Statement of Purpose

Coming from a family where both of my parents are Greek expatriates in Istanbul and in Cairo, I never felt that I have a single ethnicity. From a young age, I was raised with two different cultures, the western one, as I was born in Greece and the middle-eastern one. This gave me the blessing to develop both my practical and emotional intelligence and it was something that made me differ from all others.

My step to the United States of America came so naturally to me since I was fully confident that pursuing a PhD program in computer science was the right choice. This happened two years ago, after presenting my research work in the second graduate course that I took, during my undergraduate coursework. The moment I understood that searching for the *"unknown"*, constantly looking for new directions on a topic that no one has ever thought of before or looking for small flaws in already robust concepts, was the same moment which sparked my desire. What led me to such a state was my mentality, my work ethic and my passion for databases and machine learning. Performing excellently in projects that either intersect with database systems or machine learning and artificial intelligence, made me confident that I had built the appropriate skill set and a strong background in order to tackle any given problem in the field.

The link that I was searching between these two distinct directions, came after reading some publications of MLbase from AMPLab. These papers were an inspiration, showing me that there is an active research community with the same passion as mine. Therefore, when it was time to work on my thesis, I decided to set two goals: conduct research in an area that I find interesting, there was room for improvement and combine any form of machine learning technique with databases and distributed environments. I looked at every single aspect of the issue and I tried to understand which direction would lead to something promising. After finding two open problems, I managed to tackle every single one of them, by proposing a new approach. I firmly believe that my experimental evaluation was systematic and my proposals were both robust and reliable. Through this research project I managed to improve my methodological skills and I understood how deeply I enjoy the process of reading papers, analyzing their technical results and trying to find the *"edge"* at a given problem.

My next step is currently in the United States of America. My primary motive for joining the University of Massachusetts Amherst was the research fit. A research project that solves hard database query problems in dynamic environments. *"Databases"* and *"dynamic environments"*, two words that intrigued me even from when I was studying relational databases. Such a hard problem to answer *"What if in my database something changes?"*, and a series of other questions arise that exceed the current research knowledge. After reading many papers in the relative research field, I convinced myself that this small research area has the potential to change the way we perceive databases until now. Combining pure mathematics, linear programming, database systems and learning techniques is exactly what I would have hoped for working right now. This experience so far has taught me that I can successfully be a team by myself. I am both the person who thinks and delivers at the same time. My motto?

When *"opportunity"* finds *"preparation"* then *"success"* comes.