INFLUENCE OF ALEVI-SUNNI INTERMARRIAGE ON THE SPOUSES’ RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION, FAMILY RELATIONS, AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF TURKISH COUPLES

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What influence Alevi-Sunni intermarriage has on spouses’ individual religious affiliation after marriage was the initial research question addressed in this study. No official or unofficial data exist regarding the Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Turkey. This study responded to the need to describe extant relationships by using a qualitative approach to gather detailed information from a sample of married couples in Corum city, Turkey. A case study method was applied to a sample of ten couples. Couples were selected using snowball and purposive sampling techniques. A team of researchers conducted forty face-to-face interviews. Each of the ten husbands and ten wives in Alevi-Sunni intermarriages were interviewed twice using semi-structured questionnaires. Additional demographic and observational data were gathered. Spouses in the Alevi-Sunni intermarriages sampled did not change their religious affiliation after marriage. The spouses reported few if any problems in their marital relationships and in child rearing. However, spouses did report many problems with parental families, in-laws, and other relatives. The disapproval and punishments from extended family members are related to the social stigma attached to Alevi-Sunni intermarriages. However, intermarriage, modernization including secularism and pluralism are challenging this stigma. Because of this transition further interdisciplinary studies on Alevi-Sunni intermarriage that explore different dimensions of intermarriage are needed.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter has six sections: in first section; the research problem is stated to explain what has been done, what has not, and the special interest in this topic. In second section, the purpose of the study is clarified. In third section, the research questions of the dissertation are stated. In fourth section, the many aspects of this study’s significance are presented to affirm its necessity. In addition, it’s the study’s contributions to the fields of family, religion, and sociology are listed. In fifth section, the grounded theory and the purpose of using the grounded theory method for this dissertation are stated. In the final section, the organization of the dissertation chapter by chapter is explicated.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage formalizes a couple’s relationship and brings them closer together as well as their relatives, neighbors, and others (cf. Yinger, 1968). Couples’ backgrounds can be diverse in many ways including age, ethnicity, social class, and religion. Some diversity has more of an impact on the couple’s relationship than others. Religious diversity in many ways can have a great deal of influence the couple’s interaction (Yinger, 1968).

Since the early years of the last century, studies have examined intermarriage in American society along many social criteria, including race, faith, and culture, (cf., American Medical Association, 1937; Bossard & Bol, 1957; Bugelski, 1961; Burchinal & Chancellor, 1962; Cavan, 1970; Glick, 1970; Greenstein & Carlson, 1993; Heer, 1967;
Marcson, 1950; Merton, 1941; O’Leary & Finnas, 2002; Peres & Schrift, 1978; Schoen, 1986; Sherkat, 2004; Yancey, 2009). Many of these studies focused on interfaith unions. As is the case for most other social criteria, interfaith marriage in America has increased during recent decades. Among American adults, about four in ten (37%) participated in religious intermarriage in the United States in 2007 (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008, p. 34). Additionally, in half of these couples (50%), one partner was more likely to change his or her religious affiliation in order to match that of the spouse after marriage (Pew, 2008, p. 35).

However, few studies could be found in the existing literature about intermarriage in Turkey, either in English or Turkish. Because of the lack of national data on intermarriage, knowledge of intermarriage in Turkey is based upon special studies and surveys. Examples include Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits (2002), who studied Turkish-Kurdish intermarriage, and Çatlı (2008), who studied Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. To the author’s knowledge, Çatlı’s is the only study in the present literature examining the Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Nevşehir and Istanbul, Turkey (2008).

Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is an appropriate topic for this dissertation due to the following reasons:

1- When Alevi and Sunni youths are willing to marry each other, considerable public concerns are raised related to family, relatives, religious, and cultural matters. For example, parents usually worry about changing religious affiliation of their son or daughter. Due to this fear, it is very common to find many couples of Alevi-Sunni mixed marriage who have had problems with the husband or wife’s
family, relatives, neighbors, and/or social environment during the process of or after the marriage.

2- This kind of intermarriage has always been negatively spoken of in public; hence, a social stigma is often attached to intermarriage in Turkey.

3- A huge knowledge gap exists about the topic due to the lack of research and publications about the issue.

Purpose of the Study

The study’s aim was to explore and describe the characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in relation to individuals, family, and society. First, an examination of the meaning of marriage for both spouses was made in order to get a detailed understanding of the respondents’ beliefs about marriage in general. Second, the characteristics of mate selection of intermarriage couples were determined by examining the main features of dating of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage spouses. Whether Alevi-Sunni intermarriage has any considerable impact or not on the individual religious tradition preference of the spouses was examined. That is, does a relationship exist between Alevi-Sunni intermarriage and change of personal religious affiliation preference of spouses pre- and post-marriage. Also, each spouse’s opinions about religious beliefs and affiliation identity before and after the marriage were explored. Finally, the impact of intermarriage on child-rearing was explored, as well.

Further the characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage and their impact in regards to family and society were explored. The influence of intermarriage on the relationships in and outside the immediate family was explored. Especially, if Alevi-Sunni mixed
marriage had any impact on the relationships of spouses with each-other, their parents, in-laws, etc. Finally, the existence of any social stigma on Alevi-Sunni intermarriage was explored.

Research Questions

The main goal of this study was to explore Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Çorum City, Turkey. For this purpose, research questions were divided into two parts. The first part examined Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in relation to the individuals involved (i.e. the spouses); the second part examines Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in relation to family and society.

The research questions about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in relation to individuals are:

1- What is the opinion of each couple about family in general?
2- What is the process of mate selection?
3- What is the opinion of each member of the couple about religious beliefs and religious affiliation identity before and after marriage?
4- Does Alevi-Sunni intermarriage have any influence on individual religious affiliation of spouses during the marriage? If so,
5- How does Alevi-Sunni intermarriage affect each member of the couples' religious tradition preference?
6- How do religious affiliation differences affect the marriage?
7- Does Alevi-Sunni intermarriage threaten child-rearing? If so, How?
The research questions about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in relation to family and society are:

8- Does Alevi-Sunni intermarriage have any influence on family relations, such as the relationship between the couple and their children, parents, and in-laws?

9- Does Alevi-Sunni intermarriage have any influence on relations with the social environment, including other relatives, friends, neighbors etc.?

10- Does a social stigma on Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Çorum City, Turkey exist?

Significance of the Study

This study was unique in several ways. One, it used qualitative research techniques, which are not very common in Turkey vis-a-vis the United States. This dissertation is also the first Alevi-Sunni intermarriage qualitative study in Turkey at the doctoral level. The most significant benefit of this research includes a contribution to the better understanding of this kind of intermarriage in Turkey in particular, but also in the world more generally. The findings also have implications for policy-making. Findings should help Turkish governmental and nongovernmental (NGO) institutions make better policies concerning family affairs. In conclusion, the dissertation’s findings should be beneficial for almost everyone to whom intermarriage pertains, including the intermarried couples, their families, relatives, neighbors, friends, and Turkish society by drawing attention and offering insights into several characteristics of Alevi-Sunni mixed marriage. Consequently, inter-cultural conflict might be reduced.
Grounded Theory

The role of theory in qualitative research is different from that in quantitative research. As Straus and Corbin (1998) state, qualitative research methods include interviews, observations, documents, etc. and facilitate researchers obtaining complex details about a phenomenon. Also, qualitative studies are mainly inductive because they proceed “from the particular to the general, from a set of specific observations to the discovery of a pattern that represents some degree of order among all the given events” (Babbie, 2004, p. 25).

In a qualitative study, researchers often prefer to use the grounded theory method. In other words, the qualitative researcher attempts to formulate a new theory from the collected data rather than to test an existing theory (Straus & Corbin, 1998).

This qualitative research uses the grounded theory method in order to examine how two people negotiate personal religious identity pre- and post-marriage in the Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Çorum city, Turkey. More specifically, the researcher does not proceed from any specific hypothesis or theory, but rather allows these to develop through the research process. Thus, data collection, data analysis, and theory development have closer relationships with each other in grounded theory method. Straus and Corbin (1998) noted that:

Theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the “reality” than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation (how one thinks things ought to work). Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action. (p. 12)
Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 includes the statement of the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, a brief explanation of grounded theory and justification and purpose of using it in this dissertation, and the organization of the dissertation.

Chapter 2 is an annotated literature review and summarizes the available and relevant literature in both English and Turkish. The topics cover are intermarriage, interfaith marriage, concerns about intermarriage and interfaith marriage, intermarriage and interfaith marriage in Turkey, families in Turkey with many aspects, Alevism and Sunnism, and the relevant history and relationships between Alevism and Sunnism followers in Turkey and in the province sampled. Chapter 3, the methodology section, explains the methodological steps by stating the research design, data collection, and data analysis procedures in detail. Chapter 4 contains the results of the research and describes the characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in an organized manner by examining several different issues. Descriptive details of sample and impacts of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage on different phenomena are examined in this section. Chapter 5 reveals and applies a theoretical framework for explaining the relationships between Alevi-Sunni intermarriage and affiliation preferences of spouses post-marriage. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusions. The topics covered including discussion, major findings, research questions answered, implications for future research, and policy implications of the study.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Interraditration

Family is the core institution in almost every society. Marriage plays a key role in the continuation of families in almost all societies. Therefore, marriage holds a unique position among other social phenomena in society and in many academic disciplines (Roopnarine & Gielen, 2005). People usually tend to marry someone who shares many of the same statuses to them including someone who are from the same social group. However, similarity of status is not the only factor influencing one’s choice of spouse; many variables play into this decision (Kalmijn, 1998). For example, some people seek differences in their potential spouses along such dimensions as race, ethnicity, religion, culture, etc. Marriages of these sorts are collectively referred to as intermarriage or mixed marriage (Landis, 1949).

Although intermarriage has been one of the main issues in ethnic relation studies, sociology has also dealt with intermarriage issues (Pagnini & Morgan, 1990; Qian & Lichter, 2007). According to Bossard (1939), intermarriage is socially a vital issue and should be studied due to the significance of intermarriage as “an index of the assimilative process,” “the social distance between distinctive groups,” and the “cultural similarities and dissimilarities in marriage” (p. 792). Intermarriage is studied in terms of the amalgamation or assimilation of distinct social groups. Statistical investigations of the ratio of mixed marriages to the total number of marriages have been implemented to measure “the rate of amalgamation of different groups.” From a more general and theoretical perspective, anthropological investigations have examined the various
blending effects of mixed marriages, as exemplified in the value systems of the spouses themselves, in relation to broader trends of cultural (religious and social) assimilation (Resnik, 1933, p. 94).

Song (2009) pointed out that intermarriage can effectively decrease the ‘social distance’ between the majority and various minority groups, thereby restructuring the system of social mores related to the appropriateness of certain relationships. As intermarriage results in less distinctive boundaries between social groups through successive generations, it can provide information of societal change over time (Kalmijn, 1998).

Sociological research on intermarriage, as Barron stated, has distinguished itself from other approaches by emphasizing “the causal factors,” “the patterns of incidence and selection,” and “the consequences among the marriage patterns and their children” (1951, p. 249). The term intermarriage has been used in the literature: (a) to refer to marriage between people of “culturally incompatible groups, subsocieties, or societies,” focusing on the modes of accommodation of each of the spouses in pursuit of a harmonious union, and (b) to capture the attempts of the broader social networks of the spouses to reconcile their differences “without loss of distinctive values” (Cavan, 1970, pp. 311-312). Kalmijn and Tubergen (2010) outline the three general notions according to which researchers most frequently explain intermarriage: “Individual preferences to marry within or outside the group, structural opportunities to meet members of the own group, and the influence of third parties on marriage behavior” (p. 461; Kalmijn, 1998). According to Kalmijn and Tubergen (2010), the study of intermarriage provides researchers with key insights into the strength of disparate subgroups’ interrelationships.
by indicating to what degree they consider each other equals. Intermarriage results in a connection not only between the spouses themselves, but also more generally between their respective communities. Intermarriage facilitates inter-cultural blending, thereby blurring ethnic distinctions, and ameliorating systematic prejudice through successive generations, each being less likely to identify with a single group than the last. Widespread intermarriage homogenizes formerly distinctive “ethnic definitions in society” (p. 459).

The many factors affecting intermarriage may vary depending on the people, and by extension, the broader social networks involved (Camazine, 1967). According to Barnett (1962), the existence of minority groups, an unbalanced sex ratio, and the acceptance of definite cultural principles promote mixed marriage.

Concerns about Intermarriage

Crucially, mixed marriages exhibit “obvious and unusual” discrepancies in the spiritual beliefs or ethnicity of the partners. Although these are the main focus, some studies have included education, age, social status, and others as representing mixed marriage. These differences have typically and perhaps intuitively been associated with marital strife, though some research indicates that not all of these affect marriage negatively (Landis, 1949, p. 401).

Cerroni (1985) pointed out three major stress factors related to intermarriage. The first is the personal stress factor, which is related to the interaction between the two spouses and the effect of their individual problems on this interaction. Second is the external stress factor, which is related to the interaction between the married couple and all people around them who can influence them. Third are the random stress factors,
which include unpredictable actions in the life of couple such as a change of personal affiliation of one individual or both spouses.

Most studies of gender differences in intermarriage have focused on interracial and interethnic mixed marriages. One study conducted in the United States, for instance, found that “Black men marry Whites more often than Black women” (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 412).

Education level has also been studied in relation to intermarriage. One consistent finding in this literature seems to be that as education level increases, so too does the tendency to marry exogamously for minority groups. For example,

More highly educated persons—of both majority and minority groups—have a more individualistic attitude, are less attached to their family and community of origin, and have a more universalistic view on life than lesser-educated persons. As a result, they would find ascribed characteristics less relevant in deciding whom to marry. (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 414)

Many societies pay little attention to intermarriage among people of different races, religions, and ethnic groups (Degler, 1971). Some societies have more tolerance and acceptance of intermarriage due to their heterogeneous composition, like the United States (Baber, 1937; Spickard, 1989). Intermarriage rates have increased in the United States (Hobart, 1990). It might be because intermarriage seems to have catalyzed the melting-pot feature of the U.S., thus helping to eliminate intolerance among ethnic and religious groups (Chiswick & Lehrer, 1991). Therefore, the United States provides a particularly attractive setting for the study of intermarriage in that it constitutes an asymmetric network of nearly absolute cultural, ethnic, and religious subgroup representativity (Kalmijn & Tubergen, 2010).
Interracial marriage takes three main forms: Interfaith, interracial, and interethnic. Marriage of people from different classes is not accepted as intermarriage by most observers (Cerroni, 1985). In the following section, interfaith marriage will be considered along with several dimensions relevant to the study topic.

**Interfaith Marriage**

Abrahamic religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - have different doctrines for the religious and social life of their followers. However, the supremacy of God, marriage, and family are accepted as essentials by all three religions, and each of them offers unique prescriptions in order to improve conjugal relations (Harris et al., 2008). Because religion is intimately connected to a society’s belief systems and moral code, it affects the preference of individual on a potential spouse (Kalmijn & Tubergen, 2010; Lehrer 1998; Sherkat 2004). Consequently, interfaith marriage has been accepted as a vital issue by religious leaders since the initial splintering of different religions (Cavan, 1970).

Interfaith marriage refers to one in which the spouses do not share a religious affiliation (Locke et al., 1957). In addition, marriages between members of different religious groups or subdenominations within a single religion have also been variously referred to in the literature as “religious intermarriage, interreligious marriage, interfaith marriage, [and] mixed marriage” (Cavan, 1970, pp. 316-317).

In a sociological conceptual framework, as Cavan (1970) said, interfaith marriage is a sort of interaction among different religious groups, subgroups, or societies. Bossard and Boll (1957) illustrated cases of attitudes toward different variables to demonstrate the ideational differences within interfaith families. Although the church
paid significant attention to endogamy, especially religious endogamy, they predicted the increase in interfaith marriages in their study.

The number of interfaith marriages has been significantly increasing in America since the 1960s; despite some scholars’ beliefs that interfaith marriage threatens the morals, security, and stability of a religion (Cavan, 1970; Kalmijn, 1993; Lehrer, 1998). For example, about forty percent of American adults (37%) were in religious intermarriage in 2007 (Pew, 2008, p. 34). The growth rate in interfaith marriage might relate to both lower church attendance and levels of perceived family happiness (Alston et al., 1976). Moreover, the spouses’ tendency to have similar educational level and the decline of the significance of religious difference could explain the increase in interfaith marriages (Kalmijn, 1991).

An interaction between religion and family, and they influence each other in significant ways (Yinger, 1968). In addition, intermarriage attitude along with the religion of friends, church participation, and religious self-identification might affect religious communality orientations (Anderson, 1969).

Concerning the number of followers, interfaith marriage could be either an opportunity or a threat for the denominations involved (Chiswick & Lehrer, 1991). Nonetheless, churches seem to be suspicious about and punish marriage between Christians and non-Christians (Birtwistle, 2006).

The United States, as a “denominational society,” contains many religious denominations, each of which plays a significant role in determining the patterns of behavior of its followers (Greeley, 1970, p. 949). The discussion of interfaith marriage in the United States in the existing literature usually centers on marriages between the

Concerns about Interfaith Marriage

Because intermarriage involves definite religious, cultural, and ethnic differences, these couples must endure more and separate challenges compared to their homogamous counterparts (Patsovos & Joanides, 2000). People sometimes see religious difference as a scapegoat for marital problems although it may not be the actual reason (Vernon, 1962). Thus, with interfaith marriage, some concerns arise, which can threaten the relationships of interfaith couples. Greenstein and Carlson (1993) examined some sociological and historical concerns regarding interfaith marriage, like “lack of acceptance by religious institutions and parents, emotional barriers to direct communication; [and] change in initial relationship contract” (p. 428).

Heiss (1960) investigated the typical characteristics of interfaith marriage couples. He concluded that interfaith couples have “a lesser early tie to religion, greater dissatisfaction with early relationships with parents, greater strife in family of orientation, lesser early family integration, and greater emancipation from parents at time of marriage” than those in intra-marriage (p. 47). In this sense, Alston et al. (1976) found that both Catholics and Protestants engaged in interfaith marriages were less likely to attend church, which they interpreted as “a measure of religiosity” (p. 264).
Another concern about interfaith marriage is the relationship between it and the divorce rate. "Intermarriage and divorce are often positively related" (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 397). According to Bahr (1981), compared to same-faith marriages, interfaith marriages are less stable because it is probable the disparities in the faith preference of the couple creates strife, which affects the divorce rate. In addition, interfaith marriages end in divorce nine times more frequently than other types of intermarriages.

Finally, the assimilation theory has been used to examine the various forms of marriage, but especially interreligious marriage (Cretser & Leon, 1985). Thus, "interracial marriage among heterogeneous social groups has often been studied as a process of assimilation" (Anderton, 1986, p. 341). For instance, it is believed that the percentage of mixed marriage among Jews in the U.S. has been growing, which is accepted as a sign of the Jewish group's wavering survival as an autonomous sub-society (Fein, 1971).

Children and Assimilation

The children of same-faith marriage generally subscribe to the same denomination of their parents (Hoge et al., 1982). However, children of interfaith marriages have been shown to be less strongly religious than those of homogamous relationships due to an inconsistency in "religious socialization" (Petersen, 1986, pp. 731-732).

Several factors influence the religious socialization of children of interfaith marriage, including the types of religions concerned, "parent-child systems," gender of the child, and the relationship between father/mother roles and religious affiliation.
(Salisbury, 1970, p. 128). For instance, “females felt more pressure than males from their parents to marry a person of the same religious faith” (Knox et al., 2002, p. 84). Also, in order to transfer their religious traditions and beliefs, Protestants, Catholics, and Jewish parent tend to wish their children adopt the same faith (Bisin et al., 2004) but this is not possible for one spouse in an interfaith marriage. The religious affiliation and intensity of faith affect the outcome. Nelsen concluded that:

Catholic dominated over Protestant identification in interfaith marriages; this took priority over the Protestant mother's influence upon her child. Especially when the mother is Catholic, the children are Catholic. The Catholic parent is more influential for the daughter's identification than for the son's. When the mother is conservative Protestant, the children are more likely to be Protestant than when she is liberal Protestant. Conservative Protestant-Catholic marriages have higher rates of religious “nones” for sons than daughters. In a family with only one parent with a religious identification, the child is more likely to have no religious identity if it is the mother who has no identification. (1990, p. 122).

As a result, Reiss (1965) highlights the fact that interfaith marriage, given its documented effects on the behavioral and religious tendencies of children coming from such marriages, can also be used to predict “future religious cultural differentiation” of a society (p. 64).

Intermarriage and Interfaith Marriage in Turkey

As mentioned in the introduction, although intermarriage exists, a huge knowledge gap exists regarding intermarriage and interfaith marriage in Turkey. Neither the Turkish Statistical Institute, the Ministry of Interior, nor the Presidency of Religious Affairs collects data about religion, denomination, intermarriage, and interfaith marriage (Turkish Statistical Institute, personal communication, March 25, 2011; Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality, personal
communication, March 24, 2011; the Presidency of Religious Affairs, personal communication, March 14, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to carry our studies on these issues in order to fill this gap in knowledge. Only a few studies on intermarriage have been completed in Turkey from which to depart.

Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits studied the Turkish-Kurdish interracial marriage in Turkey. Turks and Kurds are considered to be different races than each other in Turkey (Gündüz-Hoşgör & Smits, 2002). Though Turks and Kurds have traditionally preferred ethnically homogamous relationships, these groups have more and more frequently intermarried despite the ongoing conflict occurring in Southeastern Turkey. These intermarriages are affected by several factors. More intermarriages of this type take place in metropolitan areas than in rural areas. Education level plays an ethnicity-specific role in that Kurds with high education and Turks with low education levels are more likely to intermarry. Finally, gender differences appear in that Kurdish males and Turkish females are more likely to intermarry (Gündüz-Hoşgör & Smits, 2002).

The other study about Turkish intermarriage by Çatlı (2008) is the only available Alevi-Sunni intermarriage study. She identified several features affecting Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. In the first place, in urban centers the likelihood of intermarriage increased due to the breakdown of definite ethnic distinctions. Prestige was also an influential factor, in that Sunni status is privileged within Turkish culture. Therefore, the Sunni partner was more likely to exert control over the couples affiliation and behavior. Similarly, the patriarchal nature of Turkish society gives privilege to the male partner. However, in some cases, the woman determined the couple’s affiliation. In these cases financial asymmetries seem to be the root cause.
In conclusion, a study that explores and examines Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Çorum city should help fill the knowledge gap. It will build on and extend these two previous Turkish studies, especially the latter one.

Basic Historical and Demographic Information about Turkey

It has been accepted that “Turkish society is being rapidly transformed from a traditional, rural, agricultural, patriarchal society to an increasingly modern, urban, industrial, egalitarian one” (Sunar & Fişek, 2005, p. 170). Turkey, covers an area of 785,347 square kilometers, its location provides a bridge between Europe and Asia. It has 81 provinces and the capital is Ankara. Turkey also has four annual seasons along with a wide variety of ecologies (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2010a, pp. 4-14). Turkey is a multi-cultural nation because Anatolia area was the mainland for many historical states, such as the Hittites, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Seljuks, and finally the Ottomans. Today's socio-cultural demographic mix can be traced out of these cultures (Sunar & Fişek, 2005).

