

BEYOND THE SPOKEN: ETHNIC MARITAL ENDOGAMY IN  
NORTHERN CYPRUS

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **BEYOND THE SPOKEN: ETHNIC MARITAL ENDOGAMY IN NORTHERN CYPRUS**

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This thesis presents the ways marital endogamy contributes to the maintenance and persistence of Turkish Cypriot identity and the integrity of the community. Although the Western ideology of romantic love seems to be welcomed in North Cyprus, Turkish Cypriot people tend to select their marital partners from their own community. In this context, it is important to comprehend how Turkish Cypriots perceive and define marriage on the basis of ethnic identity. By understanding how endogamy is perceived and how the boundaries between themselves and the outsiders are drawn, this study aims to investigate the motivations behind endogamous marriages in Northern Cyprus in accordance with their traditional cultural and linguistic affiliations. Patterns of endogamy among the Northern Cyprus population are studied through thirty semi-structured interviews which were conducted with Turkish Cypriot women in the summer of 2017. Although the nature of endogamy has changed in North Cyprus, it is still important in the sustenance of the group continuity, cultural continuity and distinctive language.

**Keywords:** Turkish Cypriot identity, Endogamy, Marital endogamy, Group integrity, Group continuity

## ÖZ

### KONUŞULANIN ÖTESİNDE: KUZHEY KIBRIS'TA ETNİK TEMELLİ GRUP İÇİ EVLİLİKLER

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Bu çalışma Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta yaşayan Kıbrıslı Türk kadınların grup içi (içten evlenme) ve grup dışı evliliğe (dıştan evlenme) dair fikirlerini ve tutumlarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta grup içi evliliklerin ardındaki motivasyonu anlamak ve bunu Kıbrıs Türk kimliği ve grup ilişkileri çerçevesinde incelemek araştırmanın odak noktasıdır. Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta evliliklerin temelinde romantik aşk/sevgi olduğu varsayımı olsa da, Kıbrıslı Türkler eşlerini kendi etnik kökenlerinden seçmeye eğilim göstermektedirler. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmada Kıbrıslı Türklerin etnik kimlik temelinde evlilikleri nasıl algıladıkları ve tanımladıkları, grubun 'biz' ve 'ötekiler' arasında yaptığı ayırım ve çizdiği sınırlar göz önünde bulundurularak incelenmiştir. Nitel araştırma metodu kullanılarak 2017 yazında Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta Kıbrıslı Türk kadınlarla yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar yapılmıştır. Araştırma bulguları, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta grup içi evlenme pratiklerinin zaman içerisindeki dönüşümüne rağmen, bu pratiğin grubun devamlılığı, kültürün devamlılığı ve özgün dilin korunması açısından hâlâ önemli olduğunu göstermiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Kıbrıslı Türk kimliği, Grup içi evlilik, İçten evlenme, Grup bütünlüğü, Grup devamlılığı

To the shattered streets  
of  
**N I C O S I A**



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 SETTING THE INTEREST AND AIM OF THE STUDY

Most of the studies about Cyprus are on the ‘Cyprus problem’ or ‘Cyprus conflict’; myriad of studies are concerned with the political issues taking place in the island. Hopes for reunification or the division of the island are the main themes in the studies concerning Cyprus. Especially the northern part of the island lacks social studies which are relevant for the question of ethnicity<sup>1</sup>. Social studies about ethnic communities or ethnic identity are major subjects which inform us not only about the political agenda of the Turkish Cypriot<sup>2</sup> people to be followed but also help us to understand the role of traditional culture and a distinctive language as important elements of community feelings.

The dynamics of ethnic endogamy is the key to understanding the ethnic group formation and maintenance of ethnic identity. Marrying within a specific (ethnic)

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<sup>1</sup> The literature on ethnicity in the North of the island is mostly concentrated on the topics such as demography, immigration, ethnic and religious minorities, and nationalism (Dayıoğlu 2012, 2014; Hatay 2005, 2007; Purkis and Kurtuluş 2013).

