural food together at a specific time together is important for the family.

Adedolapo brought up a particular point that back home using hands to eat is essential if not almost mandatory. Traditions mean a lot to them, and they both wish to carry it into their children and after experiencing both worlds being able to have a perfect mix of both cultures.

Language was also a big deal and Adedolapo mentioned that he would like for his kids to speak Yoruba which is his traditional language. When it comes to assimilations, Adedolapo mentioned that mixing his traditions to the American one has been hard. He found himself implementing a lot of the American traditions because of the fast lifestyle he is experiencing as an international student. Throughout the interview, they sometimes mentioned how their parents also impacted their decision and how they assimilate. For example, they always remind them to always remember where they come from and who they are. It is a way to remind them of their traditions and to cherish them.

Themes:

From the beginning of the interviews, we really focused on bringing up how different their traditions are and if they were able to carry it here. Throughout the interview, they mentioned that finding their people has been hard specifically at BU. They have tried to meet people from different backgrounds and sometimes make compromises. Ariam tried to put herself out there and join clubs where she could find people from Eritrea. However, she could not find many people. On the other hand, she found people from Ethiopia that she connected with. Transitioning from their initial traditions to this new felt like a huge clash. Adedolapo mentioned

being an international student in two countries and how the change in weather was surprising. He mentioned how when he came during the summer he noticed how people were dressed outside, wearing shorts, tank tops, crop tops, etc. It was something he was not used to back home. These types of clothes were something you were home because in his tradition, you cannot dress a certain way outside you should be covered up. Since family and food is a big thing in their tradition, celebrating holidays has been harder because they are not here with their families. They have their own holidays as Ariam mentioned a celebration from Eritrea she used to do back in Dubai with her family and she cannot carry it in the US. For example, their new year in September and Eritrea Independence Day. Adedolapo mentioned holidays that everyone celebrates but how the timing and the celebrations were different. For example, Mother's Day back in Nigeria is another day in the US, and also thanksgiving in the US is one day during the year while in Nigeria it is at the end of every month. As international students, they had to experience some types of stereotypes. They shared some funny stories that happened to them when they came to the US. Ariam expressed that she had a stereotype of the US. She believed that people were walking with guns everywhere and that it was very dangerous, but her view quickly changed when she moved to the US. Obviously, she also had people ask her if she rode a camel to go to school when she was in Dubai and that made her laugh. Adedolapo also had a very funny story of when someone asked him if he lives in a hut, and if they have cars back in Africa and if there are animals walking around in the street. Rather than feeling offended he explained that he lived in the city, and they have cars and houses just like in America. He understood that America portrayed Africa like that, and he tried to educate his friend.

Observations

It was hard to not be biased during the interview but the thing I noticed the most was how much Family meant to them. As an international student as well, I felt some type of connections with their stories, and I could relate to most of it. They are both young adults explaining how their traditions were a little old and that some traditions they did not agree with. Coming to America opened their mind to acceptance and learning how to take and use both traditions to their benefits. I think that you could sense in a way that they missed being home with their family and enjoying their food. It is harder for them to find it here specifically in Boston. It was pretty interesting to see how their 2 stories unfolded because they both come from different backgrounds but the stories, they have been still a little similar in a way. Adedolapo in particular is my friend, but I did not know so much of his story before the interview and it was a great experience to just sit there and listen to him talk about how much traditions mean to him as a person and how it shaped him. Ariam was an interesting one to interview as well, she is younger and recently moved but she has already learned so much about American culture. She is perfectly assimilating without forgetting where she is coming from. I just want to point out this one thing Adedolapo mentioned about what happened with his mom when he forgot to bow to say Hi and she called him out as being Americanized. It was funny because I had the same experience with my mom when one day, she spoke to me in our traditional language, and I answered her in French. I had a whole speech about how I should not forget where I am from and that I should answer her in the language she spoke to me etc. It was interesting to relate to him in that way. Ariam is a business major student, and I am also minoring in Business. When I asked her the question about any interesting classes, she's taking she told me about one of my favorite classes I took and we talked about it and connected in a certain way. They were both open and I

appreciate the fact that they were comfortable sharing this information with me and even pictures with their family and friends back home.

Summary:

In summary, Adedolapo and Ariam have very similar yet very different backgrounds. They both cherish their family and traditions very much and enjoy sharing their cultures with others. They both had their own way of adapting to this new tradition. While it was more challenging for Adedolapo than Ariam, they both found what works best for them. They both have a great value of not forgetting where they came from, but they are open to discovering what this new country can add to their traditions. I believe that this is not a case of picking one side either white or black, but it is a perfect gray. A perfect mix of both traditions, being open to what is new while not forgetting who you already are.