The Republic of Turkey, which is the immediate descendent of the Muslim Ottoman Empire, was established on October 29, 1923. Therefore, the majority of the population is Muslim. Islam has a huge impact on families in Turkey (Nauck & Klaus, 2008; Pew, 2009).

Population

“Turkey has experienced various intensive social and economic changes in the 20th century. The size and the structure of the population have been exposed to a range
of transitions along with alterations in the society” (Sutay, 2004, p. 2). In addition, “improvements in hygiene, nutrition, and medical care have greatly lowered infant mortality ... and raised average life expectancy” in Turkey (Sunar & Fişek, 2005, p. 170).

The total population of Turkey was 13,648,270 million in 1927, whereas it was 72,561,312 million in 2009. In addition, even though the annual growth rate declined from 21.10% to 14.50%, the population has grown 5 times during the last 82 years (Turkstat, 2010b).

**Fertility, Life Expectancy, and Mortality**

According to Nauck and Klaus, “the total fertility rate in Turkey decreased steadily within the last decades” and will continue to decrease in the future, as well (2005, p. 370; TurkStat, 2010a, p. 86). Kagitcibasi and Ataca (2005) stated that “the implication of the decrease of economic/utilitarian VOC [value of children] and the increase of psychological VOC is decreased fertility” (p. 319; Kagitcibasi, 1982a, 1982b).

The highest birth rate in Turkey has always been in Istanbul, followed by Southeast Anatolia (TurkStat, 2010a, p. 71). Looking at the age specific fertility rate, mothers aged from 20-29 have the highest fertility rate, whereas mothers aged from 40-49 have the lowest fertility rate (TurkStat, 2010a, p. 73). It is expected that the total fertility rate per woman will be 2.05 in 2015, 2.01 in 2020, and 1.97 in 2025 (TurkStat, 2010a, p. 86).

Life expectancy has increased in Turkey. The development of industrialization, health reforms, and better standards of living resulted in an increased senior population
in Turkey (Sunar & Fişek, 2005). Based on the national data, life expectancy at birth has increased 5 years from 1990 (67.4 years) to 2006 (73.2 years) (TurkStat, Population and development indicators, n. d.). Furthermore, it is expected that females will live longer than males in Turkey, and “expectation of life at birth” for females is estimated to be 77.4 in 2015, 78.3 in 2020, and 78.9 in 2025, while it is 72.1 in 2015, 72.7 in 2020, and 73.1 in 2025 for males (TurkStat, 2010a, p. 86).

As a final point, mortality is another issue for Turkish society. Circulatory system diseases were the main cause of death for both males and females and adults with the age of 65 and older consistently have the highest mortality number (TurkStat, 2010, pp. 84-85).

Ethnic Composition, Religion, and Language

Even though the population of minorities is low, Turkey may be stated among the multiracial countries. Turkey, as Sunar and Fişek examined, has different ethnic groups:

The population of Turkey is heavily dominated by ethnic Turks, but a number of other groups are represented, notably Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, Sephardic Jews, Circassians, Gypsies (Roma), Laz, Syriacs, and others. Except for Kurds, who are estimated to constitute up to about 20% of the population, these minority groups are quite small. (2005, p. 170)

Regarding religion, about 98% of Turkey is Muslim and the majority of Muslims are Sunni followed by Alevi (Pew, 2009, p. 5; Öktem, 2002). Also, there are different religious groups within the subgroups of Turkey other than Islam. Öktem (2002) stated this diversity as “50,000 Armenian Orthodox Christians, 25,000 Jews, 15,000–20,000 Syrian Orthodox Christians (Syriac), 5000–7000 Yezidies, 2000–3000 Greek Orthodox Christians, [and] a small number of Nestorians” live in Turkey (p. 375; Howard, 2001).
Finally, “the official language of the nation is Turkish, but various languages such as Kurdish, Ladino, Armenian, Greek, and the Laz language are spoken within minority communities” (Sunar & Fişek, 2005, p. 170).

**Partner Selection and Marriage**

Partner selection is one of the hardest decisions to make for marriage in many societies. The decision making process for partner selection differs for male and female adults in Turkey. Mate selection is further altered by the parents’ significant influence on their children (Schonpflug, 2001).

The significant factors reported by single Turkish males in making a marriage decision are their future wife falling in love with them (90%), this marriage being the first marriage of the future wife (86%), and, finally, their future brides’ having a similar family structure (81%) (TurkStat, 2006, p. 9). The most important factor reported by single Turkish females, in contrast to the preference of single Turkish males, is their future husbands’ being employed (95%). In addition, falling in love with them (90%), and having a similar family structure (87%) are significant, as well (TurkStat, 2006, p. 9). Marriage has primarily become a matter of love in recent decades although it has traditionally also been accepted as “a matter of property exchange and conservation, in effect an economic transaction between two families more than an individual decision by two autonomous individuals” (Sunar & Fişek, 2005, p. 174).

According to the latest national family structure research, about 81% of Turkish families are nuclear in structure, 13% are extended family, and 6% hold individual status in Turkey (TurkStat, 2006, p. 1). Among Turkish adults, about 96% marry only one time.
in their lifetime, 4% marry two times in their lifetime, and only 0.3% marry three or more times in their lifetime (TurkStat, 2006, p. 4). Finally, about 59% of women and 58% of men marry for the first time between the ages of 18 and 24 (TurkStat, 2006, p. 4).

Payment of Bridewealth (Mahr) and Abduction of Girls (Kız Kaçırma)

Traditionally, payment of bridewealth, in other words payment of dowry, mahr, or bride price (başlık parasi), was one of the requirements of marriage in Turkey. However, payment of bridewealth has sometimes been misconceptionalized by scholars who have confused the different forms of payments as one singular form. The one type of payment of bridewealth, which is called as mahr, is the amount of payment (money or other goods), which is given by the groom to the bride herself, not to her family, as an expression of gratitude for accepting the marriage, for encouragement of the bride to marry, and also for provision of wedding expenses (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1999, pp. 217-220). It is rooted in the holy Qur’an (4:4) as “Give to the women (whom you marry) their bridal-due (mahr) willingly and for good” (Ünal, 2006, p. 174).

The other form of “payments of bridewealth take place as transfers from the family of origin of the groom to the family of origin of the bride (baslık)” (Nauck & Klaus, 2005, p. 368). This type of payment is mainly associated with Eastern Turkey; therefore, abduction of girls is commonly seen in this area because of the high amount of bridewealth.

Compared to the past, payment of bridewealth in Turkey has radically decreased. For example, only 17% of marriages involved payment of bridewealth or başlık parasi in
The payment of bridewealth was lower in urban areas compared to rural areas (TurkStat, 2006, p. 7).

The abduction of girls, kız kaçırma, still exists in modern Turkey although the percentages are lower today than in the past. In practice, both bride and groom agree on escaping somewhere in order to marry without the permission and knowledge of the families. As Nauck and Klaus (2005), stated, the abduction of girls is:

The execution of marriage without the permit of the families of origin and without bridewealth payments. This does not always take place against the will of the bride, for example, if a possible marriage is in danger because of the amount of bridewealth the family of origin is asking for, or if the parents of the bride put a stop to marriage in general and her increasing age diminishes any further marriage chances, or in case of serious conflicts between the bride and her parents about the choice of the groom. (p. 368)

Types of Marriages

Although Turkish adults tend to promote love marriage, arranged marriage still exists in Turkish society for several reasons. These include promoting family unity and protecting goods and patriarchal power in extended families (Fox, 1975; Hancioğlu, 1985). Another common type of marriage is consanguineous marriage. Consanguineous marriage is defined “as a marriage in which the two partners have at least one ancestor being no more distant than a great-great-grandparent in common” (Fisüoglu, 2001, p. 215). Consanguineous marriage has been accepted as an important indicator of Turkish conjugal and family system (Fisüoglu, 2001) because it makes up approximately 21% of marriage in Turkey in 2006. In fact, it is the most common type of marriage in Southeast Anatolia, where it makes up 40% of total marriages (TurkStat, 2006, p. 8).
Öktem (2002) mentioned that “for all citizens of Turkey, civil marriage is prescribed by law and is the only form of marriage that carries any legal status. Nevertheless, after civil marriage, couples are free to participate in a religious marriage ceremony according to their particular rites” (p. 402). In this regard, about 86% of the couples reported that they had both civil and religious marriages. About 4% of the spouses had only religious marriage ceremony, while 10% only civil marriages (TurkStat, 2006, p. 6).

In conclusion, some other types of marriage exist in today’s Turkish society (Sezen, 2005). These include interfaith marriage, temporary marriage, abduction of girls, marriage with payment of bridewealth, etc. However, the predominate types of marriage are those listed above as they are the most common in Turkish society today.

**Household Roles and Relationships**

Household roles and relationships may vary depending on the society, place, and time. “Role relationships in the family consist of reciprocal role expectations of the family members” (Schonpflug, 2001, p. 219). Among married Turkish adults, 87% of women reported that they cook at home, whereas only 2% of men reported that they cook at home in Turkey in 2006. Moreover, 68% of men and only 7% of women reported that they perform the tasks of household maintenance (TurkStat, 2006, p. 2).

A gender hierarchy still exist within Turkish families, in which males are considered superior to women in many respects, such as in terms of power, value, prestige, etc. (Kandiyoti, 1988; Kiray, 1976). As a result of most Turkish families being traditional and patriarchal family, males always have the most powerful status within the
Turkish family, including control of the decision making process (Sunar & Fişek, 2005). In addition, “children are at the very end of the decision [making] hierarchy in traditionalistically structured families” (Schonpflug, 2001, p. 219).

The major problems between couples are responsibilities related to home and children. About 35% of husbands and wives older than 18 years old reported that one of the spouses had a problem related to the division of the responsibilities of home and children (TurkStat, 2006, p. 14). Moreover, when a problem exists between couples, the common reaction of males (31.3%) is speaking up, though for most females (about 40%) it is keeping quiet (TurkStat, 2006, pp. 14-15). Finally, about 95% of males reported that their relationships with their wives were either perfect or good, this being true for 91% for females (TurkStat, 2006, p. 15).

Whatever the type of household role and relationship is, about 96% of men and 86% of women were satisfied by their marriage, and about 95% of men and 92% of women were satisfied from their family relations in 2009 (TurkStat, 2009, p. 452).

Alevism and Sunnism in Turkey

Alevism and Sunnism are two key terms in this study. As a general term, Alevi is Arabic and means ‘belonging to Ali,’ ‘related to Ali,’ ‘adherent of Ali,’ ‘love of Ali,’ ‘advocate of Ali,’ etc. The plural of the name is “Aleviyye and Aleviyyun.” Generally, it is the name of “religious and political groups who belong to Ali.” The term is used in Islamic Sufi movements, like Qadiriyya and Rifa’iyyah, and in subdenominations of Shi’a, like the Zaidis, Twelvers, Ismailis, Nusayriyyah, etc. (Ocak, 1989, pp. 368-369).
The love of Ahl al Bayt, the family of the house of the Prophet, including Saint Ali and his families, too, takes a significant place in this affiliation. It is formulated as Haqq-Mohammad-Ali, which shows that the love of Allah, the Prophet, and Ahl al Bayt cannot be separated (Üzüm, 2002a).

The term Sunni, means “people taking the safe and right way, is used to describe people who have subscribed to the Ahl al Sunnah” since the 8th century C.E. The term Ahl al Sunnah is described as “people who follow the way of Prophet Mohammad and his sahabas [the companions of the prophet] in terms of the fundamental religion issues” (Yavuz, 1994, p. 525).

The Turkish type of Alevism and Sunnism can be traced back to the beginning of the Islamization process of the Turks in Middle Asia (Üzüm, 2002a). During the conquests of some parts of Middle Asia by the Arab Muslims, the Turks had a chance to meet them beginning in the time of Omar, the second caliph of Islam in the seventh century. Thousands of Turks subscribed to Islam in the 9th century, whose numbers grew in the following years (İnan, 1976; Yazıcı, 2002; Yıldız, 1976).

Nomadic Turkish tribes had no chance to learn Islam from books and hodjas; thus, they created a sort of “public Islam,” which is the syncretism of Islam and their previous beliefs, such as Shamanism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Christianity, etc. (Ocak, 1983; Üzüm, 2000). Therefore, these nomadic Turkish tribes have been accepted as the ancestry of the Alevi in Turkey today. On the other hand, people who learned the Islam at the schools and from books accepted as the ancestry of today’s Sunnis (Üzüm, 2000).
The conquering of Anatolia by Alparslan, Sultan of Seljuk State, in 1071 let thousands of Turks and many dervishes and Sufis from Middle Asia, Iraq, Iran, and Syria move to Anatolia. Some Sufi movements became very popular and impacted rebellions and religious life in Anatolia (Eröz, 1990; Turan, 1969). One of the well-known revolts was the “Babai Rebellion” against the Sunni Seljuk State in 1240. Baba Ilyas was the leader of the rebellion and Baba Ishak was his main assistant. This revolt was stopped by Seljuk States’ army, and thousands were killed. However, some of the rebels escaped and had a closer relationship with each other, which improved the Babai movement. The Babai movement did not continue, but transferred its belief system and traditions to Alevism (Ocak, 1991, pp. 373-374). This movement is accepted as the core of Alevism (Çamuroğlu, 1992; Köprülü, 1976; Ocak, 1996). In addition, Alevism is also affected by Hadji Bektash Veli. It is a common belief that the saint Hadji Bektash Veli and his ancestry go back to Prophet Mohammed that is very important for Alevis. He lived in the 13th century in Anatolia and worked for spreading Islam (Üzüm, 2002a, 2002b).

Another stepping-stone for Alevi-Sunni relationships in the history was the establishment of Safavi State by Shah Ismail in Tabriz (Iran) in 1501 (Üzüm, 2002a, 2002b). Shah Ismail accepted the Twelve Imams Shi’a as a formal denomination, and his politics relied on the conversion of Sunnis to Shi’a. He killed many Sunnis for this purpose. Also, he sent his assistants to Anatolia, the land of the Sunni Ottoman Empire, to disseminate Shi’a propaganda. Ottoman Empire was a Sunni state and promoting it. Because of Shah Ismail’s politics, the first Kızılbas riot, the Sahkulu Riot, occurred in Anatolia against the Sunni Ottoman Empire. Many other riots also cropped up in
Anatolia until the Caldiran War between the Sunni Ottoman Empire and the Shi’a Safevi State in 1514. This war was aimed at stopping the Safevi and Shi’a’s impacts on the public, especially those of the Kizilbas, in Anatolia, which were threatening the Ottoman Empire, who eventually won the war (Öztuna, 1983). After this war, the Kizilbas people continued to riot against the Ottoman Empire (e.g. in the Bozoklu Celal, Sulunoglu Koca, Zunnunoglu, Domuz Oglan, Yenice Bey, Atmaca, Kalender Celebi, Seydi Bey, and Inciryemez riots; Öz, 1992; Üzüm, 2002a; 2002b). Therefore, the relationship between the Kizilbas and Sunni groups was generally not satisfactory.

Because Shi’a Safevi State lost the Caldiran War and all Kizilbas riots were quelled by the Ottoman Empire, the Kizilbas people started to live far from the urban centers, which shows their reaction to their unhappy relations with the Ottoman Empire. Some of the Kizilbas people joined the Bektashis while others continued to practice their beliefs as before until the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (Üzüm, 2000a). Moreover, many Kizilbas believers, who preferred to live in cities and near to cities, accepted Sunni Islam though the majority of Alevi believers had a very careful and limited relationship with Sunnis. Due to the politics of the Sunni Turkish states (i.e. Ottoman Empire) Sunnis were the dominant group among Turks (Koçan & Öncü, 2004; Üzüm, 2002a).

In regards to the population, it is estimated that 73,619,000 of the Muslim population living in Turkey makes up about 98% of the population (Pew, 2009, p. 5). The majority of the Turkish population is Sunni and Alevis are the second largest group. Nevertheless, there is no census about the precise population of Alevis and Sunnis in Turkey specifically (Pew, 2009), because state does not capture religion and/or religious
beliefs (Ministry of the Interior; General Directorate of Civil Registration and Nationality, personal communication, March 24, 2011).

Alevi Sunni Relationships in Turkey

Alevis supported the Turkish Independence War (1919-1922) and aimed to have good relations with the Republic of Turkey since they responded happily to the establishment of the secular Republic of Turkey (Üzüm, 2002a). In this period, As Dressler said:

Economic and societal changes resulting from industrialization initialized a rural exodus in the 1950s and 60s. Large numbers of Anatolian villagers, Alevis and Sunnis, migrated to the urban centers. Hence, the historic physical segregation between Alevis and Sunnis came to an end. (2003, p. 114)

Nevertheless, the relationship between these groups was not always a happy one. For example, “[I]n contemporary Turkey, the Alevi serve the role as the significant other and the public notion is to a large extent formed by a number of dramatic events: the clashes in Kahramanmaraş in 1979 and Çorum in 1980, the incendiarism in Sivas in 1993, and the riots in Istanbul (Gaziosmanpaşa) in 1995” (Olsson et al., 1998, Preface). As Şahin (2005) points out, tension between the groups has existed since the Ottoman period. Superstitions about these two groups still exist in Turkish public, directly affecting both groups’ and individuals’ relations with one another. It will be beneficial to mention the relationships of these groups in Çorum City, Turkey.

Alevi-Sunni Relationships in Çorum City

Çorum is one province out of 81 in Turkey occupying 12,797 square kilometer (TurkStat, 2009, p. 4; see Appendix A for the map of the city). Its population was

The Islamization process of and Turkish population in Çorum traces back to Seljuk State. This process has continued under the control of other states, including the Ottoman Empire, ending with the Turkish Republic. This city has had different religious subgroups including Sunnism, Alevism, Bektashism, etc. from the beginning of this process until now. In addition, this city is accepted as one of the centers of Baba Ilyas, who incited the Babai Riot. Thus, it is possible to see the differentiation of Alevism and Sunnism in this city (Arabacı, 2000; Ocak, 1996). Alevis and Sunnis generally live in separate areas of the city: For example, the former in the districts of Milönu and Kale, the latter in Mimar Sinan. These groups do live together to some degree, however, especially in Bahçelievler (Arabacı, 2000). Although the differentiation between Alevism and Sunnism in Çorum still exists, any separate living conditions do not threaten their relationships as neighbors, friends, and commercial partners, which remain strong (Arabacı, 2000).

As to the relationship between Alevism with Sunnism, 65% of Alevis and Sunnis believe that Alevism and Sunnism are different compared to about 23% who do not have any idea about it. Fifty-four percent of Alevis reported that they have problems with Sunnis due to religious issues, while 46% of them reported that they have problems with Sunnis due to non-religious issues. In contrast, 75% of Sunnis reported that they have problems with Alevis because of religious topics, whereas 25% of them believed that they have problems with Alevis because of other issues (Arabacı, 2000, pp. 160, 180-181).
Finally, Arabacı (2000) found that both Alevi and Sunnis in Çorum City believe that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage may be a helpful solution for problems between Alevi and Sunnis. Also, they agree that (a) there should be dialog between the groups, (b) everyone should have knowledge about the other group, (c) imams and dedes should inform both groups about religious matters, such as The Qur’an, Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammed, Ahlal al Bayt, etc., and (d) similarities should be stressed instead of differences by everyone to solve the problems between Alevi and Sunnis (Arabacı, 2000, pp. 183-185).

Exogamy in Alevism and Sunnism

As Kalmijn (1998) mentioned, “although many characteristics play a role in the choice of a spouse, sociologists have most often examined endogamy and homogamy with respect to race/ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status” (p. 395). Also, as mentioned earlier, interfaith marriage as a type of exogamy can be considered a strong indicator of the level of cross-cultural integration between two groups (Alston et al., 1976).

The perspectives on exogamy of the Alevi and Sunni in Turkey are different. For Alevi, endogamy, as opposed to exogamy, had always been vital to sustaining their community until the time of the Turkish Republic (Balkanlıoğlu, 2006; Çamuroğlu, 2000). For the purpose of sustaining community, Alevi punished those who choose to marry into Sunni families by, for example, dismissing them from the Alevi community, called düşkünlük. Therefore, one must have Alevi ancestry to be considered as a potential mate, and furthermore, to marry an Alevi (Çamuroğlu, 2000; Subași, 2005).
However, the new conditions in metropolitan centers arising from the formation of the Turkish Republic have forced Alevis to change their endogamic approach. First of all, Alevis and Sunnis started to live together in urban area, which was not common before. Secondly, Alevis were not ready for the urban life because they had generally been living in villages. Finally, many of the vital Alevi institutions in its belief system, such as brothership between Alevi families (musahiplik), authority of dedes, and cem rituals were threatened in urban life. Therefore, today, it is possible to find Alevi families in which one of its members has married someone who is not Alevi (Subaşı, 2005; Üzüm, 1997).

In contrast, endogamy is not important to Sunnis, although endogamous marriage is the most common type of marriage in Sunni society. The general belief in Sunnism is that every Muslim can marry one another without considering denominational differences. More specifically, Muslim men can marry Christian and Jewish women, although this is impossible for Muslim women. This belief comes from the Qur’an (5: 5): “And (lawful for you in marriage) are chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given Book [Old and New Testament] before, provided that you give them their bridal-due, taking them in honest wedlock, and not in debauchery, nor as secret love-companions (Ünal, 2006, p. 231).

Regardless of the beliefs in regards to marriage in both of these traditions, Alevi and Sunni intermarriage in Turkey exists (Çatlı, 2008). Taking Çorum City as a target population, Cılaz (2006) found no difference between Alevis and Sunnis in terms of types of marriage. The most common marriage, she found, was love marriage, followed by arranged marriage (Cılaz, 2006).
In conclusion, intermarriage in general, interfaith marriage in particular, basic historical and demographic aspects, and family topics relate the study were covered in this chapter. The next chapter documents details regarding the methodological approaches of this study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study focused on the Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Çorum province, Turkey. Methodological issues are presented in three sections in this chapter. The first section states the research design. The second section details specifically the data sources and data collection issues under the subheadings of research setting, recruitment, sample eligibility, interview process, interview guide, and reflexivity. The final section on data analysis provides the specific methods and procedures that were utilized for data analysis during the course of the research including issues of reliability and validity of the research measures. Also, limitations of the study, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process, and a summary table of the key methodology aspects of the research are stated in this section, as well.