<sup>2</sup> According to Kanlı (2018), the terms ‘Cypriot Turk’ and ‘Turkish Cypriot’ have different connotations. He argues that the term Cypriot Turk emphasizes Cypriotness juxtaposed with Turkish identity as a left-inclined but a non-political description of identity. However, the term Turkish Cypriot emphasizes Turkishness in place of Cypriotness, the former being a more conservative but still a non-political description of identity. In the daily life, community members mostly name themselves as *Kıbrıslı Türk* in Turkish which corresponds to *Cypriot Turk* in English when directly translated. However, analyzing the direct translation of the terms is not enough for understanding the social connotations of them. I personally do not agree with Kanlı’s definition of the term since in many of the social studies, researchers use the term Turkish Cypriot, including those from left-inclined backgrounds like most of the left-wing and right-wing politicians. Besides, in the TRNC Constitutional Law, the term ‘Turkish Cypriot people’ is used to define the native population in the North of the island (TRNC Const., pmbl.). As a community member, I know many people who are not conservative but use the term Turkish Cypriot when they define their identity in English. I am very aware of the fact that self-naming is quite a sensitive issue, and the naming of a community should be based on the perception of community members. Therefore, I will use the term ‘Turkish Cypriot’ since it is the most common definition used both in daily life and in international politics.

group, i.e., endogamy, means more than a personal choice when choosing a spouse. It also reflects and contains deep-rooted and structured codes where members of an ethnic group are expected (or forced) to follow. According to Hoşgör and Smits (2002),

... ‘who is going to marry whom’, is not merely a simple process of random meeting or spontaneous falling in love, but also, and in many societies primarily, a rationally and carefully guided transaction in which important economic and social considerations play a role and many more persons than the partners and their close relatives may be involved. (p. 419)

Leeuwen and Maas (2005) emphasize the significance of social identities in marriage partners as being the most sensitive and acute indicators of class or community feelings. Referring to Thompson (1988), they argue that “who marries whom, without courting alienation or rejection from a social set, is an acid test of the horizons and boundaries of what each particular social set regards as tolerable and acceptable, and a sure indication of where that set draws the line of membership” (p. 1). In this context, marriage patterns not only reflect personal choices but also provide a deeper understanding about a community’s limitations for membership, giving clues about what is tolerable and what is not. This definition may provide an answer to the question: What makes a group or a community different than others?

Political transformations have deep and permanent consequences for self-identification of the people living in the Northern side of Cyprus. Turkish Cypriots, as a relatively small community in terms of population size<sup>3</sup>, have tried to maintain their physical and cultural presence on the island. For that purpose they transfer their ethnic identities to following generations by developing different mechanisms of survival. Besides formal education in schools, different cultural mechanisms have been adopted for this very purpose. For instance, with respect to family life, political, cultural and ethnic identities of Turkish Cypriots play a major role in keeping the community

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<sup>3</sup> According to the latest population census data in North Cyprus in 2011, the total number of the population was 286,257 (‘TRNC’ Prime Ministry State Planning Organization Statistical Yearbook 2016, p. 15).

members together. Although the Western ideology of romantic love seems to be welcomed in the Northern part of Cyprus, Turkish Cypriot people tend to select their marital partners from their own community.

Since ethnic marriage patterns in the Northern part of the island is an understudied topic in the literature, there are only a limited number of quantitative or qualitative studies about marital endogamy patterns in Cyprus. However, due to my personal experiences during the years I have spent in Northern Cyprus as a community member, I have constantly encountered marital endogamy as an important component of maintaining community identity, uniqueness and unity of the community. Marital endogamy can also serve as a form of self-segregation where a community can isolate itself from other groups and use it to resist integration. For the southern part of the island, there are several studies about endogamy or marriage patterns in general (e.g. Fulas-Souroulla 2008, Furtado & Theodoropoulos 2011). However, these studies are more concerned with the attitudes of Greek Cypriots about mixed marriages (inter-societal marriages), i.e., marriages between Greek Cypriots and non-nationals living in Cyprus. These studies based on quantitative analysis focus on the mechanisms through which education affects interethnic marriages, which is considered as one element of assimilating immigrants into the dominant culture.