Research Design

The dissertation study followed a qualitative research model. This research was cross-sectional and employed the qualitative case study as a research method. Case studies concentrate upon one or more examples of some social phenomena, like a village, in this study ten couples who were in an intermarriage. A value of in-depth case studies is that they “can yield explanatory insights” (Babbie, 2004, p. 293). Appropriate qualitative data collection and data analysis methods resulted in details about the relationships and resulting interactions and social contexts of Alevi-Sunni intermarriages.
Data Collection

Research Setting

Data source and collection are a very significant processes for every research. The target population was couples of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Çorum province, Turkey. Although the population of Çorum City includes followers of different Islamic affiliations, the majority groups are Alevis and Sunnis. Alevis and Sunnis live separately in some districts and together in other districts (Arabacı, 2000). No official population data on the size or proportion of Alevis and Sunnis in this city exist. However, both Alevi and Sunni populations are high enough in this city to provide a considerable sample pools for studying the Alevism-Sunnism relationship issues (Arabacı, 2000). Because of the more even distribution of these two groups, Çorum province was chosen as the site for the research (see the map of Çorum City in Appendix A).

Two stages of sampling methods were used, snowball and purposive sampling. Snowball sampling “begins with one or a few people or cases and spreads out on the basis of links to the initial cases” (Neuman, 2006, p. 223). In this case each couple contacted was asked by the researchers for a list of names of other couples who would be eligible to participate in a research (i.e. snowball sampling). Most couples referred other mixed marriage couple(s) for possible inclusion in the research. Then, researchers purposely selected the names on the list of couple who were eligible for the sample and would result in the diversity necessary (i.e. purposive sampling). Sample recruitment process is provided below in detail.
Recruitment

Recruiting qualified respondents is a demanding task; therefore, different sources were used during the recruitment process. Firstly, Imams and Dedes (socio-religious leaders) were asked to refer Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples in that city, because both Imams and Dedes play significant roles as counselors for intermarriage issues. Academicians who work on the Alevism-Sunnism topics were also asked to refer respondents. Friends and other contacts in my social environment were other sources for finding samples. Finally, the initial respondents were asked to refer other Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples. Twelve couples were found with the help of intermarried couples and five couples were found from other sources for a total seventeen possible couples.

The recruitment process was accomplished after finding the ten eligible couples of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage (totally twenty people) who met the required diversity criteria. One goal was to have an equal number of husbands and wives from each religious group. In fact, the final sample consisted of five Sunni husbands married to five Alevi wives and five Alevi husbands married to five Sunni wives as showed in the pie chart. Further details about samples are provided in the following sections.

![Pie Chart: Proportion of samples]

*Figure 1. Proportion of samples.*
Sample Eligibility

Inclusive Criteria

Some inclusive criteria were applied in order to find relevant sample couples for the study. A judgemental or purposive procedure was used to select the Alevi-Sunni couples. A couple were chosen if both of the spouses were healthy, willing to talk, and have at least one child from the Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. Also, couples were chosen among Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples who married only one time in their life period. The goal was to eliminate the potential impacts of other marriages on respondents. The length of marriage was another criterion in order to explore the characteristics of Alevi Sunni intermarriage over time. Thus, respondent couples were selected with different lengths of marriage ranging from three years to twenty eight years. In order to determine whether a couple was eligible for interview, researchers asked the person making the referral if the referred couple met the sample’s inclusive criteria. Also, researchers checked and confirmed the respondents’ situations based on the sample eligibility criteria when they had the first contact with the couples.

Exclusive Criteria

Respondents who were unhealthy, divorced, childless, under the age of eighteen, and could not be reached were excluded. After further checking it was determined that three of the seventeen couples were not eligible and they were excluded from the study. One of the couples had no baby and health problems. The second couple could not be reached because they moved out from the city. The third couple was excluded from the study since they were divorced. Also, four couples
declined participation in the study due to the personal content in the interviews and time factor involved in the interview process. Therefore, any data about their intermarriage could not be gathered. Details on the ten couples who were interviewed are stated in descriptive analysis in results section.

**Interview Process**

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection. All data gathered from the respondents were collected with explicit permission and voluntary participation of the respondents. Data were collected through two in-depth interviews with each respondent and audio-recorded with the permission of each respondent. Each respondent was interviewed individually. The first interview with each respondent was about the intermarriage in relation to couples and approximately lasted thirty minutes. The second interview was about the intermarriage in relation to family and society and lasted about an hour. All interviews were conducted in respondents' home.

The maximum time between the interviews one and two for a respondent was one week. All forty interviews were completed by the researchers in a month. Interviews were conducted in Turkish and the responses were translated to English later by key personnel and the other researchers cooperatively. Translations to English were checked and doubled checked by the research team.

Data from the interview consisted of the completed consent form, background information questionnaire, responses to face-to-face interview, participant observation by researchers, and researchers’ notes. Every respondent signed the consent form
before the interview started. Then, the respondent filled out the socio-demographic questionnaire followed by the in-depth interview (See Appendix B for interview schedule). In in-depth interviews, as Ritchie and Lewis recommended, “the researcher uses a range of probes and other techniques to achieve depth of answer in terms of penetration, exploration and explanation” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 141). Therefore, the researchers asked probing questions in order to explore more relevant and detailed data. For this purpose, the researchers, for example, asked: “You said … a moment ago… Tell me more what do you mean by that?” “Tell me more about this situation?” “Tell me the most difficult part of the situation?” “Tell me the least difficult part?”

Finally, the researchers took observational notes during the each interview. The researchers checked the interview schedule at the end of each interview. Overall, all the researchers reported success in the interviewing process.

**Interview Guide**

In order to explore opinions and experiences of the respondents in the sense of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage, a semi-structured interview questionnaire was used (see Appendix B for the questionnaire). Two questionnaires were created. The first one was mainly focused on Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in relation to individuals. Questions in the first questionnaire were asked to the respondents in the first interview. In this questionnaire, the first question examined the happiest day of the respondent’s life, whereas the second question explored the opinions of the respondents on the subject of family. Question number three covered the characteristics of mate selection process of the intermarriage couples, while fourth and fifth questions asked for elucidation on the
religious beliefs of the respondents before and after marriage. More importantly, the sixth and seventh questions concerned the religious affiliation identities of respondents’ pre-post marriage. Finally, question number eight asked for clarification Alevi-Sunni intermarriage threats to child rearing.

Questions in the second questionnaire were about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in relation to family, relationships, and society. Questions in the second questionnaire were asked to the respondents in the second interview. In this questionnaire, the first question explored the impact of religious affiliation difference of spouses on the marriage. The second question inquired how intermarriage influences family relations. Another question asked for revelations on how intermarriage influences relationships of couples with relatives, friends, neighbors, etc. Next question examined the respondents’ thoughts considering the marriage and social stigma. The final questions covered the respondents’ suggestions for couples of intermarriage and further research.

**Reflexivity**

Reflexivity in qualitative researches has become a very significant issue. It can be defined as “an awareness of the self in the situation of action and of the role of the self in constructing that situation” (Bloor & Wood, 2006, p. 145). Thus, reflexivity issues related to this research are considered.

Reflecting on the selection the dissertation topic takes me all the way back to my childhood. When I was a child, I often went to the cemetery with my mother to visit my father’s grave and pray for him. The district where the cemetery was located was called
an “Alevi district” in the city. Therefore, when I went to the cemetery, I often asked myself the question who the Alevis were?

I have always heard news about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage since my childhood. In this regard, when a couple divorced, society believed that the main reason was the religious affiliation differences of the spouses. Therefore, the scapegoat was Alevism for Sunnis and Sunnism for Alevis. In addition, in Turkish society discussions about the Alevism, Sunnism, and Alevi-Sunni intermarriage have been part of the public discourse for some time. However, neither Alevis nor Sunnis had scientific knowledge about each other and their relationships including intermarriage.

As a result, my interest on the topic grew up with me. I became academically curious about Alevism and Sunnism issues because I was aware of the lack of scientific knowledge about Alevism, Sunnism and their relationships with each other.

My master thesis focused on “the contemporary problems of Alevism”. It was completed in the department of History of Islamic Denominations at Marmara University, Istanbul in summer 2006. At the end, I realized that many of the problems, such as ambiguity of definition of Alevism, lack of systematical knowledge and academic sources about Alevism, identity and image problems of Alevis, etc. happen due to the lack of knowledge, prejudices, and biases about both Alevism and Sunnism. Politicization of the problems by some marginal groups and politicians complicated the solutions. Also, the need of accurate and unbiased publications about the topics was another significant consideration. After recognizing all of these, I decided to choose a topic for my dissertation, which should be academic, new, social, depoliticized, and related to Alevism and Sunnism.
To achieve this purpose, when I entered to my doctoral program in Sociology Department, I chose sociology of family as my major field. I aimed to research these issues from the sociological perspective. I enriched my knowledge about the dissertation topic by preparing research papers, reading books, attending the conferences and presenting academic papers. Also, I discussed the relevancy and necessity of the topic of my dissertation with professors and researchers from different disciplines and in different countries.

In conclusion, during this process, I discovered that the existence of a huge information deficit about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. Therefore, I chose the topic of the influence of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage on the individual religious affiliation preference of spouses in Turkey for my dissertation.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was one of the most challenging processes in this research. A grounded theory approach, developed by Strauss and Corbin, was used to analyze the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the grounded theory method, data analysis is not a very distinct process from the data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Background questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and participant observations were the raw data analyzed in this research.

First, ID numbers were given to each of the 40 interviews. Audio-records were transcribed verbatim. Each first interview yielded an average about fifteen pages of text, and each second interview yielded an average about twenty pages of text. During the qualitative data analysis, the software program (Ethnograph) was used because using
data analysis software programs is very helpful for qualitative researchers (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

As the initial step in the grounded theory method, systematic coding was the first phase of the data analysis. It included three steps: Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the open coding phase, I read through all the transcripts of the completed interviews. Then, the data were coded based on the preliminary characteristics by using the qualitative software program Ethnograph. Initial or open coding yielded fifty two codes. Some of the codes or categories included “characteristics of dating,” “knowledge about Alevism and Sunnism,” “the influences of Alevi-Suni intermarriage on individual religious affiliation preference,” “elopement and reasons for it,” “intermarriage and child issues,” “perceptions of spouses about religious beliefs,” “perceptions of spouses about religious affiliations,” “intermarriage and relationships,” “intermarriage and society,” “intermarriage and punishments,” etc. (see Appendix E for a complete list of codes)

After the open coding, the key concepts of the data were selected in the axial coding section. The main goal in this step was to develop and relate categories to each other. For example, codes that were “disregarding the differences between Alevism and Sunnism,” “lack of identification to affiliation of origin,” and “tolerance and respect of religious affiliation differences” were integrated to the “reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference.” Also, the influences of Alevi-Suni intermarriage on relationships of spouses, with children, child-rearing, with parents, in-laws, relatives, and social environments were related to “Alevi-Suni intermarriage and its influences on relationships.”
The 52 open codes were reduced to seventeen codes in the axial coding section. The axial codes that were developed were used to organize the result section. Major headings used in the results section were “the influences of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage on individual religious affiliation preferences of spouses,” “reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference,” “dating characteristics of intermarriage couples,” “Alevi-Sunni intermarriage: Love marriage versus arranged marriage,” “elopement: Solution for breaking the obstacles in the way of intermarriage,” “Alevi-Sunni intermarriage and its influences on relationships,” “punishments due to Alevi-Sunni intermarriage,” “social stigma on Alevi-Sunni intermarriage,” etc.

Selective coding was the last step in the coding process. It involved “the process of integrating and refining the theory” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 143). In this stage, tables and flow charts were created to finalize the proposed theory by linking concrete data to the theoretical ideas.

In addition, completed background information questionnaire and the interviewer’s participant observation notes were other data sources, which complemented the results from the interviews. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 16 was used to generate descriptive data from the background information. The results are stated in the descriptive analysis section in chapter 4. Interviewers’ observational notes are suitably mentioned throughout the result chapter.

In conclusion, I compared the similarities and differences between the concepts by constantly over time comparing patterns, themes, and common concept categories. I explored new concepts concerning the Alevi-Sunni intermarriage, which do not emerge in the available literature. The results are presented in the next chapter.
**Reliability**

Reliability is always a concern for researchers (Babbie, 2004). To test the reliability of the research measures, the questionnaire was pre-tested and split into two parts plus two interviews were carried out with each respondent. Finally highly qualified researchers helped with the project.

**Pretesting the Questionnaire**

The semi-structured questionnaire was pretested to determine the logic and clarity of the questions presented. I went to Çorum City in the summer of 2010 and interviewed the total of eight Alevi and Sunni people. They were four males and four females from different job groups, educational backgrounds, socio-economic status, etc. I asked questions to the respondents from a semi-structured questionnaire with some probing questions when needed during the face-to-face interviews. The respondents were generally open and answered all questions. When respondents thought a question was ambiguous, they stated what they understood from the question, and verified their understanding. At the end of each interview, I asked them if they had any recommendation to improve the questionnaire, and if there should have been some other essential questions. Some of them had very beneficial recommendations. For example, one said “exploring the relationship between Alevi-Sunni intermarriage and child-rearing could help you to examine the characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage.” Another comment was that “how this intermarriage impacts relationships of couples with relatives and social environment” should be a research question. In addition, “what kinds of punishments appear due to the intermarriage” was another comment for the
research. Finally, one of the respondents mentioned that “publication of this kind of studies would be beneficial to inform the Turkish society about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage.”

As a result, I revised the questionnaire based on the pretest results. This rewrite was very beneficial and increased the reliability of the research instrument. The logic and lucidity of the questions became much clearer and thus enhancing the reliability of the research measures.

Two Interview Questionnaires and Two Interviews with Each Respondent

In order to explore the influence of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage on different subjects, semi-structured questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first questionnaire included the questions about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in relation to couples. Questions in this part were directed to the respondents in the first interview. The second questionnaire was including the questions about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in relation to family, relationships, and society. Questions in this part were asked to the respondents in the second interview. That is, two interviews had done with each respondent. This method augmented the reliability of the research because it let the researchers compare and check the accuracy of responses to similar questions in the questionnaire and check for consistency of the results of the interviews.

Reliability of Research Workers – A Team Approach

Using experienced research associates contributed to the reliability of the measures. Four qualified researchers from Turkey provided assistance during the both
data collection and data analysis processes. They received training about the data collection, data analysis, and other issues relating to qualitative research methods and the focus of the study during the summer 2010 in Turkey. They carried out qualitative data collection from the sample by face-to-face interviews and assisted in translating and analyzing the collected sample data.

In conclusion, reliability of the research was supported by pretesting the questionnaire, using two interview questionnaires, two interviews with each respondent, and working with qualified researchers.

**Validity**

Validity of the research is another significant issue for researchers. To establish validity of the research measure both “face validity” and “content validity” were considered (Babbie, 2004, pp. 144-145).

Only Alevi-Sunni intermarried couples were purposely selected as a subject. In order to get face validity, questions on the questionnaire were carefully designed to gathered information on indicators relevant to the study concepts. For example, to explore the impact of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage on religious affiliation preference of spouses, relevant questions were included in the questionnaire. They were “think for a moment; tell me about your religious affiliation identity before the marriage” and “tell me your religious affiliation identity after the marriage.” In that sense, pretest and review of the experts the questions improved the validity of the research by insuring reflection of the real meaning of the concept.
Content validity was also another validity check in this research. For this purpose, questionnaires included different questions, which covered the different dimension of the impact of the Alevi-Sunni intermarriage on different phenomena. For example, questions were about the impact of intermarriage on couples’ relationships, and other relationships, like, relationship of couples with family, family in laws, and relatives.

Limitations of the Study

This study has limitations. The first limitation is the non-generalizability of the study. Because of the nature of qualitative research, findings of the study cannot be generalized as representing the target population in the whole society.

Sample size is the other limitation of the study. It is usual for qualitative researchers to work with small sample size but small numbers limit the type of data analyses that is appropriate.

Possible selection bias is another limitation of the study. It is possible that the couples who refused to participate may have had more problematic relationship. Also the sample’s qualifications may have resulted in atypical couples be interviewed.

Finally, reactivity is the other limitation of the study. It is possible that some respondents altered their reactions due to being the subject of the social research. Therefore, some of the respondents might report different attitudes to please the research or report inaccurate changes in their behavior during the interview.
Institutional Review Board

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Texas. Both personal conversations and e-mail messages initiated the process to gain approval of the study. Both versions of the approved informed consent form in English and Turkish were also approved by the IRB (Please see Appendix C for the consent forms). All personal data that respondents shared during the interview are confidential and identifying data has not been used or shared with any institution or person.

In conclusion, Table 1 provides a summary of the key aspect of the study’s methods.
Table 1

Methodology of the Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Design</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approach: Qualitative</td>
<td>Target population: Couples of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Çorum Province, Turkey</td>
<td>Data for Analyze:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Dimension: Cross-sectional study</td>
<td>Sampling: Snowball and purposive sampling</td>
<td>a) Background questionnaires,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Method: Case study</td>
<td>Sample Size: Forty interviews (Two interviews with each respondent)</td>
<td>b) Transcriptions of the in-depth interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject: Individuals of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Çorum City, Turkey</td>
<td>c) Participant observation notes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Collection:</td>
<td>Data Analyze:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Background questionnaire,</td>
<td>a) Transcriptions of the interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) In-depth interview (face-to-face),</td>
<td>b) Using Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Participant observation</td>
<td>data analyze software program,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Collection Instruments:</td>
<td>c) Looking for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Informed consent Form,</td>
<td>patterns, themes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Background Questionnaire,</td>
<td>common categories,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Semi-structured Questionnaire</td>
<td>similarities,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>differences, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>d) Creating tables and flow charts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e) Theoretical Framework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sample for this study consisted of ten Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples or a total of 20 respondents of which 10 were male and 10 were female. Using information from background questionnaires, the frequency, minimum, maximum, and mean values of the samples were generated and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Frequency, Minimum, Maximum, and Mean of Samples (n = 20), Turkish Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage Couples, 2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Birth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Çorum City</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>23-52</td>
<td>32.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Marriage</td>
<td>3-28</td>
<td>10.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Children</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with One Child</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Children</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1- Elementary School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- High School</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- University Degree</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income*</td>
<td>0-13</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation Preference</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Before Intermarriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alevi</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Intermarriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alevi</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Annual income measured as: 0= No income; 1= $1-4,999, 2= $5,000-9,999,…..13= $60,000-64,999.*
Almost all of the respondents were born in Çorum City (90%), while only 2 were born outside of Çorum City. On average, they were about 33 years old (mean: 32.95). The average length of marriage of the respondents was about 11 years (mean: 10.60). Sixty percent of the respondents had only one child, while 40% of them had two children (mean: 1.40). Three out of four of the respondents (75%) had a high school degree; in contrast, 15% of the respondent had a university degree, and only 10% of the respondents had an elementary school degree. The approximate annual family income of the respondents was between $5,000-9,999. Finally, ten respondents were Alevi pre- and post-marriage, whereas ten of them were Sunni pre- and post-marriage; there were no changes in affiliation.

Major Themes

The findings stated in this chapter represent an exploration of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Çorum City, Turkey. The findings should contribute to filling part of the gap in information on intermarriage studies in Turkey as well as contribute to the general body of literature in the sociology of family on this topic. The major themes identified were derived from the analyses of the in-depth interviews, which explored in great detail the characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. The major themes investigated here are common to all couples, whether comprised of an Alevi husband or wife or Sunni husband or wife. The major findings state the main characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage and, especially, the impact of intermarriage on the religious affiliation preferences of spouses. Explanations and comparisons of the common themes among the couples and their affiliation preferences are examined in the
Influences of Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage on Individual Religious Affiliation Preferences of Spouses

The main goal of this dissertation was to explore whether Alevi-Sunni intermarriage impacts the religious affiliation preferences of the spouses. In order to satisfy this purpose, two requests were directed to the respondents: “Think for a moment; tell me about your religious affiliation identity before the marriage,” and “tell me your religious affiliation identity after the marriage.”

Ali, 52, an Alevi husband married for twenty-eight years and father of two, still describes himself as being as much of an Alevi as he was before the marriage. He generally was very talkative and positive during the both interviews. He mentioned that he has never changed his religious affiliation because he has not needed to do so. He said: “My father was Alevi, and I am Alevi. When people start to talk about Alevism and Alevis somewhere, I say I am Alevi without any hesitation.” Another Alevi husband, Zeynel, 50, married twenty-five years and father of two, described himself as Alevi and reported that he was unsure of the meaning of both his and his wife’s affiliations. It was noted by the interviewer that he was very neutral about both religious beliefs and affiliations during the interview. He said:
Now, I still describe myself as Alevi, but I do not know why I am Alevi and my wife is Sunni. I do not know how these terms were created. I do not want to know, also, because we are married and have two children.

One of the respondents thinks Alevism and Sunnism are just labels that society gives to a person due to family background in patriarchal Turkish society. Hüseyin, 42, an Alevi husband married fourteen years and father of two, explained the issues in macro-level terms rather than just explaining them in relation to his marriage during the interviews. He seemed to be certain about the accuracy of his opinions and said, “Being an Alevi is neither a thing to be proud of nor a reviling thing.” He added:

Alevism is not everything. I describe myself as an Alevi because my parents are Alevi. That is the lifestyle of families in Anatolia. If you were born to an Alevi family, you are an Alevi; if you were born to a Sunni family, you are a Sunni, naturally.

Another Alevi husband, Hasan, 30, married six years and father of one, described himself as being proud to be an Alevi pre- and post-marriage. While he was mentioning his Alevi identity, he was showing his obedience to his Alevi identity by putting his right hand on the heart according to the interviewer’s observation. He believes that the portion of one’s identity stemming from religious affiliation inherently comes from the family. He said:

I was born as an Alevi, and my parents were Alevi. I have never kept my Alevi identity hidden in my work place or in my marriage. I always said I am an Alevi. I wish there were no denominational differences in Turkey. I want it, but I cannot hide my identity.

Aydın, 30, an Alevi husband married four years and father of one, reported that he has been Alevi pre- and post-intermarriage because being an Alevi is not a shameful thing. Aydın was not being proud of being an Alevi, but also was not embarrassed due to his Alevi identity. He said, “I have described myself as an Alevi. Actually, I have never
disregarded my Alevi identity, I do not! It is not an embarrassing thing. Thanks Allah (God). That’s it.”

Likewise, Sunni husbands reported the continuity of their religious affiliation preference. That is, being in an Alevi-Sunni intermarriage has not threatened their religious affiliation preferences, either. One of the Sunni husbands, Metin, 35, married thirteen years and father of two, said: “There is no change in my beliefs. I am still a Sunni. I live in a Sunni district with my Alevi wife.” He was very respectful about both affiliations, while he was talking about them. Hakan, 28, a Sunni husband married five years and father of one, and Ufuk, 25, married three years and father of one, reported that they have never changed their religious affiliation preferences since they have not seen any differences between the two Islamic affiliations, Alevism and Sunnism. Also, Arif, 28, a Sunni husband married four years and father of one, reported no change in his religious affiliation preference after his marriage. Finally, “Nothing is changed in my life after the marriage regarding to Alevism and Sunnism,” said Mustafa, 24, a Sunni husband married four years and father of one.