These types of studies provide information about which groups interact with whom, but they do not explain the reasons behind mate selection. I aim to make a modest contribution to the literature by studying various patterns of endogamy among the Northern Cyprus population through qualitative analysis. In other words, understanding the perceptions and motivations of the members of the Turkish Cypriot community when choosing marital partners is crucial for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of endogamy where cultural norms and a distinctive language play a determining role. Therefore, an explorative analysis rather than an explanatory one will be developed aiming to discuss the social/cultural dimension of marital endogamy. In this context, to understand and analyze how and why Turkish Cypriot people select their marital partners from their own community, I formulated the following questions:

- How marital endogamy provides a ground for the maintenance of social/cultural heritage and language?
- How marital endogamy contributes to the maintenance/persistence of Turkish Cypriot identity?

In the light of the research questions above, I aim to understand how Turkish Cypriot people perceive and define marriage on the basis of ethnic identity. As mentioned above, marital endogamy indicates the way an ethnic group sustains its presence. It also shows how ethnic assets, traditions and culture are transferred to the next generation within a group. It also provides information about the boundaries of a group, and informs us about whom and which groups can tolerate each other. Besides, marital endogamy determines the limits of group membership and provides clues about the components of ethnic identity although in an indirect way. More specifically, marital endogamy will help us to understand the nature of ethnic identity in the everyday lives of the people of Northern Cyprus with a focus on how it is perceived and experienced by them. By understanding how endogamy is perceived, this study aims to investigate the motivations behind endogamous marriages among the peoples of Northern Cyprus in relation to their traditional cultural and linguistic affiliations. How the Turkish Cypriot community perceives the influence of endogamous marriages on their culture and their distinct language is the central focus.

Considering the political history of Cyprus is important to understand how and why Turkish Cypriot people select their marital partners from their own community. The clashes between the two communities, Turkish and Greek Cypriots, appear to have shaped and influenced the cultural identity of both communities. Division of the island in 1974 posed serious problems for the people living in Cyprus since both communities have encountered warfare, migration and economic problems during the clashes between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities. The salient political problem in Cyprus has started with the anti-colonial uprisings against the British rule in 1950s which was followed by the clashes between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots in 1960s (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p .xi). Republic of Cyprus has gained its independence from Great



Britain in 1960, which lasted until 1963 (Morelli, 2017, p. 1). In that period, there were several communities which made up the population living in Cyprus; these were the Turkish and Greek Cypriots living together with minority groups such as Maronite Christians, Latins, and Armenians. The multifaceted political agenda of Cyprus was followed by the Turkish military intervention in 1974 that resulted in the division of the island as two separate parts through a Green Line<sup>4</sup>. Morelli (2017) argues that “as 2017 began, Cyprus entered its 53rd year as a politically separated nation and its 43rd year as a physically divided country” (para. 1). The visible “Cyprus problem”, in other words, the divided communities of Cyprus, rendered the reunification of the island as the primary social problem. Clashes between the two major ethnic communities, the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots, have led to traumatic experiences in the lives of many from both sides. Economic, political and cultural composition of both communities has undergone serious changes following these political transformations. Smith (1991) discusses the importance of warfare in the constitution of ethnic identity. He defines ‘warfare’ as “a mobilizer of ethnic sentiments and national consciousness, a centralizing force in the life of the community and a provider of myths and memories for future generations” (p. 27). In this context, the bloody clashes between the two communities in Cyprus are important in the manner that they play a salient role in the formation and maintenance of ethnic identities among the communities living in Cyprus. Besides the influence of the clashes between the two communities, the presence of Turkish immigrants in North Cyprus should be considered as a vital factor that shaped the perception of ethnic identity among Turkish Cypriots. After the military intervention in 1974, Turkey’s intrusion into the island made the presence of Turkish immigrants more critical in opposition to the Turkish Cypriot identity. As Turkey’s presence in the island lasted longer than expected, the native people began to perceive Turkish immigrant groups as representing the political hegemony of Turkey in the north of the island. In this context, native Turkish Cypriots began to perceive the presence of Turkish immigrants (most of whom possess higher degrees