Similarly, both Alevi and Sunni wives reported that none of them had changed their religious affiliation preferences due to intermarriage. For example, Eda, 30, married for thirteen years and mother of two, described herself as Alevi. Serap, 24, described herself as an Alevi. She has been married five years and is mother of one. She was very open during the interview and stated, ”I am an Alevi. My family of origin is Alevi and my husband is Sunni.” Another Alevi wife, Yagmur, 24, married four years and mother of one, did not change her religious affiliation preference because it was
meaningless for her to change it. Aslı, 24, an Alevi wife married three years and mother of one, stated that:

Actually, we have a word for the religious affiliation, Alevism, Alevi. This is who I am. I have never changed my affiliation since the marriage. There has been no change. I am who I have been. There is no change in our marriage.

Zeynep, 23, an Alevi wife married four years and mother of one, reported that “[her] beliefs have always been the same. [She] actually did not know what Alevism and Sunnism were. Frankly, [she] do[es] not care about Alevism and Sunnism, but about love.” She was looked very happy during the interview. When she was talked about her identity and husband she was smiling.

Emine, 48, a Sunni married twenty eight years and mother of two, mentioned that she has been Sunni and has not thought of changing her religious affiliation preference because of her Alevi husband. She was not very talkative during the interview. Mehtap, 50, a Sunni married twenty five years and mother of two, explained that intermarriage has never had any impact on her religious affiliation preference. She has not seen any difference between Alevism and Sunnism. In that sense, she said:

Mine [beliefs] are the same as before. There has been no change in my beliefs. How can I say -- I am who I have been. There is no change in my life. What they [Alevi family-in-law] did, did not affect my affiliation choice. No. My direction has been the same. There is no change. Never, never. I am who I am. My husband is who he is. So the worships are the same, the lifestyles are the same. The religions are the same. How can I be an Alevi or he a Sunni? So, the epithet that people give you all is different. The lifestyles are not different. In my husband’s lifestyle and family, they believe in the Qur’an, prayer, fasting, what the six pillars of Islam ask you to do. What can you do, additionally? What can he do as a Muslim? What can he do different in order to be a Sunni?

Interestingly, Esra, 39, a Sunni married fourteen years and mother of two, mentioned that since her and her husband’s world views are similar, they disregard Alevism and Sunnism. She was very liberal and open minded. There was not any
religious figure, picture, or paints in the home implying Alevism or Sunnism affiliation or allegiance. Esra said: “I and my husband do not have knowledge about Alevism and Sunnism. Therefore, our lifestyles are similar, and we did not think of changing our religious affiliations. We do not deal with these issues.”

Zuhal, 25, a Sunni married six years and mother of one, and Ayşe, 28, married four years and mother of one, reported that they did not change their religious affiliation preferences. Both of the respondents disregarded the affiliation differences and focused on the similarities of the affiliations by mentioning the same God, prophet and holy book.

In conclusion, this study reports that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage does not appear to threaten the religious affiliation identity of the spouses regardless of gender, religious affiliation preference before marriage, and length of marriage. Specifically, each member of the couples described herself or himself with the same religious affiliation preference before and after the marriage. Further, they described themselves as holding the same affiliation as their fathers. This may indicate the enduring strength of the traditional and patriarchal characteristics of the Turkish family. Thus, neither Alevi nor Sunni spouses changed their religious affiliation preference because of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage; both of the spouses continue to live with same religious affiliation as before their intermarriage (see Table 3).

From observation of the interviews, it is noted that majority of the respondents were comfortable during the interviews and responded to all the questions directed them. It is anticipated that having interviews in their home created a comfortable situation for them. Majority of the respondents were very friendly and open.
This result brings us to the issue of why none of the spouses changed her/his religious affiliation preference as a result of intermarriage. This contrast with the 50% rate of change reported for mixed marriage in the U.S. (cf., Pew, 2008, p. 35). The possible reasons underlying this trend are outlined in the following section.

Table 3

*Religious Affiliation Preference of Spouses Pre-Post Intermarriage*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of the Respondents</th>
<th>Religious Affiliation Preference Pre-Marriage</th>
<th>Spouse with the Affiliation</th>
<th>Religious Affiliation Preference Post Marriage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Alevi</td>
<td>Sunni Female</td>
<td>Alevi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>Alevi Male</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>Alevi Female</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Alevi</td>
<td>Sunni Male</td>
<td>Alevi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for Maintaining the Religious Affiliation Preference

This section outlines the possible reasons for interfaith spouses not changing or maintaining their religious affiliations after marriage. These reasons may be categorized as (1) disregarding the differences between Alevism and Sunnism, (2) lack of identification to affiliation of origin, and (3) tolerance and respect of religious affiliation differences.

*Disregarding the Differences between Alevism and Sunnism*

Some of the couples reported that there was no difference between Alevism and Sunnism; hence, they did not think about changing their religious affiliation preference post marriage. This happens in either of two ways: by disregarding the differences
between Alevism and Sunnism or accepting both of them as the same. In this regard, Ali, an Alevi married twenty-eight years, believes that there is no difference between Alevism and Sunnism. He prays five times in a day. Also, there were Islamic figures and paints on the wall in the home showing the couple’s religiosity. He reported, “There is no religious difference between us -- all of us read the same Holy Qur’an.” He disregarded the differences and said:

In my opinion, there is no difference between them [Alevism and Sunnism]. I mean, in our home there was nothing such as an Alevi or Sunni. Among my closer friends, some of them are Sunnis, and some of them are Alevis. There is no difference among people.

Similarly, Hakan, a Sunni married five years, believes that being human is more important than being an Alevi or Sunni. He was angry with society because of the separation of Alevism and Sunnism from each other. He said: “In my family, there is no Alevi-Sunni differentiation -- in my family.” He paused a while and stated the following:

In the society, yes. In the society there are differentiation, but not in my family. I and my wife never distinguish between Alevism and Sunnism. We care about humanity, and it does not matter where she comes from. Kurds are humans, Alevis are humans, Laz are humans. All of them are my friends. If she is human, that is it. I and my wife do not have Alevi-Sunni differentiation. We all believe in the same Allah (God). If you ask me the prophet, I will say Mohammad. My wife will say the same. We have the same adhan. There is no difference, but people create it.

Ufuk, Sunni, married three years, rejects the differences between Alevism and Sunnism and accepts both of them as one thing. He emphasized the similarities. He said:

To me, there is no Alevism and Sunnism. One time, someone said: ‘I am a Sunni,’ and another one said: ‘I am an Alevi.’ The ethnicity is the same; the religion is the same. Everything is the same that we have. I asked, ‘Now, how many Allah (God) we have?’ One. All of us believe in the same Allah.
Aslı, Alevi, married three years, refused Alevism and Sunnism differences by stating:

Because my family-in-law is not like a classical Sunni family, and my family of origin is not like a classic Alevi family, I always say we all live on the same ground. There should not be Alevism and Sunnism. I am siding with my words. I have had no problem with Alevism-Sunnism. I have friends from Alevis and Sunnis. For me, all of them are equal.

Sunni wife, Mehtap, married twenty-five years, accepts Alevism and Sunnism as being the same. She reported: “I am married with an Alevi male, but they fast during the Ramadan and pray. Their religious life is not different than mine. I mean, there is no difference; there is no difference in lifestyles.”

Zuhal, Sunni, married six years, believes that Alevism and Sunnism are not different because both Alevis and Sunnis believe in Islam and the same Allah. She also rejects Alevi-Sunni differentiation. She said: “To me, there are no Alevi and Sunni phenomena.”

In summary, some couples of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage disregard the Alevi-Sunni differentiation due to several different reasons. Firstly, they focus on the similarities of Alevism and Sunnism. In that sense, respondents emphasized believing in same God (Allah), same prophet (Mohammed), same holy book (Qur’an), and same adhan etc. This suggest a meaning that Alevism and Sunnism are two sides of one or same coin. Figure 2 summaries the aspects of these couples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alevi-Sunni Intermarried Couples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on the similarities and underlying same/mutual worships (Same God, prophet, holy book, praying, fasting, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not changing the religious affiliation preference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Disregarding the differences between Alevism and Sunnism.
Lack of Identification to Affiliation of Origin

In some cases, Alevi-Sunni couples have only basic introductory information about Alevism and Sunnism. This limited knowledge usually comes from what they have heard from their families of origin and others in society. These couples also do not do any reading or research about both affiliations, Alevism and Sunnism.

The following statements indicate that religious affiliation is unimportant due to the fact that the respondent lacks the detailed knowledge about affiliations and his religious affiliation identity. Explanations of Zeynel, an Alevi married twenty five years, shows that length of marriage does not help to enrich the knowledge of spouses about Alevism and Sunnism. In addition, it also does not affect either the lack of identification to affiliation of origin, or change of religious affiliation preference. He shook his head and said:

I do not know Alevism and Sunnism. No. No. No. I did not research Alevism and Sunnism. I do not like political and denominational issues. I have never dealt with them. In my family, nobody talks about them. I do not like these topics.

He added, “We did not think about religious issues. I mean, we did not pray -- we will not. Books, journals, and documentary in television -- I do not watch because I do not like them.

Hüseyin, Alevi, married fourteen years, stated that he has never done any research about Alevism and Sunnism because he and his wife were liberal. He said: “Both of us are free about religious issues. That is, we do not care about Alevism and Sunnism although it is a social reality in our society. We have done no special research on Alevism and Sunnism.”

Sunni husband, Metin, married thirteen years, reported that he has little knowledge of and done no research on Alevism and Sunnism. He believes that “if
people fast and pray, they are Sunni, and if they do not, they are Alevi.” He also stated that “I had no chance to read something about my and my wife’s affiliations because I did not need that.” Mustafa, Sunni, married four years, comment on this issue was:

Never -- I have never done any research about Alevism and Sunnism. I heard something about them. Truthfully, Someone said my dad: 'We are Sunnis.' I asked my father what it was. He told me to forget it. There is no difference except for the name. I mean, I learned that at age sixteen. I learned what Alevi meant later from the society.

Mustafa adds that he still does not know about Alevism and Sunnism and stops everyone who starts to talk about this issue.

Serap, an Alevi wife married five years, explained: “My family has always said we are Alevi. I have never done any research on Alevism, and my knowledge is based on what my family has said to me. I had knowledge about Alevism when my family told me.” Esra, Sunni, married fourteen years, reported that she had never had good relations with religious issues since her childhood. She also had done no research about Alevism and Sunnism pre- or post-marriage. She said: “Such things as Alevism and Sunnism have not taken a place in my life. I usually look at people’s manners. I and my husband did not look at Alevism and Sunnism, but our harmony.”

These interview responses indicate that some of Alevi-Sunni couples lack the identification to affiliation of origin. Many of them stated that they do not know what Alevism and Sunnism are and do not need to know them, too. In addition, many of the respondents said that they do not read books, articles, journals, etc. about Alevism and Sunnism. As a confirmation, it was observed that no books, articles, magazines, or related materials about Alevism and Sunnism were seen in the couples’ home. Thus, lack of knowledge about Alevism and Sunnism creates lack of identification to affiliation.
of origin. It is considered as a reason why spouses do not change their religious affiliation preferences. Figure 3 summaries the key aspects for these couples.

Couples knowledge about affiliations comes from what they have heard from their families of origin and society

Couples do not read any book, article, magazine etc. about both affiliations

Lack of identification to affiliation of origin of Alevis and Sunnis

Alevis and Sunnis intermarried who lack identification to affiliation of origin

Religion (and neither affiliation) does not affect the marriage

Lack of Identification to Affiliation of Origin Continue

None of the spouses change religious affiliation preference

Figure 3. Lack of identification to affiliation of origin.

Tolerance and Respect of Religious Affiliation Differences

Tolerance and respect of affiliation differences of the spouses are the other main reasons underlying why Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples do not attempt to change their religious affiliation preferences. Aydın, an Alevi married four years, stated that tolerance and respect must exist in the family, if not this creates big problems within the family. Especially in Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples should be more tolerant. He said:

In the family, of course, some problems happen -- minor or major problems. There are cultural differences between me and my wife. She entered to the group that she had known them as stranger and bad. People talked about them badly, in general -- especially if the male is Alevi and the female Sunni, the females having really hard problems. In fact, it happens to males, as well. If the family of the groom is not tolerant or thoughtful, there will be big problems. I mean, nobody
can say there will not be a problem. There will be divorce in the family. I see that happen in the society. If nobody tolerates the spouse’s affiliation difference, she will react to the actions, of course. I think both of the spouses should tolerate each other and their affiliation differences. They should find the middle way.

Yagmur, Alevi, married four years, believes that:

Tolerance is necessary and if couples would like to be happy, they should always tolerate each other. I and my husband are respectful to each other’s affiliation preference. Although we have some problems as a family as is normal, we do not see our affiliation differences as a problem.

Mehtap, a Sunni wife married twenty-five years, believes that keeping the continuity of the family is the most important thing for couples. Therefore, tolerance takes a unique place in intermarriages. She said:

I did not consider the different affiliation preference of my husband. Before I married, my elder brother talked to my husband’s family and said: ‘You are Alevi, and we are Sunni. If you will not be able to tolerate the difference, this marriage should not happen. We tolerate the difference, you should do so.’ Our families agreed on it. We married and have no problems.

As a result, respect and tolerance in the life of these couples play very significant roles. After the intermarriage, couples learn how to live with other’s preferences peacefully. These couples of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage reported that they practiced tolerance in their home and relationships and neither of the spouses changed their religious affiliation preference. Figure 4 summarizes the key components for these couples.

![Figure 4. Reasons for not changing the religious affiliation preference.](image-url)
Perceptions of Couples about Religious Beliefs and Affiliations

Identity pre-and post-Marriage

In order to explore whether Alevi-Sunni intermarriage has any impact on couples’ religious affiliation preferences, the perceptions of spouses about religious beliefs and affiliations were examined.

Ali, Alevi, married twenty-eight years, and Aydın, married four years, stated that their opinions about religious beliefs and affiliation identity did not vary pre- and post-marriage because they continued to practice as they did before the marriage and still define themselves as Alevi. Aydın said:

My father went to mosque every Friday and fasted during Ramadan. We went to mosque together during Ramadan. Because my thoughts about religious life are positive, I married my wife. I did not pray five times every day before the marriage and do not do so now. But I was going to mosque every Friday to worship before the marriage and now, too. Some people think that Alevis do not go to mosque, fast, etc., but I do. I was going to mosque, fasting, and praying before the marriage. Now, I do the same. It is not always regular, but I try to do it. Also, if I do something different now as opposed to before my marriage, people think I do so because of my Sunni wife’s influence. Alevism is following the life of Prophet Mohammed and Ahl al Bayt’s (his family) life. This is what I believe and do. They prayed and fasted; I do as they did.

Zeynel, an Alevi husband married twenty-five years, mentioned that he was praying every Friday and fasting during Ramadan when he was young; he stopped doing this before marriage and still does not pray and fast. He said, “When I was young, I was fasting and praying Fridays. I stopped praying and fasting before the marriage. I still do not pray and fast.” Hasan, Alevi, married six years, believed that his religious practices temporarily changed. For example, he said:

I started to pray five times in a day, but I stopped praying due to my job. I do not fast either because of my job and responsibilities. But it is wrong to say that only Sunnis can pray. Alevis pray, too. Thousands of Alevis pray and fast as Sunnis do.
Hakan, Sunni, married five years, stated that his thoughts about religion, beliefs, and affiliation have not changed post-marriage. He reported that “I prayed before marriage. Sometimes, I went to the mosque for Friday pray but did not pray sometimes, as well. I did some things right and some wrong. My opinions about religion have not changed after marriage.”

Ufuk, a Sunni husband married three years, stated that his perceptions about religion were positive but that he does not pray and fast. He defines himself as Sunni post-marriage as well as before the marriage. Mustafa, Sunni, married four years, stated that he prayed every Friday pray and fasted before and after marriage. He said: “I am curious about religion. I am trying to follow my religion’s requirements. After my marriage, nothing changed.” Metin, married thirteen years, and Arif, married four years, stated that their opinions about religious issues were the same pre- and post-marriage.

As to the wives, some Alevi and Sunni wives were more likely to be more religious post marriage if they were religious to some degree pre-marriage. Serap, Alevi, married five years, believes that she engaged more fully in religious practices after the marriage. She reported that she fasted sometimes before the marriage but did not pray five times a day. She said that this was because [she] did not know how to pray. After the marriage, [she] wanted to learn and did learn. Now, [she] sometimes pray[s]. [She] loves to pray. After the marriage, [she] learned to pray [her]self from the book. [She] started to pray. It d[id] not happen with someone’s influence." Zeynep, Alevi, married four years, said she did not change her affiliation, but her situation regarding religious beliefs and practices improved after the marriage. She said:
My family of origin is Alevi. I am Alevi. My mother said: ‘Let’s fast during Ramadan,’ and we fasted before marriage. Some people do not fast and say ‘we are Alevis and believe Saint Ali.’ What they say is meaningless. Well, did not the saint Ali pray? Did he not fast? He did it all. I believe all the saints. I was fasting but not praying before the marriage. After the marriage, I learned how to pray and continue to pray now.

Zuhal, Sunni, married six years, said her perceptions about religious beliefs and affiliation did not change. She reported that she has been praying and fasting both pre- and post-marriage and that her marriage affected her religious life positively. That is, she engages in religious practices more so than before. She said:

Before the marriage, I was praying and fasting, but not regularly. I regret my irregular religious practices. Clearly, now, I pray regularly. The best regular worship of mine is fasting. But it is now better than when I was single because I am being older. I feel the hereafter more. I know -- I understand that everything is meaningless other than hereafter.

What Ayşe, Sunni, married four years, reported is consistent with Zuhal’s explanations. Ayşe said she has been doing her religious practices both before and after her marriage. She thinks religious beliefs are very important for her life. She held her hands showing how to pray and reported:

Yes. I was praying before the marriage. Everything is the same in my life after the marriage. I mean, neither my husband nor my mother-in-law push me to do or not do any religious practices. In contrast, they help me to keep up my practices.

Esra, Sunni, married fourteen years, reported that she, as well as her husband, has always been liberal about religious beliefs and affiliations. Therefore, her opinions about these topics have remained the same, and she does nothing differently now than before her marriage.

Finally, Emine, Sunni, married twenty-eight years; Mehtap, Sunni, married twenty-five years; Eda, Alevi, married for thirteen years; Yagmur, Alevi, married four
years; and Aslı, Alevi, married three years all stated that no change happened in their lives regarding their religious beliefs and affiliation.

In sum, couples’ opinions about religious beliefs and affiliation identity varied based on gender. Perceptions of Alevi and Sunni husbands and wives about religious beliefs and affiliation differed depending on the religious practices of the husbands and wives pre- and post-marriage. Husbands' attitudes towards religious beliefs and affiliation generally did not change. Although temporary changes in some of the husband's religious life were reported after the marriage, after a while, they returned to the previous situation. In contrast, for most wives after the marriage it was common to be more religious, although no change was reported for a few wives. Wives reported usually more worship behavior post-marriage when compared to their situation pre-marriage. Interestingly, the changes in their religious practices did not affect their religious affiliation preferences.

Religious Affiliation Differences and Their Impacts on Marriage

Couples perceptions about religious affiliation differences and their impacts on marriage were also explored. In other words, whether Alevi-Sunni intermarried couples felt any effect of religious affiliation differences on their marriage.

One of the Alevi husbands, Ali, married twenty-eight years, shook his head and held his hand up to indicate stop, said: “No, we did not have any problem due to the affiliation differences. I have never had any problem. We just talk about Alevism and Sunnism as a joke. [Smiling].” Alevi husband, Hüseyin, married fourteen years, stated
that they sometimes have familial problems; nonetheless, the source of these issues is not the difference in their religious affiliation. He said:

Alevism and Sunnism never were a problem for me and my wife. We had arguments because of the many things, but we did not have any discussions or problems due to the Alevism and Sunnism differences. We sometimes talk about Alevism and Sunnism. My wife is more positive than me about that because she does not care about these issues. I like her approach and appreciate it.

Sunni husband, Hakan, married five years, reported that the differences between Alevism and Sunnism have not been a problem for him and his Alevi wife. He stated,

No, Alevism-Sunnism has not been a problem for my family. In my view, it has not happened. I mean, we did not have any discussions about it. I say, she is human, too. Humanity. You are part of humanity; you can be Alevi, Sunni, or Kurd. Now, is Laz any different?

Mustafa, Sunni, married four years, said almost the same things. He affirmed, “I swear to Allah (God), I and my wife have never talked about nor discussed affiliation differences and do not perceive it as a problem in our marriage.” Ufuk, married three years, also stated that religious affiliation differences have not impacted their marriage.

Similarly, both Alevi and Sunni wives reported that having different religious affiliations from their spouses has never influenced their marriages. Female respondents emphasized that neither of the spouses create a problem because they have a different affiliation preference. Finally, the respondents do not think religious affiliation difference is a scapegoat for their marital problems. In that sense, Mehtap, Sunni, married twenty-five years, reported:

We do not talk about Alevism and Sunnism at the home. When my child was going to high school, he did not know about Alevism and Sunnism because Alevism and Sunnism are not important matters for my family. My husband is Alevi, but it is only a name given by society. He is who he is. In our life, he did not
force me to drink alcohol or to dress a certain way. I have never seen him impose on me to do anything. It never happened.

Although finding that religious affiliation differences do not affect the marital relationships of couples, some related problems were reported. Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples reported that they sometimes have problems within their families similar to what every family is likely to report. These reported problems; however, do not appear to be due to the religious affiliation differences of the spouses. Furthermore, spouses stated that having different religious affiliations is not a big issue for them and is not the source of their marital problems. They often stated that these problems are related to in-laws, social stigma, and related issues.

Opinions of Each Couple about Family in General

Family is one of the core institutions for Turkish society as much as for any other society. As such, perceptions of couple members about family were considered important. The Alevi-Sunni intermarried couples’ opinions about family in general were the basis for assessing how intermarried spouses viewed their family life. For instance, Zeynel, Alevi, married twenty-five years, mentioned that:

It is Turkish society, you know. We live in a Muslim country, and family is very significant for us. Thus, family is a very vital issue for us. The biggest fruit of the family is children. We have two children. Family cannot be described with words. It is meaningless for someone who does not know what family is. Lifestyles are different, viewpoints are different, but it is a very significant phenomenon.

Hüseyin, Alevi, married fourteen years, believes that family is a very serious institution. According to him:

Both of the couples must be very loving and respectful of each other. Couples should bring up good children. Family requires both spouses’ effort to function
properly. My aims are to raise children who are disciplined, well educated, and ready to handle any potential issues.

In addition, Hakan, a Sunni married for five years, thinks that family is very important for socialization. He said:

It is very hard to be a family. In order to have a place in society, it is necessary to have a family. After a certain age, you cannot live with your parents. Family is everything. I mean, it is the happiest thing for someone at that moment.

Ufuk, a Sunni married for three years, emphasized the relationship between happiness and family. When he talked about family, his eyes were shining. He said: “Family means for me presence and happiness. For example, I work very hard, but when I come home and see my wife and little daughter, I forget everything. To me, family is presence and happiness.”

Family is very significant not only for husbands, but also for wives, regardless of age, length of marriage, and affiliation. Yagmur, Alevi, married four years, trusts that “family is the source of happiness and responsibilities because it is very influential in one’s life. After the marriage, you create a new world; half is your husband’s, and half is yours.”

Esra, a Sunni married for fourteen years, considers that “family is a sort of balanced relationship because everyone should recognize the other. Love and respect are very significant in family since marriage is not an issue for one or two days, but for life.”

In conclusion, respondents regarded family as a demanding task but also a very valuable phenomenon for them for several reasons. These reasons included the joys of having children and the advantages for socialization, love, and happiness.
Dating Characteristics of Intermarriage Couples

Establishing how the couples met and established their relationships should provide insights into the basis for their marriages. Thus, dating characteristics of intermarried couples in regards to place for dating, length of dating, etc. were covered.

Zeynel, an Alevi married for twenty-five years, said: “We met in elementary school and dated about ten years. Then, we married.” Hüseyin, Alevi, married fourteen years, said that he met his wife “at a party and dated about a year before marrying.” Hasan, Alevi, married six years, also met his wife in high school and married after dating. Ufuk, Sunni, married three years, spoke of his dating experience: “We met and dated for about five or six months. Then, we married.” Mustafa, Sunni, married four years, stated that he met his wife in high school. After dating for a while, they married.

In addition, Yagmur, an Alevi married for four years, expressed that she met her husband through the recommendation of her friend. Aslı, married three years, states the same reason for meeting her husband for the first time. Serap, married five years, stated that she met her husband in a café. She said: “One of my friends introduced us to each other. We dated about six to seven months, and we married by running away -- people say elopement here.”

In the courtship process, the family of the male usually knows about the dates. Ali, Alevi, married twenty-eight years, reported the following: “My family knew my girlfriend and wanted me to marry her. My parents were positive about my sweetheart.” Hasan, an Alevi married six years, said: “We dated about five years and decided to marry. My family knew about my dates and respected my choice. My wife’s family was totally against me and our marriage.”
In contrast, usually only mother, sister, and friends of the female or nobody knew about the wives dates. In order to protect wives from the father and brothers’ punishment, nobody told them about the dating. Zeynep, an Alevi married for four years, said: “My sister knew the guy whom I was dating. I just told her about my love. My friends also knew about us, but not my family. I did not tell them about it in this case.” Zuhal, Sunni, married six years, said: “We met in a social place. Nobody knew about my dating because my family is a traditional one. We dated for six months and loved each other. We married in the form of elopement.” Ayşe, Sunni, married four years, declared “Only my mother knew about my dating. After, my family members learned of it, they were all against my marriage.”

It can be concluded that respondents met in different places and usually dated for some time before marrying. Schools, parties, and other social environments constituted the most frequent places of meeting, while friends’ recommendations are also often the cause for the meeting of the spouses. The lengths of time of dating varied from six months to ten years. Spouses of intermarriage love each other pre- and post-intermarriage; therefore, Alevi-Sunni intermarriage usually occurs in the form of love marriage. Table 4 summarizes the dating characteristics.

**Table 4**

*Typically Dating Characteristics of Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage Couples*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Places of Meeting</th>
<th>Lengths of Dating</th>
<th>Information known to Family</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>School, party, and social environments,</td>
<td>6 Months-10 years</td>
<td>Yes (Usually all members)</td>
<td>Marriage with wedding or elopement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>School, party, and social environments,</td>
<td>6 Months-10 years</td>
<td>Limited (usually mother, sister and friend(s) or nobody knows)</td>
<td>Marriage with wedding or elopement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage: Love Marriage versus Arranged Marriage

Love marriages predominated among the couples interviewed. If this sample is typical maybe the only type of marriage for Alevi-Sunni intermarriage are love marriages. Interestingly, all respondents in this research reported that both spouses loved each other and decided to marry with or without getting their families’ approval.

The reports of couple members support this contention. “I married my wife after dating ten years. We loved each other and married. It is one of the happiest things in my life,” said Zeynel, an Alevi married for twenty-five years. Arif, a Sunni married for four years, said: “We loved each other when we dated. We decided to marry, but her family did not let us. We married because we loved each other.” Mustafa, Sunni, married four years, reported that “the happiest day in [his] life was when they explained the love each had for the other before the marriage.” He added, “I said I wanted to marry her. She said her family would not let us marry because of Alevi-Sunni issues. So, she said she would elope with me. We married by eloping.”

Similarly, each of the female respondents stated that she married because she was in love with her husband. Their marriages happened although their families were opposed to them, in most cases. Esra, a Sunni married for fourteen years, reported:

Whether I am happy with this guy is important for me. If I decide to marry him, it does not matter to me his being an Alevi or Sunni. For us, whether we can be happy if we marry each other and whether we fit each other well are important rather than our adhering to Alevism or Sunnism. We wanted to and so we married.

Ayşe, married four years, said:

I loved him and married although my family did not approve of my decision. But I am happy now. If I had known I would be faced with problems because of my marriage, I would still have loved him and married him, as well.
The interview data examined suggest that love marriage holds a unique place in Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. The reason that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage usually happens in the form of love marriage is explained in part by Turkish social and family structure. That is, relationships with family, in-laws, relatives, etc. are still strong in Turkish society. Therefore, people must consider social control pressures via their extended family members even for their personal choices. In this case, the social control pressures and anticipated stigma are the basis for disapproval of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. Families do not want to become the targets of such biases because of the intermarriage of their children. As a result, love marriage in many cases appears to be the only choice for the potential couples for this type of intermarriage in this society. The pressure from the immediate and extended families plus the anticipated stigma appears to lead to love marriages. For some couples of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage they married without their families’ consent and eloped. The next heading examines the elopement.

Elopement: Solution for Breaking the Obstacles in the Way of Intermarriage

In many cases Alevi-Sunni intermarriage happens in the form of elopement (*kız kaçırma*), which refers to running away from home with a lover for the purpose of getting married. It, therefore, happens with the consent of both male and female. Families of the spouses learn of the elopement after it happened. Elopement in Alevi-Sunni intermarriage mainly happens when the family of either of the spouses is against the marriage because of the difference in religious affiliation.
Eda, Alevi, married thirteen years, mentioned that she married by eloping since her family would not let her marry her Sunni husband. She believed it was the only choice that she had for marriage. Another, Serap, Alevi, married five years, stated that she had very bad relations with her family and decided to elope. She said:

I had bad relations with my family. I thought my husband could make me happy. I always thought that. I had a boyfriend before, but I believed my husband was the one. Because I thought he could make me happy and take care of the home and our needs for life, I decided to marry; I decided to elope for the marriage. My family, of course, did not want me to marry him, because he was a Sunni.

Zeynep, Alevi, married four years, mentioned that they did not plan to marry before, but her bad relationships with the family members catalyzed her decision to elope. She reported:

My husband asked me if I wanted him to get me. I said: Yes, come and take me. Traditionally, his family should have asked my family's permission for the marriage first. Actually, I did not want his family to come and ask for my family's permission for marriage because there was an Alevism-Sunnism problem between our families. Then, we decided to elope. I left home as if going to work and we ran away.

Zuhal, Sunni, married six years, had similar problems due to the Alevism and Sunnism issues and ran away from home for her marriage. She said:

We dated for six months, and I loved my husband a lot. He said: 'Do you want my family to get your family’s permission for our marriage? We do not have to elope.' I said no, because my family would not let me marry you. I wish I could marry in the normal fashion as other couples do. I mean, we married by elopement.

Interestingly, some families do not give permission for their daughter to marry with someone from another affiliation but want her to run away from home for the marriage. For example, Ayşe, Sunni, married four years, mentioned that her family pushed hard for her to run away from home for marriage, but she did not do that. She said:
Everyone in my family said that he was an Alevi and that they would not let me marry him. They pushed for me to run away from home for the marriage, but I said I would not do anything wrong and that he was not a bad guy; so, I would not elope. When I said I would marry as usual, my mother and the others showed me the door to go away. She said: ‘Go, go my daughter!’

Finally, Emine, Sunni, married twenty-eight years, reported that she wanted to run away with her husband but could not achieve it. After that, her family reluctantly let her marry her Sunni love. Other couples reported that they married without elopement. They had both families’ consent either willingly or unwilling and had a full wedding ceremony.

In summary, the cause of elopement is usually family based obstacles or bad relations. Typically, either the male or the female asks the other for elopement because of obstacles concerning religious affiliation differences placed before the marriage. Specifically, having bad relations with the spouses’ families seems to be a significant reason for elopement. More importantly, it seems that the most significant factor for elopement beyond the love of the couples for one another and their willingness to marry was the disapproval of family members. Thus, approximately 40% of the respondents, four couples, reported that they married by elopement. In addition, one couple reported that they wanted to elope but could not accomplish it, then married without elopement with the reluctant approval of the family of bride. Finally, one other couple stated that the wife’s family pushed her to elope, but she did not do it because she wanted to marry without eloping. Figure 5 present the key aspects of elopement and Table 5 notes the number of couples that eloped.
Table 5

*Type of Marriage Style of Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage Couples*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Marriage Style</th>
<th>Wife is Alevi</th>
<th>Wife is Sunni</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Couple Married by Elopement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Couple Married without Elopement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alevi-Sunni adults meet, date, and love each other

→ Would like to Marry

→ Ask family for permission for intermarriage

→ Female’s family (either Alevi or Sunni) does not let them to marry mainly because of religious affiliation difference and social stigma

→ Female thinks that her family will not approve their intermarriage

→ Female has bad familial relations with her family of origin in some cases

→ Elopement happens

*Figure 5.* Process of elopement of Alevi-Sunni couples.

Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships

Other characteristic of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage are the influence it has on the relationships between the couple, child-rearing, with parents, in-laws, relatives, and
those further extended relationships in the social environment, such as friends, neighbors, etc. Hence, Alevi-Sunni intermarriage and its impacts on such relationships will be mentioned in the following sections separately.

Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships of Spouses

Alevi-Sunni intermarriage does not appear to have any direct or unique influence on the relationships between couples. For instance, Aydın, Alevi, married four years, said:

We loved each other and thought of each other every day and night. Our love grew every passing day. She said that if her family would not let her marry me, she would never marry in her life. I said the same.

He also stated that Alevism-Sunnism does not matter for them and their relationship with each other and was almost perfect. Ufuk, Sunni, married three years, reported that “intermarriage does not influence [their] relationships with each other.” He has never “had a problem with his wife due to the intermarriage.” “I am happy with my family,” he said [smiling].

Zeynep, Alevi, married four years, is happy with her marriage. Marrying a Sunni husband did not affect her life. What affected her life was love. She loves her husband more than anything. She was smiling and effervescent while she was talking about her husband. She said:

I love him a lot! When I knew I loved him, I waited for him to tell me that he loved me. When he did, it was the happiest day in my life. I am also happy because we have a child. Love is the most important thing for me. I and my husband think like that.
Esra, Sunni, married fourteen years, said that being Alevi and Sunni was not the issue, but what was important was the perspectives and consistency of couples. She said: “People marry and divorce. When divorce happens, couples consider Alevism and Sunnism as a scapegoat. It is wrong! I have been married with an Alevi husband for fourteen years, and I am happy with him.”

The result is that the affiliation differences are not seen as a problem by Alevi-Suni couples. Thus, intermarriage does not appear to influence couples’ relations. Further, this situation is the same for all couples regardless of their affiliation preferences.

Alevi-Suni Intermarriage and its Influences on Child-rearing

Exploring Alevi-Suni intermarriage and its influences on child rearing was one of the main purposes of this research. For this purpose, spouses’ viewpoints about child rearing were collected. Almost all of the spouses reported that intermarriage does not influence child-rearing. They did not want their children to describe herself or himself either as an Alevi or Sunni but well educated, qualified, and good Muslims filled with morals and values.

Hüseyin, Alevi, married fourteen years, mentioned that he wants his children “to be well educated, disciplined, and good people. Alevism and Sunnism does not matter for [him].” Aydın, Alevi, married four years, disregarded being Alevi or Sunni for his child and wanted his child to find the truth. He said:

Now, I can say that I do not expect him to be Alevi or Sunni. I can say that because I want him to learn his own truth. Both of the sides might be wrong in certain respects. I want him to find the truths of both sides. I want him to learn that. I mean, not to be a fundamental Sunni who does not like others religions, or
not to be an Alevi who rejects the proper religious beliefs totally or ignores Sunnis. I want him to find the middle of both affiliations.

In contrast to Hüseyin’s and Aydın’s views about religious affiliation and child-rearing, one Alevi husband reported that he wanted his child to be an Alevi because he is Alevi. Hasan, married six years, mentioned that he wants his child to describe herself as an Alevi because:

Everything grows up on its root. My child’s father, me, is Alevi. I want her to be Alevi, Allah (God) willing. I want her to worship and fast, too. She may not be perfect, but she should pray and describe herself as Alevi.

As for Sunni husbands, they are liberal with regard to child-rearing and the decision of their children to identify as Alevi or Sunni and usually think like Alevi fathers. As an example, Metin, married thirteen years, said he does not care about the religious affiliation identity of his children. Hakan, married five years, said:

I swear to Allah [God], my child should grow up not as Alevi or Sunni, but as a good person, a religious person. I will do everything for that goal. He should fear Allah and live with the knowledge of Allah. He must not be an atheist. I do not want him to be an atheist. He will be either Alevi or Sunni – this is not a big deal for me and my wife. I have no problem with Alevism or Sunnism; thus, I do not care whether he will be Alevi or Sunni, but a good person.

Ufuk, married three years, stated, “I have not thought that, but it is of no concern for me whether my child describes himself as Alevi or Sunni. Both of them are ok to me.” Zeynep, married four years, does not believe being Alevi or Sunni is important for her baby, but rather that her child be religious. She said:

I want my baby to learn how to pray and gain other knowledge necessary for Muslims. When he grows up, he will may ask me, Alevism and Sunnism. I mean, for me, there is no being Alevi or Sunni because I believe in Allah and the holy book [Qur’an]. I pray, and my husband does, too. I want my baby to pray, fast, be respectful to everyone, and know how to act in society. I want my baby to be like that.
Esra, married fourteen years, stated that they raise their children not as Alevi, Sunni, or extremely religious, but as well-educated and morally good people. “We teach our children how to be a respectful people. We are not very religious people. I want my children to be respectful and compassionate people.”

The interviews reported that the majority of the respondents think that religious affiliation preference had no impact on their child-rearing and that they do not want their children to be Alevi or Sunni, but good people equipped with morals and values. Another interesting result is that couples report not talking about Alevism-Sunnism issues to each other or to their children. When children ask questions about this topic, they usually pass over it with basic answers and do not impose on them to subscribe to one or the other affiliation. In addition, spouses mentioned that they would be respectful of the choices of their children about religious affiliation and choice of spouse.

Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage and its Influences on the Relationships of Spouses with Parents, in-Laws, and Relatives

Intermarriage threatens the relationships of the couples with their parents, in-laws, and relatives. The respondents reported that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage strongly and, in most cases, negatively impacted the relationship of couples with their parents and in-laws pre- and post-marriage.

One of the extreme cases illustrating how Alevi- Sunni intermarriage threatens the relationships of spouses with their families and in-law is Ali’s experience. Ali, Alevi, married twenty-eight years, reported that both he and his wife have not had any good relationships with his family in-law because of their intermarriage. He was visibly upset,
while he was talking about the intermarriage and its impact on their relationships with his family-in-laws. He said:

My father-in-law was a thoughtful person, but my mother-in-law was very strict about our marriage. She wanted us to break up even we were engaged. When I went to my fiancé’s home to take her ID for paper works for our marriage, my mother-in-law told me that I should look for another girl to marry. This happened because she is Sunni and I am Alevi. We went to my in-laws' home to celebrate the Eid, but they dismissed us from the home. After that, we have never gone to their home. My father-in-law died as he displeased with his daughter, my wife. We have never had good relations with my in-laws. I mean, if my mother-in-law sees my children, she would probably not know who they were. We have not had a relationship for years.

Another similar case shows how Alevi-Sunni intermarriage negatively affects the couples' relationships with their in-laws. Hakan, Sunni, married five years, reported that both he and his wife have had good relationships with his family, but not with hers since they married. He said:

My mother-in-law was against our marriage. My father-in-law and mother-in-law forced my wife not to marry me because I am Sunni. Thus, my relationships with my in-laws have always been bad. I have not spoken with my mother-in-law for years. It is not because I am disrespectful to her, but because she discriminates against me because I am Sunni.

Alevi-Sunni intermarriage sometimes threatens the relationship of spouses with their in-laws and relatives though the situation can improve after a time. Hasan, Alevi, married six years, said he and his wife have had good relations with his family, but very bad relations with his family in-law and her relatives before their marriage. For him, it took four years to fix these relationships. He said:

Although we married, my in-laws and relatives wanted to take and throw away my wife’s wedding ring. Nobody came to our wedding ceremony from my wife’s family except a few people. After about four years, we fixed the problems and now have good relations because they have seen that I am not a bad guy. Today, the relationships are very good, but we have had many problems until now.
Mustafa, Sunni, married four years, said that he and his wife have good relationships with his family, but not with hers and her relatives. However, these relationships have been improving with some since the marriage. He said:

When we married, my in-laws rejected me. One day, my brother-in-law called my wife and told her to come to his home but without me. My wife said that she would not come there if he rejected me. They rejected me because I am Sunni. After about one-and-a-half years, they accepted me. Now, we are good with her family, except her father.

It is interesting that couples may have good relationships with their immediate families, but not with extended family members. Ufuk, Sunni, married three years, reported that he and his wife have had very good relationships with his family as well as hers, though problems persisted with the extended relatives of each. He said:

My father-in-law loved me as his own son. However, his brothers stopped to talk to him because he permitted his daughter to marry a Sunni, me. When my father-in-law died, he was disgruntled with his brothers because of my marriage. They do not like me, never.

He added that some of his own relatives also created some problems before the marriage, but they have a good relationship with his wife now. In other cases, the spouses’ relationships with each other’s immediate and extended families are good. Zeynel, Alevi, married twenty-five years, stated that he and his wife have good relationships with both of their families, but that his wife’s family interrogated him about religious and other issues before the marriage because he was Alevi. Hüseyin, married fourteen years, said:

We have had very good relationships with my family and family-in-law. The only thing is that, when my wife told her family that she wanted to marry me, her father said no because I am Alevi. Later, he said ok. Since then, we have had no problems.
Alevi-Sunni intermarriage typically threatens the relationships of both Alevi and Sunni wives with their family, in-laws, and relatives. Although Mehtap, Sunni, married twenty-five years, and Esra, married fourteen years, reported that their intermarriage has not threatened their relationships with anyone, other Alevi and Sunni wives stated that one or more of their relations with family, in-laws, or relatives is bad because they had Alevi-Sunni intermarriage.

In conclusion, reports from the interviews revealed that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage had impacts on the mentioned relationships. Though relationships tended to improve over time and are good after the marriage, how long they take to be considered good varies depending on many variables. On the one hand, intermarriage may not threaten the relationships of spouses’ with their families, in-laws and relatives in the long run but in some cases the relationships of the couples with their parents and in-laws never improved because of the intermarriage.

**Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships of Spouses with Social Environments**

Respondents also stated that their relationships in broader social environments, including friends, neighbors, etc., have not been threatened due to their intermarriage and that they have continued to have the same relationships as before. Respondents mentioned that their friends accepted them with their Alevi-Sunni identity. Their relationships with their neighbors are typically limited, and they do not talk about Alevism-Sunnism issues with their neighbors.
The interesting thing is that these couples sometimes are accepted as a counselor for their friends who would like to marry someone from a different religious affiliation. To illustrate, Ufuk, married three years, said:

One of my friends said: 'I am in love with an Alevi girl. I want to marry her. If I marry her can we be a good couple?' I said: 'If you are happy each other now, you can be happy if you marry. Forget the social stigma.'

Overall, Alevi-Sunni intermarriage does not appear to influence the relationships of couples in their social environments, such as friends, neighbors, etc. Overall, it could be concluded that the impact of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage on relationships of couples with different groups vary somewhat. This variation is summarized Table 6.

Table 6

*Influence of Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage on Relationships*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of Intermarriage</th>
<th>Until the Marriage</th>
<th>After the Marriage</th>
<th>How long before relationship is good?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships between couples</td>
<td>No influence</td>
<td>No influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships between couples and children</td>
<td>No influence</td>
<td>No influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-rearing</td>
<td>No influence</td>
<td>No influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships of couples with wives’ parents</td>
<td>Typically negative Rarely positive</td>
<td>Typically continue to as negative or sometimes be positive after some time</td>
<td>It can take until four years or continue to be bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships of couples with husband’s parents</td>
<td>Typically positive Rarely negative</td>
<td>Typically positive or if negative, usually be positive after some time</td>
<td>It can take until four years or continue to be bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships of couples with family in-laws</td>
<td>Sometimes negative Sometimes positive</td>
<td>Continue to as is or if negative, sometimes be positive after some time</td>
<td>It can take until four years or continue to be bad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Punishments due to Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage

Social stigmas and prejudices about Alevism, Sunnism and Alevi-Sunni intermarriage directly affects the couples’ lives in many ways. In this regard, the families of the couples often exhibit an unwillingness regarding their children’s intermarriage and pressure them not to marry someone from a different religious affiliation. If their daughter or son still insists on the intermarriage, the family may attempt to punish the couple including attempts to kill the bride, groom or both, violence against the bride, groom or both, etc. Because families are usually more likely to attempt to punish their daughters, wives responds are examined first.

Zeynep, married four years, talked about her experiences in regards to intermarriage and her family’s desire to kill her as a consequence of her marriage to a
Sunni. She thinks social control influences families to punish Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples. She was perspiring when she reported that:

Social control is very much so about intermarriage. This is true in my family, which consists only of Alevis. If an Alevi female marries a Sunni male or runs from home to marry a Sunni, she is done. I mean, when I ran for my marriage, they said 'Let's shoot her.' My uncles told my brothers to kill me. 'Go and kill both of them' -- me and my husband -- 'You know their home. You should not let them live.' If an Alevi lady marries a Sunni male, she cannot return to her family. She cannot see her parents and visit them. She cannot say I am the daughter of X. We still have something like that and it is very sad. I mean, the intermarried lady is not an Alevi anymore; she is done.

Ayşe, Sunni, married four years, stated that her uncle intimidated her with threats of murder because she fell in love with an Alevi and wanted to marry him. According to her, although it was an innocent desire, her family threatened her many times in order to stop her from marrying him. She reported that she became depressed and later began therapy. She was both perspiring and increasing the volume level of her voice while she was saying:

My uncle wanted to kill me because I loved an Alevi guy and wanted to marry him. He told my family that he would take me away. My mother said nothing. 'Ok, you can go,' she said. This means she sacrificed me to the traditions. Everyone sacrificed me! My mother said: 'Ok.' She did not ask what he was going to do with me. He took me and we left from the home. My uncle and I were alone and he said: 'Ayşe, I heard you want to marry an Alevi guy. You love an Alevi guy. They came to your home to get your parents’ permission. It absolutely cannot be!' He said he could kill me. He told me his prejudices about Alevis. I said I wanted to marry him anyway. I was very frightened! I told myself that this was the end, I was done. He left me to my home and said he would never let me out. As a punishment, I stayed in my home without any communication with my boyfriend.

Other types of punishments, such as physical and emotional violence against couples, etc. take place in both Alevi and Sunni families. Therefore, intermarriage couples suffer from these punishments as well. For example, using violence against couples is one of the forms of punishment by families and relatives of the spouses.
Hasan, Alevi, married six years, while discussing his family in-laws and relatives was looking very angry and he was blushing due to his furiousness on this issue. He mentioned:

When my wife eloped with me, her family descended suddenly upon my home to find us there. Her family and relatives reported us to the police. We went to the police station and were not arrested because my wife was older than eighteen. Later, we went to court, and I saw all of my wife’s relatives there. They came to beat me seriously. They did not come to my wedding, but to the court.

He also added that “cops in the court surrounded me and my wife to protect us from her family’s and relatives’ attacks.” In addition, Eda, married thirteen years, stated that she suffered violence against her and her husband because of the marriage.

Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples reported many instances of punishment due to being intermarried (see Table 7). Punishments take different forms, such as attempt to kill, physical or emotional violence against bride, groom, or both. Family and relatives are usually the potential groups who desire to punish bride, groom, or both. In this regard, it is concluded that social control negatively impacts the intermarriage. Finally, Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is not only punished but stigmatized. Social stigma on Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is highly influential and the next section will discuss this issue.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process and Type of Punishments for Intermarriage Couples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family learns the intermarriage ➔ Wants to stop it ➔ If cannot ➔ Punishments appear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Punishments: Attempts to kill the bride, groom or both, violence against the bride, groom or both, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Stigma on Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage

Social stigma associated with Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is a very significant social and sociological phenomenon. Many of the respondents mentioned that they had to face a social stigma not only during the process of marriage, but also after their marriage. The main sources of the social stigma are the widely held prejudices and biases about Alevis and Sunnis. This is a consequence of the limited knowledge each group has about the other. What they do know is usually based on what they have heard or hearsay from the other societal sources. The usually inaccurate beliefs are often maintained from generation to generation. Therefore, a social stigma emerges and is maintained over time. In turn the stigma threatens the physical and mental health of the couples’ marriage and life quality. Social stigma leads to a blanket disapproval of the family because of the intermarriage.

Family and Relatives

Social stigmas are mainly enforced in the family of origin and extended relatives, though it also happens at the societal level as well. Hasan, Alevi, married six years, emphasized the point that social stigma makes the life of intermarried couples unlivable and creates boundaries between the families of the spouses. He believes that his in-laws did not accept him because he was an Alevi and that the family wanted to separate him from his wife even though she was pregnant. “My wife’s family did not want to take us in or want us to be a part of my family,” Hasan said. He was looking so sad and added:

Being an Alevi is accepted as a committing a crime. My wife’s grandmother is one of the people who do not want us to marry. When she learned my wife was
pregnant, she said she wished she would have a dead baby. She did not want us to be happy; she did not even want us to have children. We are faced with many problems due to social stigma.

Metin, Sunni, married thirteen years, said: “My wife’s parents would not let us to marry. Then, my wife eloped with me. We had no other choice. They did not accept me because I am a Sunni. It is because of social stigma.” Social stigma can sometimes come from the relatives and threatens the relationships. Ufuk, Sunni, married three years, mentioned that they had been faced with social stigma from his relatives because of his marrying an Alevi wife. He said: “My cousin called my family and said: ‘Tell him not to degenerate our family by marrying an Alevi wife. He should marry a Sunni lady, not an Alevi.”

Zeynep, Alevi, married four years, reported that she and her husband have been faced with many social stigmas from her family of origin because of their Alevi-Sunni intermarriage, especially from her grandparents and uncles. She said:

My father has never talked to me since I married. He has been angry with me and is displeased with me and my husband. My father does not actually consider my marriage with a Sunni a problem, but my uncles do. After I eloped, my uncles came to my father and insulted him because I married a Sunni. My father said nothing but cried; he was so sad. My uncles depressed my father by saying, ‘Your daughter married a Sunni guy’ and ‘How can you accept her as you daughter as before.’ My younger sister said to me that my father misses me a lot, a lot, but he cannot talk to me because of the influence of my grandparents. But I did not think we be like that. I was assuming that we can continue to have good relationships. Why don’t we? But, my uncles and some others have depressed my father. So, I do not know. My uncles, grandfather, and grandmother demoralize my father. Elders! I cannot understand that. My grandmother said about me, ‘I will get her to our home even if she has a six month old baby or is six-months pregnant because she is married to a Sunni.’

What Zeynep said confirms Ayşe’s and Zuhal’s statements. Thus social stigma appears in not only Alevi, but also Sunni families. Ayşe, married four years, said her father did not talk to her and her husband for six month after her marriage. Zuhal, Sunni,
married for six years, believes that she has faced social stigma since she married an Alevi husband. She said:

My family would not let me marry an Alevi, so I ran away with my husband for the marriage. My family was angry with me and did not talk to me for fifteen days after my marriage. My father was angry with me. None of my relatives came to my wedding because I married an Alevi. My aunt, grandmother -- none of them came. My uncle still does not talk to me because I married an Alevi. My family did not accept my husband because he is an Alevi for three years after our marriage.

In brief, most respondents reported that family and relatives often stigmatize the intermarriage couple. That is related to family and relatives’ disapproval of this kind of marriage. The interviewers also asked about social stigma on Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Turkish society at large.

Society

Social stigma about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage appears not only in the family of spouses, but also in the society at large. The attitude of society about this type of intermarriage is very negative and affects the social life of both spouses. In that sense, Ayşe said: “The negative societal influence on the Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is huge. When I go to a wedding ceremony, ladies point to me with their fingers [she hold her finger up pointing to the interviewer] and say: ‘Look, she has! She has married an Alevi! So, it is always like that.” She also stated that the social stigma about intermarriage still continue in the form of sarcastic words said to the couples and made to make them feel bad. “When I go to a wedding, people say about me, she is the daughter of X. She married an Alevi. I am saddened to hear this, of course.”
Respondents reported that social stigma does not wane based on affiliation preference of the spouses or the length of the intermarriage. Mehtap, married twenty-five years, said:

I have faced some harmful situations. I have been stigmatized even after marriage in the society. For example, I go to some social events, and everyone is Alevi except me. They talk about a lady and say that she is this or that because she is a Sunni. I see the same thing among my Sunni friends.

In contrast, it should be noted that liberal families are more tolerant about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. That is, they exhibit less social stigma and respect their children’s spousal preference. Hüseyin, married fourteen years, thinks that since his and his wife’s families are liberal and do not have strong religious feelings, they experience less social stigma. He said:

When we decided to marry, we knew it was a problem in Turkey. When my wife talk to her family about our marriage, I told her ‘Please tell your family I am an Alevi. I do not want to have any problem because of that. I guarantee you that my family will not create a problem about you.’ Actually, we thought that my wife’s family would not create a problem, but we wanted to let them know anyway. I have been married for fourteen years and I had never heard anything about my affiliation preference yet regarding our marriage. But we hear that these kinds of marriages can be problematic.

In conclusion, many Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples suffer from social stigma. Social stigma is one of the major reasons leading to disapproval of intermarriage. Alevi and Sunni families, relatives, and society are the usual stigmatize Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. This stigmatization supports their disapproval of these marriages. Social stigma about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage still appears in Turkish society. Figure 6 presents key aspects of social stigmas.
| Each group has prejudices and biases of about the other creating social stigma |
| Family, relatives, and society stigmatize and disapprove the intermarriage |
| Threatens Alevi-Sunni intermarried couples (physically, mentally, and their relationships with different groups of people) |
| Either one of the relationships of the couples with family, in-laws, relatives, etc. threatened |
| Society stigma continues regardless to length of intermarriage |

*Figure 6. Characteristics of social stigma.*
CHAPTER 5

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Given that the results of a qualitative study such as this may or may not agree with the existing theories, developing a new theory or variations on existing theories is often a goal of qualitative research (Straus & Corbin, 1998). The present findings demonstrated that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage does not influence the religious affiliation preferences of spouses. The theoretical framework originating from this study’s finding is stated below.

As mentioned before, intermarriage studies in the U.S. and elsewhere mainly focus on the intermarriage between the followers of different Christian and Jewish denominations. However, intermarriage among the followers of different Islamic affiliations has not been widely researched, at least not in Turkey.

Alevism and Sunnism in Turkey in regards to religious beliefs system and affiliation structures are different than those of other Islamic sects (i.e. Shi’a) and other religions’ denominations. These differences are directly related to the misunderstanding and lack of acceptance of Alevis and Sunnis for each other. This mutual misunderstanding and lack of acceptance influence the characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. In this study, none of the spouses changed her or his religious affiliation preference due to Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. This means that neither the Alevi nor Sunni spouses converted to the other affiliation because spouses of intermarriage either disregarded the differences between the two affiliations, lacked an identification with their affiliation of origin, or tolerated and respected the religious affiliation differences.
Disregarding the Alevism-Sunnism Differences

Some of the Alevi-Sunni couples disregarded the Alevism-Sunnism differences, which let each spouse keep their original religious affiliation after the marriage. This disregard happened in two different formats: Rejection of the differences between Alevism and Sunnism or acceptance of the two affiliations as being one and the same. Respondents’ arguments in either format focused on the similarities by mentioning the similarity of the belief systems of the two affiliations. Specifically, spouses who disregarded the Alevism-Sunnism differences emphasized the consistency of the beliefs of the followers of Alevism and Sunnism, such as their believing in the same God (Allah), the same holy book (Qur’an), the same prophet (Mohammad), etc.

Lack of Identification to Affiliation of Origin

For other couples, the spouses’ lack of knowledge about both affiliations, led to the lack of identification to their respective affiliations of origin. This helps explain why some Alevi-Sunni couples do not change their religious affiliation preference post-marriage.

The majority of the respondents had just an introductory knowledge about both their and their spouses’ affiliations. The couples’ limited knowledge about the affiliations usually relied on what they had learned from their families, relatives, and social environments. Almost all of the couples had never researched Alevism or Sunnism. The length of marriage and affiliation preference of spouses pre- and post-marriage did not affect the spouses’ knowledge about Alevism-Sunnism. Their lack of knowledge resulted in a lack of identification to their affiliation of origin. This is a second reason that
helps explains why Alevi-Sunni intermarriage does not affect the religious affiliation preferences of spouses post-marriage.

Tolerance and Respect of Religious Affiliation Differences

The third reason that Alevi-Sunni intermarried spouses did not change their religious affiliation preference post-marriage is the tolerance and respect between the spouses about religious affiliation differences and other phenomena within the family. Toleration of and respect for the choices of spouses, especially the religious affiliation choices, were very significant for the couples of intermarriage. Tolerance and respect for one another may provide couples the stability of good familial relationships. In this research, most of the Alevi-Sunni intermarried couples tolerated each other’s religious affiliation differences. That is, none of them felt pressure from his or her spouse to change his or her religious affiliation preference and keep the same affiliation preference they held before marriage.

These results may be better understood by taking into account macro-level social changes. That is looking through the lens of the secularization and pluralism theories along with the impacts of modernization, industrialization, urbanization and technology on the family structure and marriage in Turkish society.

Secularization Theory

Secularization is a theoretical term used to describe religious decline “both on the public scene and in the minds of individuals” due to the modern age (Berger, 1990, p. 25). In this process, modern science and technology have changed the situation of
humanity, which has resulted in the “sharp decline of both religious practice and belief” (Berger, 1990, p. 27). In addition, industrialization has been accepted as one reason for increasing secularization and religious decline. For example, churches in one of the British industrialization centers have gradually became empty. Berger argues that the decline was explained by the impact of industrialization on the religious life of the British society during the 19th and 20th centuries. Another factor associated with religious decline in public areas and in the life of individuals was migration and its relation to secularization. Emigration is theorized to influence the religious beliefs and practices of individuals and society directly. But the overarching “reason for secularization . . . is the transforming power of modernity” (Berger, 1990, p. 28).

A relationship between secularization theory and the findings of this study appears possible. It could be stated that there is a link between the first two results of this study and the secularization theory. As mentioned in the literature review, the Turkish Republic has experienced many changes and developments in many areas, such as in the scientific, technological, industrial, and economic domains, beginning with its establishment. The Turkish Republic accepted secularism as one of its revolutionary goals in contrast to its Islamic heritage, inherited from the Ottoman Empire. To achieve this goal, citizens were strictly forced not to practice religious beliefs regardless of the religion. In addition, industrial developments resulting in emigration have taken a unique place in the history of the Turkish Republic. Industrialization process was the beginning of emigration of Alevi and Sunnis from their rural villages. This effectively ended the long standing Alevi-Sunni segregation because these groups started to live together in urban areas (Dressler, 2003). This migration also marked the
beginning of the secularization process of the Alevi and Sunni citizens. Therefore, the role of religion has steadily decreased not only in the public spheres, but also in the daily lives of Alevis and Sunnis. That is, many Alevi-Sunni youths have grown up with a lack of knowledge about their religious affiliation. They have defined themselves with a secular identity although they have not completely rejected their Alevi and Sunni identities. For them, Alevi and Sunni identities were simply those given by society due to their family backgrounds. These secular Alevis and Sunnis lacked knowledge about their religious affiliations. The knowledge they did have about Alevism and Sunnism mainly came from family and society. Hence, they have only had introductory exposure to the principles underlying their affiliations. For example, intermarried couples usually stressed that both partners believed in the same God, prophet, holy book, etc. Although what they stated is true, it should be noted that Alevism and Sunnism are different affiliations of Islam as detailed in the literature review section. Therefore, because of the lack of knowledge about both affiliations and focusing on the similarities of the affiliations, couples tend to not see any differences between Alevism and Sunnism; thus, they do not change their religious affiliation preference after marriage.

Also, lack of knowledge leads couples to identify less with their affiliation of origin. The responses demonstrate that the given identity, as an Alevi or Sunni, was ineffective and meaningless for some of the couples. Since the traditional structure of the Turkish family is patriarchal, the individuals in couples in this study were labeled as Alevi or Sunni based on their father’s religious affiliation. However, couples accepted Alevism and Sunnism as an epithet that is given by the society and often considered it as having no influence on the relationship between spouses. Thus, being or being
accepted as an Alevi or Sunni by the society tends not to be important for couples of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage.

Pluralism Theory

Pluralism is defined as “the co-existence with a measure of civic peace of different groups in one society” (Berger, 1990, p. 37). Religious pluralism is accepted as one of its dimensions. In addition to the term co-existence, Berger coined another useful term, “cognitive contamination.” The term refers to how “the different lifestyles, values, and beliefs begin to mingle.” According to Berger, “[c]ities become gigantic and increasingly heterogeneous. More and more, people of widely different cultures are forced to rub elbows all the time... People encounter different cultures and worldviews without ever leaving their place of birth” (Berger, 1990, pp. 38-39).

Turkish society and couples of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage practice pluralism, as well. As part of the process of pluralism, globalization with increasing access to technology (e.g., internet) has contributed to intermarriage increases in Turkish society. People, especially in a patriarchal society, like Turkey, have had a chance to see via migration, travel and media other societies where many different cultures, religions, races, life styles, etc. coexists. This exposure increases the chances that will couples practice pluralism and Turkish society will become more pluralistic. An example of the former occurs when a woman after entering a mixed marriage does not change her affiliation preference because she tries to establish or maintain her own unique secular identity.
Interruption and Stability of Affiliation Theory

Based on the study's finding a theory of "intermarriage and stability of affiliation theory" is proposed. What is being explained is that intermarriage couples do not change their religious affiliation preference after their marriage. This due to one or more of the following reasons. Spouses of intermarriage either disregard the differences between the two affiliations, have a lack of identification with their affiliation of origin, or are tolerant and respectful of religious affiliation differences. This theory proposes a number of steps leading up to the intermarriage have no impact on religious affiliation.

Firstly, love marriage appears as to be one of the most common types of marriage for intermarriage couples. Thus the consideration of the couples' mutual love is more important than religious affiliation differences. Secularization, pluralism, urbanization, technological and industrial developments, globalization, etc. all negatively influence the power of the family and marriage structure in a patriarchal society. That is, individuals in a society that is becoming less patriarchal are more likely to make their own decision when they marry and disregard the parent's approval or disapproval. When spouses think that they fit together and love each other, they are likely to decide to marry regardless of religious affiliation differences, family's, relatives' and society's concerns about intermarriage.

In contrast to spouses’ marriage decision, consistency and harmony, their families usually disapprove intermarriage due to the religious affiliation difference. Not only families of the couples, but also their relatives and society are likely to disapprove the intermarriage. In this regard, prejudices and biases against to the people of different religious affiliation are highly effective in encouraging disapproval of intermarriage. The
social stigma attached to intermarriage should be added as the other major reason for disapproval. Disapproval of intermarriage may lead to punishments, such as threatening the couples by murder or different types of punishments. This is especially the case when familial ties are strong and families are conservative, especially if they still believe in patriarchy.

Interestingly, couples marry with or without getting the approval of the family and regardless of punishments. If both family of bride and groom approve the marriage and no problem appears, the couples tend to marry by having a full wedding ceremony. In contrast, intermarriage, in most cases, happens in the format of elopement without getting the families’ approval. In this sense, intermarriage influences the couples’ relationships with families and relatives negatively. Strained relationships sometimes become better after a while but some remain strained forever. As the most important thing in the life of the couples, intermarriage does not appear to threaten the marriage, child rearing, life styles, and relationships of couples with each other. Moreover, it is also highly significant that intermarriage does not threaten the religious affiliation preferences of the spouses.

In addition, it should be noted that when couples of intermarriage focus on the similarities in terms of religious affiliation, they disregard the religious affiliation differences. They either accept both affiliations as the same or disregard the differences between two affiliations by focusing on the likeness between them by focusing on the mutual religious symbols, praying, figures, etc. in both affiliations.

Another explanatory for stability of same affiliation of intermarried couples after the marriage is lack of identification with affiliation of origin. The main cause for that
seems to be lack of knowledge of couples about their affiliations resulting in lack of identification with the affiliation of origin. Since changing the religious affiliation has no benefit for them or is meaningless (cf. social exchange theory), they keep the same religious affiliation post marriage.

The final factors for the stability of same affiliation in intermarriage are tolerance and respect of religious affiliation differences between members of the couples. Both spouses know that they do not share the same religious affiliation and talking about the differences will probably create costly marital problems. They tolerate and respect each other for the permanence of the marriage and do not compel each other for conversion on religious issues.

In contrast, it is proposed that some intermarried couples may change their religious affiliation preferences due to different circumstances than those reported in study’s sample. When a husband is strict about the religious affiliation identity and forces his wife to change her affiliation, it is likely for the wife to convert to her husband’s affiliation, especially in social contexts emphasizing patriarchy. Also, it is more likely for a woman to convert to her husband’s affiliation, when she lives with the extended family of her husband. In extended families, traditions and customs are more likely to remain strong. Therefore, the extended family of husband increases the chances of changes in the religious affiliation identity of the wife. Finally, it is also possible for both wife and husband to convert to the other’s religious affiliation when matching the affiliation preference of her or him is considered rewarding or beneficial. In this example, the benefit of the conversion is considered more rewarding than the cost of having different affiliations (cf. social exchange theory).
In conclusion, despite the fact that intermarriage directly influences the intermarried couples, such as affecting their relationships, quality of the life, etc. it does not have any impact on the religious affiliation preference of the couples. However, it is possible for some couples to convert in some definite situations. Figure 7 summarizes the key components of the Stability of Affiliation Theory at the micro-level, which occur within the larger social context with growing secularism and pluralism.
Couples pay attention to love versus religious affiliation differences

- Decide to marry each other

- Sharing the marriage decision with the families

  - Family (and relatives) approves
  - Family (and relatives) disapproves the intermarriage due to religious affiliation differences, prejudices, and social stigma (especially in masculine societies)

- Couples marry with family’s approval
- Couples marry without family’s approval

  - No punishment
  - Punishments appear (before and/or after the marriage)

- Intermarriage does not threaten the relationships
- Intermarriage threatens the relationships

  - Relationships are good
  - Relationships may be good or remains bad forever

  - Intermarriage does not threaten marriage and the relationships of couples each other

  - Intermarriage does not threaten the religious affiliation preference of spouses because:

    - Each of the Couples
      - Disregarding the differences between the affiliations
      - Lack of identification to affiliation of origin
      - Tolerate and respect of religious affiliations

      - Couples do not change their religious affiliation preference

*Figure 7.* Intermarriage and affiliation stability theory.
Husband is strict about the religious affiliation identity

Husband forces his wife for changing her affiliation (in patriarchal societies)

Wife lives with the extended family of husband and they impress the wife for affiliation change

Willingness of either of spouses matching the affiliation preference with spouses due to the cost-benefit issues

Either one of the couples probably change the religious affiliation

*Figure 8.* Probable reasons for religious affiliation change of couples.

**Summary**

This research indicated that marital stability is in transition in Turkey based on the decline of influence of extended family. The meaning of marriage and its future is in transition as well. These transitions suggest that intermarriage rates in Turkey will continue to increase.
Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is a real and growing phenomenon in Turkish society. As illustrated throughout this study Alevi-Sunni intermarriage does not appear to influence the affiliation preferences of spouses. Neither Alevi husbands and wives, nor Sunni husbands and wives changed their religious affiliation preferences. They reported that intermarriage has not impacted their marital relations, including their affiliation preferences post-marriage. However, Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is a complex matter, which includes other issues, such as the perceptions of the couples about religious beliefs, family, type of marriage, relationships of couples with others, punishments, social stigma, etc. These issues were explored during the study.

Major Findings

The findings indicate that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage does not have any impact on couples’ religious affiliation preferences due to one or more of the following three major reasons: (1) Disregarding the differences between Alevism and Sunnism, (2) Lack of identification to affiliation of origin, and (3) Tolerance and respect of religious affiliation differences.

Couples engaged in Alevi-Sunni intermarriage either disregard the differences between Alevism and Sunnism or accept both of them as being the same. In that sense, couples usually focus on the similar religious symbols, belief systems, practices, etc. For example, couples mentioned believing in the same God (Allah), prophet, holy book,
prays, fasting, etc. in both Alevism and Sunnism. Then, they emphasized that Alevism and Sunnism are not different from each other, but indeed almost the same. Therefore, for these couples, it is unnecessary to change their religious affiliation preferences simply because of the intermarriage.

Another reason that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage does not affect couples’ religious affiliation preferences is the lack of identification to affiliation of origin. Lack of identification to affiliation of origin typically started pre-marriage and continued even after Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. This reinforces the claim that Alevi-Sunni identity for these couples is just an ineffective epithet given by the society. It does not regulate the life of these couples in any way. Therefore, Alevi-Sunni intermarried couples do not feel the need to change their religious affiliation identity.

The final reason for not changing religious affiliation post-marriage is tolerance and respect of religious affiliation differences. The couples in this study stated repeatedly that tolerance and respect are very significant terms for married people, especially intermarried couples. Tolerating differences and respecting one’s spouse create a peaceful environment in the family in which neither of the spouses pushes the other to change their religious affiliation preference.

Another finding suggests that perceptions of couples about religious beliefs and affiliation identity pre- and post-marriage vary. In one case, the spouse’s perceptions about religious issues post-marriage did not change. This spouse continued to practice what she or he practiced before the marriage. In another case, if a spouse was a religious person before the marriage, she or he might continue on as religious as before the marriage or even become more religious. Next, if a spouse was less religious before
the marriage, she or he may become more religious temporarily. After a while, she or he might return to her or his previous situation pre-marriage. Finally, if a spouse was liberal and had no issue with religion pre-marriage, she or he would adhere to this belief after the marriage.

Interestingly, religious affiliation differences do not, at least in a negative sense, affect the marital relationships of couples. Although couples could have some marital problems, these problems are not because of the religious affiliation differences.

Couples accept family as one of the most significant institutions in their lives. Although having or being a family is a very demanding task, it is also very important for the life of the spouses. Family was accepted as a source of love, happiness, children, socialization etc.

This study revealed the dating characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarried couples. They usually met in different places, such as at school, parties, or social environments. The length of dating varied from six months to ten years before marriage. Alevi-Sunni intermarriage takes two forms: marriage with elopement and marriage without elopement.

The couples in this study saw elopement as a solution for breaking through the obstacles in the way of their intermarriage. About half of the Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples married by eloping. Others married without eloping, but this does not mean that the families of these couples approved of the Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. In some cases, couples married without eloping or their families’ consent.

This study discovered that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage happens in the form of love marriage. All respondents reported that they married by their own decision based on
mutual attraction and love. They typically married without getting their families’ approval, which shows that this type of marriage does not happen in the form of arranged marriage.

Another major finding this research reported was that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage does not influence the relationships of couples to each other, their children, child-rearing, and their social environments. However, it strongly affects the couples’ relationships with their families, in-laws, and relatives. In most cases, couples’ relationships with at least one group were negatively impacted by their intermarriage. The reasons were biases about the other group and social stigma on Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. In some cases, the bad relationships of these couples with their families, in-laws, and relatives became good after the marriage, this transition taking from fifteen days to four years to complete. In contrast, the relationships of couples with either one or more of these groups could remain bad for many years after the marriage, in some cases forever. Finally, as a few couples reported, intermarriage may not influence these relationships in any way.

Unfortunately, Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples reported that their families and relatives applied some types of punishments due to their intermarriage. In this regard, family and relatives of the bride usually attempted to punish the bride, groom or both. Punishments could take different forms, such as attempts to kill the bride, groom or both, violence against the bride, groom or both, etc. Both the bride and groom were severely affected and sometimes depressed due to these punishments.

The final result of this study is the social stigma on Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. Both Alevi and Sunni societies stigmatize and; hence, disapprove of Alevi-Sunni
intermarriage. This mainly comes from the families and relatives of the couples, followed in intensity by the society. Prejudices and biases about the other group catalyze this social stigma. Many of the respondents stated that they have been affected by social stigma; therefore, disapproval of intermarriage.

Research Questions Answered

This study answered all the proposed research questions by exploring the characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in many ways. The main goal of this study was to explore whether Alevi-Sunni intermarriage has any influence on individual religious affiliation preferences of spouses post-marriage. If so, how does Alevi-Sunni intermarriage affect the couples' religious affiliation preferences? Alevi-Sunni intermarriage does not affect the religious affiliation choices of the couples. Alevi and Sunni spouses reported that their intermarriage has not impacted their religious affiliation preferences pre- and post- marriage.

Data gleaned from in-depth interviews of Alevi husbands and wives and Sunni husbands and wives revealed that intermarriage does not influence the familial and marital relationships of the spouses toward each other, their children and child-rearing. However, it significantly influences the relationships of the spouses with their parental families, in-laws, and relatives. In contrast, ii does not impact their relationships with their social environment.

The interviews with Alevi-Sunni couples found that different types of punishments take place due to intermarriage. Also, opinions of each couple about family, process of
mate selection, and religious beliefs and religious affiliation identity before and after marriage were explored in order to satisfy the other research questions.

Finally, participant observations and notes taken by interviewers during the interviews were very helpful for this study. They provided complementary details about the experiences and thoughts of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage couples. As mentioned before, having interviews in the respondents' home provided a comfortable condition for them that was very significant for conducting healthy interviews. Majority of the respondents were very open and friendly during the interviews. It is observed that couples were generally looking very happy, such as smiling and beaming, when they talk about their spouse and children. In contrast, when they mention the impacts of intermarriage on the relationships outside the immediate family, punishments and social stigma, they often seemed sad. In fact, some of them were perspiring and their voices wavered while confirming how they suffered from having bad relationships with some people, punishments, social stigma, etc. They were happy to participate in this study and to contribute to this important research.

Implications for Future Research

It is certain that there is a strong need for additional research exploring the characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in Turkey. Dating characteristics, intermarried couples’ marriage style, elopement, and dimensions thereof should be researched in order to explore the main characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage.
Research pertaining to perceptions of grandparents, couples, and children should be examined to reveal intergenerational perceptions about intermarriage and other dimensions of the intermarriage in relation to intergenerational issues.

Research focusing on the religious affiliation preferences of offspring of intermarriage couples is crucial in considering many aspects of the intermarriage and child-rearing. For this purpose, research should focus on the impact of intermarriage on offspring’s socio-religious preferences and lifestyles. Parental influences on child-rearing and the religious affiliation preferences of offspring, such as which parent has more influence on the child, etc, as well, should be examined.

Other research may focus on the relationships of spouses with parents, in-laws, and relatives. Alevi-Sunni couples reported that they have had problems with at least one group among these due to their intermarriage. It is essential to investigate the reasons for why any of these groups are against this type of marriage. In addition, because couples have been faced with strict punishments mainly coming from family of origin and relatives in an attempt to block the intermarriage or punish the couples, the level of religiosity of the families, in-laws, and relatives, and their perceptions on intermarriage and punishments should also be studied.

Finally, studies concentrating on the social stigma associated with Alevi-Sunni intermarriage will be very beneficial. This study has suggested that social stigma is highly influential on Alevi-Sunni intermarriage, directly affecting the lives of the couples even after many years of marriage. This study demonstrated that the main reasons for social stigma are prejudices and biases about the other group coming from social
learning. This exploration should be extended by focusing on other dimensions of the social stigma on Alevi-Sunni intermarriage in future studies.

In conclusion, future studies on the mentioned topics regarding Alevi-Sunni intermarriage would augment significantly for the fields of family, sociology, and religion.

Policy Implications

This research involves a number of implications for Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. This research obviously indicated that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is seen as a social reality in Turkish society. It is important to emphasize that there is no big difference between Alevi and Sunni societies concerning their opinions about intermarriage. Also, cultural factors negatively influence Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. For example, punishments, like attempts to kill the bride, groom or both, and social stigma take a place in both societies, threatening the lives of the couples in many ways.

Therefore, it is imperative that both societies be educated about intermarriage through the provision of beneficial information about intermarriage (i.e., Alevi-Sunni intermarriage). For this goal, institutions, such as universities, NGOs, foundations, etc. should have seminars, conferences, panels, meetings etc. to educate the society about this issue.

This study also calls on researchers to focus on this topic and to perform more studies along the above mentioned lines of inquiry. Also, mass media should focus on intermarriage issues.

As a final point, governmental institutions, like The Presidency of Religious Affairs and General Directorate of Family and Social Research should take some
actions. The Presidency of Religious Affairs could educate mosque attendees about Alevism-Sunnism, family, and marriage matters. Not only imams, but also dedes should give speeches to the public on the topic with an aim to annihilate the obstacles in front of the intermarriage threatening the life of couples. The General Directorate of Family and Social Research should perform further research on the subject to allow the government to create legislation to stop punishments and social stigma.

Conclusion

Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is a multidimensional reality in Turkey related to the religious, social, cultural, and educational structure of the society. Although there are some obstacles in the way of intermarriage, it does happen and usually in the form of love marriage. Family, in-laws, and relatives are mainly against intermarriage due to prejudices and biases about the other group and its religious considerations. Therefore, when the family of the bride blocks the marriage, Alevi-Sunni intermarriage often happens in the form of elopement. Since intermarriage happens regardless of the family’s disapproval, the bride’s family and relatives typically consider punishing the bride, groom or both. Thus, it is clear that intermarriage damages the relationships of couples with their parental families, in-laws, and relatives. In contrast, intermarriage does not have any impact on the couples’ relationships with each other, their children, perspectives on child rearing, and social environment.

In conclusion, this study revealed that spouses of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage do not consider religious affiliation differences important. Consequently, they do not change their religious affiliation preferences due to intermarriage. It is imperative that
Turkish society normalize intermarriage as it has been in other countries and stop the stigmatization and punishment of the couples.
APPENDIX A

THE MAP OF ÇORUM CITY, TURKEY
Data Source: TurkStat, Turkey’s Statistical Yearbook, 2009, p. 5. (The Çorum City was circled with blue color by the author)
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES
Thank you for your participation to this interview. This interview will approximately take one hour of your time. What you share in this interview will be kept confidential. The confidentiality of any personally identifiable data will be maintained in any publications or presentations and will not be shared with any person or institution for any reason. In this interview, what I look for is your opinions and experiences about Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. Therefore, please tell me what you think and feel; this will be helpful for exploring the characteristics of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage. If there are any questions, you do not wish to respond to, feel free not to do so. I will be tape recording the interview to try to make sure that I have an accurate record of your views and I will be taking some notes for the same purpose.

Do you agree to allow me to tape-record this interview?

If yes: Thank you, I will proceed with the interview.

If no: I will now turn off the audio recorder.

May I take notes and continue with the interview protocol?

*Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire in Interview I*

Talk about your opinions on the subject of family in general.

Talk to me about your experience of mate selection.

Talk to me about your religious beliefs before marriage.

Talk to me about your religious beliefs after marriage.
Think for a moment; tell me about your religious affiliation identity before the marriage.

Tell me your religious affiliation identity after the marriage.

Tell me about if your marriage threat child rearing.

*Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire in Interview II*

Tell how your religious affiliation differences affected your marriage.

Talk to me about how your intermarriage influences your family relations.

Talk to me about how your intermarriage influences your social relations with relatives, friends, neighbors, etc.

Tell me your thoughts considering your marriage and social stigma.

Tell me what suggestion you have for the couple of intermarriage.

Tell me if there is any question that I should have included.

*Closing the Interview*

Thank you for your participation. I will be transcribing this interview and providing you a copy of the interview for clarification and/or further input. Would you prefer that I provide your copy: If Yes: How do you want me to get the copy of transcription? 1- E-mail? 2- Postal mail? 3- By hand.
Turkish Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Mülakat Tarihi:____________________________

Zaman: Başlangıç______________Bitiş________________

Mülakat Numarası: ______________


Bu mülakatta ses kaydını yapma izin veriyor musunuz?

Eğer cevap evetse: Teşekkür ederim, şimdi mülakatı başlatıyorum.

Eğer cevap hayırsa: Ses kaydı cihazını kapatacağım.

Not almak ve mülakat protokolüne devam edeilir miyim?

Yarı yapılandırılmış Soru Kağıdı-Mülakat I

Aile konusundaki düşüncelerinizi anlatır mısınız?

Eş seçimi konusundaki tecrübelerinizi anlatır mısınız?

Evlilik öncesı dini inançlarınızı anlatır mısınız?

Evlilik sonrası dini inançlarınızı anlatır mısınız?

Bir an düşünün; evlilik öncesı dini gelenek kimliğinizden bahseder misiniz?

Evlilik sonrası dini gelenek kimliğinizden bahseder misiniz?
Evliliğinizin çocuk yetiştirme üzerine etkisinden bahseder misiniz?

**Yarı yapılandırılmış Soru Kağıdı - Mülakat II**

Eşinizle sizin dini gelenek tercihlerinizin farklı olmasının evliliğini nasıl etkilediğini anlatır mısınız?

Evliliğinizin aile ilişkilerinizi nasıl etkilediğiniden bahseder misiniz?

Evliliğinizin sosyal ilişkilerinizi, mesela akrabalarınızı, arkadaşlarınızla, komşularınızı vs. gibi, nasıl etkilediğinden bahseder misiniz?

Evliliğiniz ve sosyal damgalama konusundaki fikirlerinizi paylaşır mısınız?

Gruplararası evlilik yapan çiftlere neler tavsiye edersiniz?

Bu mülakat için sizin önereğeçiniz sormam gereken bir soru var mı?

**Mülakatı Bitirilş**

Socio-Demographic Questionnaire

Date ___________ Interview ID # _____________

Place of Birth _______________________________ __________________
(City)

Age ______________ Gender___________

Education
Highest Grade Completed (Circle one): 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
College: 1 2 3 4
Post Graduate: 1 2 3 4

Employment Status
___ 1. Employed
___ 2. Self-employed
___ 3. Unemployed/Looking for a job
___ 4. Part-time worker
___ 5. Not working/Not looking for a job
___ 6. Other, (explain) ____________________________
**Total Family Income**

(Circle one)

- $1-4,999
- $5,000-$9,999
- $10,000-$14,999
- $15,000-$19,999
- $20,000-$24,999
- $25,000-$29,999
- $30,000-$34,999
- $35,000-$39,999
- $40,000-$44,999

If $45,000 or above please specify: between__________, __________

Refused

Do NOT know

*How Long Are You Married?*

Years (Circle one)

- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26
- 27
- 28

Religious Affiliation Preference before the Marriage

- Alevi ________
- Sunni ________

Religious Affiliation Preference after the Marriage

- Alevi ________
- Sunni ________

Do You Have Any Child?

Children (circle one) 1 2 3 4 5 6 More than 6 No child
APPENDIX D

THE CONSENT FORMS
University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: The Influence of Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage on the Individual Religious Affiliation Preference of Spouses: A Case Study from Turkey

Principal Investigator: Dr. Erma Lawson, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Sociology.

Key Personnel: Mehmet Ali Balkanlioglu, doctoral student, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Sociology.

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study which involves exploring whether Alevi-Sunni intermarriage influences the individual religious affiliation of spouses in Corum city, Turkey.

Study Procedures: You will be asked to complete the socio-demographic questionnaire form and share your opinions by having the interview that will take about one hour of your time.

Foreseeable Risks: No foreseeable risks are involved in this study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you. I can give you a copy of the research result. The results of the study may help us to contribute new findings to the field of Family Sociology as an academic attachment.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: Only the principal investigator and Mehmet A. Balkanlioglu will have access to the collected research data. The audio-recordings, the informed consent forms, the surveys, and the interview transcriptions will be maintained for three years past the end of the study in the office of the Principal Investigator on the UNT campus. After that time, all collected research data for this study will be destroyed. The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Erma Lawson at telephone 940.565.2295, or e-mail, Erma.Lawson@unt.edu or Mehmet A. Balkanlioglu, at telephone, 940.565.2295 or e-mail, mehmetbalkanlioglu@my.unt.edu
Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants’ Rights: Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- Dr. Erma Lawson or a research assistant has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant  Date

For the Principal Investigator or Designee:

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the subject signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee  Date

Office of Research Services
University of North Texas
Last Updated: August 9, 2007
Page 2 of 2
Kuzey Teksas Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu

Bilgilendirilmiş Rıza Formu

Bu araştırmaya katılmdan önce sizin, aşağıda amacı, faydaları, riskleri ve nasıl yapılacak belirtilen çalışmayla ilgili açıklamaları okuyup anlammanız önemlidir.

Araştırma Başlığı: Alevi-Sünni Evliliğinin Eşlerin Kişisel Dini Gelenek Tercihi Üzerine Etkisi: Türkiye'den Örnek Olay İncelemesi

Danışman: Dr. Erma Lawson, Kuzey Teksas Üniversitesi (UNT) Sosyoloji Bölümü.

Araştırmacı: Mehmet Ali Balkanlıoğlu, Doktora Öğrencisi, Kuzey Teksas Üniversitesi (UNT) Sosyoloji Bölümü.


Öngörülen Riskler: Bu çalışma için herhangi bir risk öngörülmemiştir.

Çalışmanın Katılımcıya veya Başkalarına Faydaları: Bu çalışmanın katılımcıya doğrudan bir faydası olmayacağı tahmin edilmektedir ancak isterseniz çalışmanın sonuçlarının bir kopyasını sizinle paylaşabilirsiniz. Çalışma sonuçları, Aile Sosyolojisi alanında yeni katkılarla bulunmamıza imkan sağlayabilir.


Araştırma Hakkında Sorular: Eğer çalışma hakkında herhangi bir sorunuz varsa, Dr. Erma Lawson’la 940.565.2295 nolu telefondan veya Erma.Lawson@unt.edu isimli e-posta adresinden ya da Mehmet A. Balkanlıoğlu’na 940.565.2295 nolu telefondan veya mehmetbalkanlioglu@my.unt.edu isimli e-posta adresinden ulaşabilirsiniz.

Araştırma Katılımcısının Hakları:

Aşağıya atacağınız imzanız, sizin yukarıdaki bütün bilgileri okuduğunuzu ya da size başka tarafından okuduğunu ve sizin aşağıdaki maddeleri taşıdı ettiğinizi göstermektedir:

- Dr. Erna Lawson veya araştırma görevlisi araştırmayı size açıkladı ve sizin bütün sorularınızı cevapladı. Araştırmının bütün muhtemel faydaları ve riskleri ve/veya çalışmanın sıkıntılarını açıkladı.
- Bu araştırmaya katılmak zorunda olmadığını ve katılmayi reddetmeniz veya araştırmaya katılmaktan vazgeçmeniz halinde herhangi bir ceza, hak veya menfaat kaybı olmayaçağını anladınız. Araştırmacı sizin katılmınızı herhangi bir zaman durdurabilir.
- Çalışmanın içinde yapıldığını ve nasıl yapılacakını anladınız.
- Katılımcı olarak haklarınızı anladınız ve bu çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmaya rıza gösteriyorsunuz.
- Bu formun bir kopyasını alacağınız size söyledi.

Katılımcının Adi-Soyadı
__________________________

Katılımcının İmzası Tarih
__________________________

Danışman veya Araştırmacı İcin:

Bu formun içeriğini yukarıda imzası bulunan katılımcı ile birlikte gözden geçirildiğini beyan ediyorum. Araştırmmanın bütün muhtemel faydaları ve riskleri ve/veya çalışmanın sıkıntılarını açıkladım. Katılımcının açıklamalarını anladığı kanaatindeyim.

Danışman veya Araştırmaciının İmzası Tarih
__________________________

Office of Research Services
University of North Texas
Last Updated: August 9, 2007

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APPROVED BY THE UNT IRB
APPENDIX E

CODEBOOK
The influence of Alevi-Sunni intermarriage on the individual religious affiliation preference of spouses: A case study from Turkey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code #</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Page #</th>
<th>Participant ID #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>My father was Alevi, and I am Alevi. When people start to talk about Alevism and Alevis somewhere, I say I am Alevi without any hesitation.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Now, I still describe myself as Alevi, but I do not know why I am Alevi and my wife is Sunni. I do not know how these terms were created. I do not want to know, also, because we are married and have two children.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Being an Alevi is neither a thing to be proud of nor a reviling thing. Alevism is not everything. I describe myself as an Alevi because my parents are Alevi. That is the lifestyle of families in Anatolia. If you were born to an Alevi family, you are an Alevi; if you were born to a Sunni family, you are a Sunni, naturally.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>I am proud to be an Alevi. I was born as an Alevi, and my parents were Alevi. I have never kept my Alevi identity hidden in my work place or in my marriage. I always said I am an Alevi. I wish there were no denominational differences in Turkey. I want it, but I cannot hide my identity.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>I have described myself as an Alevi. Actually, I have never disregarded my Alevi identity, I do not! It is not an embarrassing thing. Thanks Allah (God). That’s it.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>There is no change in my beliefs. I am still a Sunni. I live in a Sunni district with my Alevi wife.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Never! I did not change my affiliation. Why do it?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>No, because I do not need to that. My wife did not do that, as well.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>I did not change my religious affiliation preference after my marriage.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Nothing is changed in my life after the marriage regarding to Alevism and Sunnism.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>I still describe myself as Alevi. I am ok with my preference.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>I am an Alevi. My family of origin is Alevi and my husband is Sunni.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Actually, we have a word for the religious affiliation, Alevism, Alevi. This is who I am. I have never changed my affiliation since the marriage. There has been no change. I am who I have been. There is no change in our marriage.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>My beliefs have always been the same. I actually did not know what Alevism and Sunnism were. Frankly, I do not care about Alevism and Sunnism, but about love.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Mine [beliefs] are the same as before. There has been no change in my beliefs. How can I say -- I am who I have been. There is no change in my life. What they [Alevi family-in-law] did, did not affect my affiliation choice. No. My direction has been the same. There is no change. Never, never. I am who I am. My husband is who he is. So the worships are the same, the lifestyles are the same. The religions are the same. How can I be an Alevi or he a Sunni?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So, the epithet that people give you all is different. The lifestyles are not different. In my husband’s lifestyle and family, they believe in the Qur’an, prayer, fasting, what the six pillars of Islam ask you to do. What can you do, additionally? What can he do as a Muslim? What can he do different in order to be a Sunni?

| Influences of Intermarriage on Religious Affiliation Preferences | A1 | I and my husband do not have knowledge about Alevism and Sunnism. Therefore, our lifestyles are similar, and we did not think of changing our religious affiliations. We do not deal with these issues. | 10 | 6 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B1 | There is no religious difference between us -- all of us read the same Holy Qur’an. In my opinion, there is no difference between them [Alevism and Sunnism]. I mean, in our home there was nothing such as an Alevi or Sunni. Among my closer friends, some of them are Sunnis, and some of them are Alevis. There is no difference among people. | 4 | 7 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B1 | In my family, there is no Alevi-Sunni differentiation - - in my family. In the society, yes. In the society there are differentiation, but not in my family. I and my wife never distinguish between Alevism and Sunnism. We care about humanity, and it does not matter where she comes from. Kurds are humans, Alevis are humans, Laz are humans. All of them are my friends. If she is human, that is it. I and my wife do not have Alevi-Sunni differentiation. We all believe in the same Allah (God). If you ask me the prophet, I will say Mohammad. My wife will say the same. We have the same adhan. There is no difference, but people create it. | 9 | 13 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B1 | To me, there is no Alevism and Sunnism. One time, someone said: ‘I am a Sunni,’ and another one said: ‘I am an Alevi.’ The ethnicity is the same; the religion is the same. Everything is the same that we have. I asked, ‘Now, how many Allah (God) we have?’ One. All of us believe in the same Allah. | 6 | 15 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B1 | Because my family-in-law is not like a classical Sunni family, and my family of origin is not like a classic Alevi family, I always say we all live on the same ground. There should not be Alevism and Sunnism. I am siding with my words. I have had no problem with Alevism-Sunnism. I have friends from Alevis and Sunnis. For me, all of them are equal. | 10 | 16 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B1 | I am married with an Alevi male, but they fast during the Ramadan and pray. Their religious life is not different than mine. I mean, there is no difference; there is no difference in lifestyles. | 6 10 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B1 | Alevism and Sunnism are not different because both Alevis and Sunnis believe in Islam and the same Allah. To me, there are no Alevi and Sunni phenomena. | 7 4 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B2 | I do not know Alevism and Sunnism. No. No. No. I did not research Alevism and Sunnism. I do not like political and denominational issues. I have never dealt with them. In my family, nobody talks about them. I do not like these topics. We did not think about religious issues. I mean, we did not pray -- we will not. Books, journals, and documentary in television -- I do not watch because I do not like them. | 9 9 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B2 | Both of us are free about religious issues. That is, we do not care about Alevism and Sunnism although it is a social reality in our society. We have done no special research on Alevism and Sunnism. | 7 5 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B2 | If people fast and pray, they are Sunni, and if they do not, they are Alevi. I had no chance to read something about my and my wife’s affiliations because I did not need that. | 12 17 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B2 | Never -- I have never done any research about Alevism and Sunnism. I heard something about them. Truthfully, Someone said my dad: ‘We are Sunnis.’ I asked my father what it was. He told me to forget it. There is no difference except for the name. I mean, I learned that at age sixteen. I learned what Alevi meant later from the society. | 4 11 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B2 | My family has always said we are Alevi. I have never done any research on Alevism, and my knowledge is based on what my family has said to me. I had knowledge about Alevism when my family told me. | 6 14 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B2 | Such things as Alevism and Sunnism have not taken a place in my life. I usually look at people’s manners. I and my husband did not look at Alevism and Sunnism, but our harmony. | 8 6 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation | B3 | In the family, of course, some problems happen -- minor or major problems. There are cultural differences between me and my wife. She entered | 5 1 |
| preference to the group that she had known them as stranger and bad. People talked about them badly, in general -- especially if the male is Alevi and the female Sunni, the females having really hard problems. In fact, it happens to males, as well. If the family of the groom is not tolerant or thoughtful, there will be big problems. I mean, nobody can say there will not be a problem. There will be divorce in the family. I see that happen in the society. If nobody tolerates the spouse’s affiliation difference, s/he will react to the actions, of course. I think both of the spouses should tolerate each other and their affiliation differences. They should find the middle way. |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B3 | Tolerance is necessary and if couples would like to be happy, they should always tolerate each other. I and my husband are respectful to each other’s affiliation preference. Although we have some problems as a family as is normal, we do not see our affiliation differences as a problem. | 16 | 20 |
| Reasons for maintaining the religious affiliation preference | B3 | I did not consider the different affiliation preference of my husband. Before I married, my elder brother talked to my husband’s family and said: ‘You are Alevi, and we are Sunni. If you will not be able to tolerate the difference, this marriage should not happen. We tolerate the difference, you should do so.’ Our families agreed on it. We married and have no problems. | 8 | 10 |
| Perceptions of Couples about Religious Beliefs and Affiliations Identity pre-and post-Marriage | C1 | My father went to mosque every Friday and fasted during Ramadan. We went to mosque together during Ramadan. Because my thoughts about religious life are positive, I married my wife. I did not pray five times every day before the marriage and do not do so now. But I was going to mosque every Friday to worship before the marriage and now, too. Some people think that Alevis do not go to mosque, fast, etc., but I do. I was going to mosque, fasting, and praying before the marriage. Now I do the same. It is not always regular, but I try to do it. Also, if I do something different now as opposed to before my marriage, people think I do so because of my Sunni wife’s influence. Alevism is following the life of Prophet Mohammed and Ahl al Bayt’s (his family) life. This is what I believe and do. They prayed and fasted; I do as they did. | 30 | 1 |
| Perceptions of C1 | When I was young, I was fasting and praying | 15 | 9 |
| Couples about Religious Beliefs and Affiliations Identity pre-and post-Marriage | Fridays. I stopped praying and fasting before the marriage. I still do not pray and fast. |  
| Perceptions of Couples about Religious Beliefs and Affiliations Identity pre-and post-Marriage | C1 | I started to pray five times in a day, but I stopped praying due to my job. I do not fast either because of my job and responsibilities. But it is wrong to say that only Sunnis can pray. Alevi pray, too. Thousands of Alevi pray and fast as Sunnis do. | 13 | 3  
| Perceptions of Couples about Religious Beliefs and Affiliations Identity pre-and post-Marriage | C1 | I prayed before marriage. Sometimes, I went to the mosque for Friday pray but did not pray sometimes, as well. I did some things right and some wrong. My opinions about religion have not changed after marriage. | 12 | 13  
| Perceptions of Couples about Religious Beliefs and Affiliations Identity pre-and post-Marriage | C1 | I am curious about religion. I am trying to follow my religion’s requirements. After my marriage, nothing changed. | 9 | 11  
| Perceptions of Couples about Religious Beliefs and Affiliations Identity pre-and post-Marriage | C1 | I fasted sometimes before the marriage but did not pray five times a day. This was because I did not know. After the marriage, I wanted to learn and did learn. Now, I sometimes pray. I love to pray. After the marriage, I learned to pray myself from the book. I started to pray. It did not happen with someone’s influence. | 11 | 14  
| Perceptions of Couples about Religious Beliefs and Affiliations Identity pre-and post-Marriage | C1 | My family of origin is Alevi. I am Alevi. My mother said: ‘Let’s fast during Ramadan,’ and we fasted before marriage. Some people do not fast and say ‘we are Alevi and believe Saint Ali.’ What they say is meaningless. Well, did not the saint Ali pray? Did he not fast? He did it all. I believe all the saints. I was fasting but not praying before the marriage. After the marriage, I learned how to pray and continue to pray now. | 7 | 12  
| Perceptions of Couples about Religious Beliefs and Affiliations Identity pre-and post-Marriage | C1 | Before the marriage, I was praying and fasting, but not regularly. I regret my irregular religious practices. Clearly, now, I pray regularly. The best regular worship of mine is fasting. But it is now better than when I was single because I am being older. I feel the hereafter more. I know -- I | 11 | 4  

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Couples about Religious Beliefs and Affiliations</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Yes. I was praying before the marriage. Everything is the same in my life after the marriage. I mean, neither my husband nor my mother-in-law push me to do or not do any religious practices. In contrast, they help me to keep up my practices.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation Differences and Their Impacts on Marriage</td>
<td>D1</td>
<td>No, we did not have any problem due to the affiliation differences. I have never had any problem. We just talk about Alevism and Sunnism as a joke.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation Differences and Their Impacts on Marriage</td>
<td>D1</td>
<td>Alevism and Sunnism never were a problem for me and my wife. We had arguments because of the many things, but we did not have any discussions or problems due to the Alevism and Sunnism differences. We sometimes talk about Alevism and Sunnism. My wife is more positive than me about that because she does not care about these issues. I like her approach and appreciate it.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation Differences and Their Impacts on Marriage</td>
<td>D1</td>
<td>No, Alevism-Sunnism has not been a problem for my family. In my view, it has not happened. I mean, we did not have any discussions about it. I say, she is human, too. Humanity. You are part of humanity; you can be Alevi, Sunni, or Kurd. Now, is Laz any different?</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation Differences and Their Impacts on Marriage</td>
<td>D1</td>
<td>I swear to Allah (God), I and my wife have never talked about nor discussed affiliation differences and do not perceive it as a problem in our marriage.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation Differences and Their Impacts on Marriage</td>
<td>D1</td>
<td>We do not talk about Alevism and Sunnism at the home. When my child was going to high school, he did not know about Alevism and Sunnism because Alevism and Sunnism are not important matters for my family. My husband is Alevi, but it is only a name given by society. He is who he is. In our life, he did not force me to drink alcohol or to dress a certain way. I have never seen him impose on me to do anything. It never happened.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions of Each Couple about Family in General</td>
<td>E1</td>
<td>It is Turkish society, you know. We live in a Muslim country, and family is very significant for us. Thus, family is a very vital issue for us. The biggest fruit of the family is children. We have two children. Family cannot be described with words. It is meaningless for someone who does not know what family is. Lifestyles are different, viewpoints are</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions of Each Couple about Family in General</td>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Both of the couples must be very loving and respectful of each other. Couples should bring up good children. Family requires both spouses’ effort to function properly. My aims are to raise children who are disciplined, well educated, and ready to handle any potential issues.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions of Each Couple about Family in General</td>
<td>E1</td>
<td>It is very hard to be a family. In order to have a place in society, it is necessary to have a family. After a certain age, you cannot live with your parents. Family is everything. I mean, it is the happiest thing for someone at that moment.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions of Each Couple about Family in General</td>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Family means for me presence and happiness. For example, I work very hard, but when I come home and see my wife and little daughter, I forget everything. To me, family is presence and happiness.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions of Each Couple about Family in General</td>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Family is the source of happiness and responsibilities because it is very influential in one’s life. After the marriage, you create a new world; half is your husband’s, and half is yours.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions of Each Couple about Family in General</td>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Family is a sort of balanced relationship because everyone should recognize the other. Love and respect are very significant in family since marriage is not an issue for one or two days, but for life.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating Characteristics of Intermarriage Couples</td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>We met in elementary school and dated about ten years. Then, we married.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating Characteristics of Intermarriage Couples</td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>We met at a party and dated about a year before marrying.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating Characteristics of Intermarriage Couples</td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>We met in high school and married after dating. We dated about five years and decided to marry. My family knew about my dates and respected my choice. My wife’s family was totally against me and our marriage.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating Characteristics of Intermarriage Couples</td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>We met and dated for about five or six months. Then, we married.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating Characteristics of Intermarriage Couples</td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>One of my friends introduced us to each other. We dated about six to seven months, and we married by running away -- people say elopement here.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dating Characteristics of Intermarriage Couples</strong></td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>My family knew my girlfriend and wanted me to marry her. My parents were positive about my sweetheart.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dating Characteristics of Intermarriage Couples</strong></td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>My sister knew the guy whom I was dating. I just told her about my love. My friends also knew about us, but not my family. I did not tell them about it in this case.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dating Characteristics of Intermarriage Couples</strong></td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>We met in a social place. Nobody knew about my dating because my family is a traditional one. We dated for six months and loved each other. We married in the form of elopement.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dating Characteristics of Intermarriage Couples</strong></td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>Only my mother knew about my dating. After, my family members learned of it, they were all against my marriage.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage: Love Marriage versus Arranged Marriage</strong></td>
<td>G1</td>
<td>I married my wife after dating ten years. We loved each other and married. It is one of the happiest things in my life.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage: Love Marriage versus Arranged Marriage</strong></td>
<td>G1</td>
<td>We loved each other when we dated. We decided to marry but her family did not let us. We married because we loved each other.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage: Love Marriage versus Arranged Marriage</strong></td>
<td>G1</td>
<td>The happiest day in my life was when we explained the love each had for the other before the marriage. I said I wanted to marry her. She said her family would not let us marry because of Alevi-Sunni issues. So, she said she would elope with me. We married by eloping.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage: Love Marriage versus Arranged Marriage</strong></td>
<td>G1</td>
<td>Whether I am happy with this guy is important for me. If I decide to marry him, it does not matter to me his being an Alevi or Sunni. For us, whether we can be happy if we marry each other and whether we fit each other well are important rather than our adhering to Alevism or Sunnism. We wanted to and so we married.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage: Love Marriage versus Arranged Marriage</strong></td>
<td>G1</td>
<td>I loved him and married although my family did not approve of my decision. But I am happy now. If I had known I would be faced with problems because of my marriage, I would still have loved him and married him, as well.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elopement</strong></td>
<td>H1</td>
<td>We married by eloping since my family would not let me marry my Sunni husband.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elopement</strong></td>
<td>H1</td>
<td>I had bad relations with my family. I thought my husband could make me happy. I always thought</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that. I had a boyfriend before, but I believed my husband was the one. Because I thought he could make me happy and take care of the home and our needs for life, I decided to marry; I decided to elope for the marriage. My family, of course, did not want me to marry him, because he was a Sunni.

**Elopement**  
H1  
My husband asked me if I wanted him to get me. I said: Yes come and take me. Traditionally, his family should have asked my family’s permission for the marriage first. Actually, I did not want his family to come and ask for my family’s permission for marriage because there was an Alevism-Sunnism problem between our families. Then, we decided to elope. I left home as if going to work and we ran away.

**Elopement**  
H1  
We dated for six months, and I loved my husband a lot. He said: ‘Do you want my family to get your family’s permission for our marriage? We do not have to elope.’ I said no because my family would not let me marry you. I wish I could marry in the normal fashion as other couples do. I mean, we married by elopement.

**Elopement**  
H1  
Everyone in my family said that he was an Alevi and that they would not let me marry him. They pushed for me to run away from home for the marriage, but I said I would not do anything wrong and that he was not a bad guy; so, I would not elope. When I said I would marry as usual, my mother and the others showed me the door to go away. She said: ‘Go, go my daughter!’

**Elopement**  
H1  
I wanted to run away with my husband but could not achieve it. After that, my family reluctantly let me marry my Sunni love.

**Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships**  
I1  
We loved each other and thought of each other every day and night. Our love grew every passing day. She said that if her family would not let her marry me, she would never marry in her life. I said the same.

**Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships**  
I1  
Intermarriage does not influence our relationships with each other. I have never had a problem with my wife due to the intermarriage. I am happy with my family.

**Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships**  
I1  
I love him a lot! When I knew I loved him, I waited for him to tell me that he loved me. When he did, it was the happiest day in my life. I am also happy because we have a child. Love is the most
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Page</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important thing for me. I and my husband think like that.</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I1</td>
<td>People marry and divorce. When divorce happens, couples consider Alevism and Sunnism as a scapegoat. It is wrong! I have been married with an Alevi husband for fourteen years, and I am happy with him.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>I want my children to be well educated, disciplined, and good people. Alevism and Sunnism are not matter for me.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>Now, I can say that I do not expect him to be Alevi or Sunni. I can say that because I want him to learn his own truth. Both of the sides might be wrong in certain respects. I want him to find the truths of both sides. I want him to learn that. I mean, not to be a fundamental Sunni who does not like others religions, or not to be an Alevi who rejects the proper religious beliefs totally or ignores Sunnis. I want him to find the middle of both affiliations.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>Everything grows up on its root. My child's father, me, is Alevi. I want her to be Alevi, Allah (God) willing. I want her to worship and fast, too. She may not be perfect, but she should pray and describe herself as Alevi.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>I swear to Allah [God], my child should grow up not as Alevi or Sunni, but as a good person, a religious person. I will do everything for that goal. He should fear Allah and live with the knowledge of Allah. He must not be an atheist. I do not want him to be an atheist. He will be either Alevi or Sunni – this is not a big deal for me and my wife. I have no problem with Alevism or Sunnism; thus, I do not care whether he will be Alevi or Sunni, but a good person.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>I have not thought that, but it is of no concern for me whether my child describes himself as Alevi or Sunni. Both of them are ok to me.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>I want my baby to learn how to pray and gain other knowledge necessary for Muslims. When he grows up, he will may ask me, Alevism and Sunnism. I mean, for me, there is no being Alevi or Sunni because I believe in Allah and the holy book [Qur’an]. I pray, and my husband does, too. I want my baby to pray, fast, be respectful to everyone, and know how to act in society. I want my baby to be like that.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Text</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships</td>
<td>I2</td>
<td>We teach our children how to be a respectful people. We are not very religious people. I want my children to be respectful and compassionate people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships</td>
<td>I3</td>
<td>My father-in-law was a thoughtful person, but my mother-in-law was very strict about our marriage. She wanted us to break up even we were engaged. When I went to my fiancé's home to take her ID for paper works for our marriage, my mother-in-law told me that I should look for another girl to marry. This happened because she is Sunni and I am Alevi. We went to my in-laws' home to celebrate the Eid, but they dismissed us from the home. After that, we have never gone to their home. My father-in-law died displeased with his daughter, my wife. We have never had good relations with my in-laws. I mean, if my mother-in-law sees my children, she would probably not know who they were. We have not had a relationship for years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships</td>
<td>I3</td>
<td>My mother-in-law was against our marriage. My father-in-law and mother-in-law forced my wife not to marry me because I am Sunni. Thus, my relationships with my in-laws have always been bad. I have not spoken with my mother-in-law for years. It is not because I am disrespectful to her, but because she discriminates against me because I am Sunni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships</td>
<td>I3</td>
<td>Although we married, my in-laws and relatives wanted to take and throw away my wife’s wedding ring. Nobody came to our wedding ceremony from my wife’s family except a few people. After about four years, we fixed the problems and now have good relations because they have seen that I am not a bad guy. Today, the relationships are very good, but we have had many problems until now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships</td>
<td>I3</td>
<td>When we married, my in-laws rejected me. One day, my brother-in-law called my wife and told her to come to his home but without me. My wife said that she would not come there if he rejected me. They rejected me because I am Sunni. After about one-and-a-half years, they accepted me. Now, we are good with her family, except her father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships</td>
<td>I3</td>
<td>My father-in-law loved me as his own son. However, his brothers stopped to talk to him because he permitted his daughter to marry a...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships</td>
<td>I3</td>
<td>We have had very good relationships with my family and family-in-law. The only thing is that, when my wife told her family that she wanted to marry me, her father said no because I am Alevi. Later, he said ok. Since then, we have had no problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermarriage and its Influences on Relationships</td>
<td>I4</td>
<td>One of my friends said: ‘I am in love with an Alevi girl. I want to marry her. If I marry her can we be a good couple?’ I said: ‘If you are happy each other now, you can be happy if you marry. Forget the social stigma.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishments due to Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage</td>
<td>J1</td>
<td>Social control is very much so about intermarriage. This is true in my family, which consists only of Alevis. If an Alevi female marries a Sunni male or runs from home to marry a Sunni, she is done. I mean, when I ran for my marriage, they said ‘Let’s shoot her.’ My uncles told my brothers to kill me. ‘Go and kill both of them’ -- me and my husband -- ‘You know their home.’ You should not let them live. If an Alevi lady marries a Sunni male, she cannot return to her family. She cannot see her parents and visit them. She cannot say I am the daughter of X. We still have something like that and it is very sad. I mean, the intermarried lady is not an Alevi anymore; she is done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishments due to Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage</td>
<td>J1</td>
<td>My uncle wanted to kill me because I loved an Alevi guy and wanted to marry him. He told my family that he would take me away. My mother said nothing. ‘Ok, you can go,’ she said. This means she sacrificed me to the traditions. Everyone sacrificed me! My mother said: ‘Ok.’ She did not ask what he was going to do with me. He took me and we left from the home. My uncle and I were alone and he said: ‘Ayşe, I heard you want to marry an Alevi guy. You love an Alevi guy. They came to your home to get your parents’ permission. It absolutely cannot be!’ He said he could kill me. He told me his prejudices about Alevis. I said I wanted to marry him anyway. I was very frightened! I told myself that this was the end, I was done. He left me to my home and said he would never let me out. As a punishment, I stayed in my home without any communication with my boyfriend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishments due to Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage</td>
<td>J1</td>
<td>When my wife eloped with me, her family descended suddenly upon my home to find us there. Her family and relatives reported us to the police. We went to the police station and were not arrested because my wife was older than eighteen. Later, we went to court, and I saw all of my wife’s relatives there. They came to beat me seriously. They did not come to my wedding, but to the court. Cops in the court surrounded me and my wife to protect us from her family’s and relatives’ attacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Stigma</td>
<td>K1</td>
<td>My wife’s family did not want to take us in or want us to be a part of my family. Being an Alevi is accepted as a committing a crime. My wife’s grandmother is one of the people who do not want us to marry. When she learned my wife was pregnant, she said she wished she would have a dead baby. She did not want us to be happy; she did not even want us to have children. We are faced with many problems due to social stigma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Stigma</td>
<td>K1</td>
<td>My wife’s parents would not let us to marry. Then, my wife eloped with me. We had no other choice. They did not accept me because I am a Sunni. It is because of social stigma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Stigma</td>
<td>K1</td>
<td>My cousin called my family and said: ‘Tell him not to degenerate our family by marrying an Alevi wife. He should marry a Sunni lady, not an Alevi.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Social Stigma | K1 | My father has never talked to me since I married. He has been angry with me and is displeased with me and my husband. My father does not actually consider my marriage with a Sunni a problem, but my uncles do. After I eloped, my uncles came to my father and insulted him because I married a Sunni. My father said nothing but cried; he was so sad. My uncles depressed my father by saying, ‘Your daughter married a Sunni guy’ and ‘How can you accept her as your daughter as before.’ My younger sister said to me that my father misses me a lot, a lot, but he cannot talk to me because of the influence of my grandparents. But I did not think we be like that. I was assuming that we can continue to have good relationships. Why don’t we? But, my uncles and some others have depressed my father. So, I do not know. My uncles, grandfather, and grandmother demoralize my father. Elders! I cannot understand that. My grandmother said about me, ‘I will get her to our home even if she has a six month
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Stigma</th>
<th>K1</th>
<th>My family would not let me marry an Alevi, so I ran away with my husband for the marriage. My family was angry with me and did not talk to me for fifteen days after my marriage. My father was angry with me. None of my relatives came to my wedding because I married an Alevi. My aunt, grandmother - none of them came. My uncle still does not talk to me because I married an Alevi. My family did not accept my husband because he is an Alevi for three years after our marriage.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Stigma</td>
<td>K2</td>
<td>The negative societal influence on the Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is huge. When I go to a wedding ceremony, ladies show me with their fingers and say: 'Look, she has! She has married an Alevi! So, it is always like that. When I go to a wedding, people say about me, she is the daughter of X. She married an Alevi. I am saddened to hear this, of course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Stigma</td>
<td>K2</td>
<td>I have faced some harmful situations. I have been stigmatized even after marriage in the society. For example, I go to some social events, and everyone is Alevi except me. They talk about a lady and say that she is this or that because she is a Sunni. I see the same thing among my Sunni friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Stigma</td>
<td>K2</td>
<td>When we decided to marry, we knew it was a problem in Turkey. When my wife talk to her family about our marriage, I told her 'Please tell your family I am an Alevi. I do not want to have any problem because of that. I guarantee you that my family will not create a problem about you.' Actually, we thought that my wife’s family would not create a problem, but we wanted to let them know anyway. I have been married for fourteen years and I had never heard anything about my affiliation preference yet regarding our marriage. But we hear that these kinds of marriages can be problematic.</td>
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REFERENCE LIST