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<sup>4</sup> This is the ceasefire line which separates the two parts of the island (stretches for 180 kilometers). Also known as the United Nations Buffer Zone in Cyprus, it is patrolled by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

of religiosity than Turkish Cypriots) as a threat to their population size and their secular way of living. Soon after the intervention, this perception of threat began to dominate the social interaction between the natives and the immigrants from Turkey. As Hatay argues, “beginning in the 1980s, opposition parties and newspapers in northern Cyprus created a discourse of ‘demographic danger’ in which widely claimed that the number of native Turkish Cypriots was dwindling and the number of Turkish nationals growing” (2007, p. 7). In this context, through analyzing marriage practices, the formation and maintenance of ethnic identity should be discussed with respect to dynamics of the interaction between Turkish Cypriots and Turkish immigrants, in which the native population creates boundaries with Turkish immigrants whom they perceive as the ‘primary outsiders’.

The influence of political transformations on individual lives in both communities in Cyprus necessitates an understanding of the distinction made by C. Wright Mills between ‘public issues of social structure’ and ‘personal troubles of milieu’ when discussing his concept of ‘sociological imagination’. Mills argues that sociological imagination “enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society” (1959, p. 6). Any study about Cyprus should take into account the historical context in order to understand and give meaning to the motivations behind the way people live their lives. For instance, marrying someone from one’s own ethnic group may seem like a personal choice. However, the practice of marrying within a specific ethnic group, class, or social group is relevant to the social structure. In Cyprus, understanding the motivations behind endogamous marriages requires a grasp of the effect of political atmosphere on personal choices in order to “understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life” of individuals (Mills, 1959, p. 5).

Modernity as a paradigm also has influenced the studies on ethnicity, ethnic groups and ethnic identity. Modernity poses certain dichotomies to understand the social with reference to certain concepts like universalism, essentialism, reductionism, and rationalism. Modernist methodology in a general sense is based on a dichotomous

understanding which makes it possible to explain the social world through causal explanations. For example, the dichotomy of the agent and structure is perhaps the most grounded, which has been criticized on the basis of reductionism since it simplifies social complexity and differences when trying to understand the social itself. By universalizing certain concepts like family, marriage or ethnicity, modernism attempts to understand the social through the lens of reductionism. Likewise, universalism has also been a target of several criticisms, and it was rejected by postmodernist thinkers. Postmodernity rejects the modern way of understanding the world. Instead, it offers deconstructionism and deessentialism by criticizing the concepts of universalism, essentialism, and rationalism. In this context, ethnicity will be studied neither in a purely modernist understanding nor as an over-fragmented concept as suggested by the postmodern paradigm.

In terms of ethnic endogamy, modernization thesis argues that the ascribed status of individuals will eventually decrease when choosing a mate. This will consequently lead to decreasing numbers of marriages arranged around ethnic identities. As societies modernize, individuals will make more rational choices and attribute more value to social stratification based on skills and formal education rather than ascribed characteristics like racial, ethnic or religious identifications.

I argue that modernization thesis simplifies the complex relationship between modernization and endogamy. Together with the rise of education levels or rationalization, Smits, Ultee, and Lammers (1998) argue that in later stages of modernization all types of endogamy and homogamy will weaken since individuals will be more independent. Besides, as a consequence of late marriage, educational endogamy is also expected to diminish. These assumptions universalize the route that all societies are bound to follow undermining the fact that different paths can be followed in different social/cultural contexts. In other words, one cannot expect all types of endogamy to diminish or weaken as a result of increasing levels of educational endogamy. I argue that educational endogamy can be observed together with ethnic endogamy. Motivations behind choosing a spouse should be analyzed in a multifaceted

fashion due to the complexity of the issue under consideration. Individuals may choose their potential partners from among those with similar educational backgrounds, but they may still prefer to marry with members of their own ethnic group.

## **1.2 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter One is comprised of a brief introduction where I present the main interest and aim of the study. This section is followed by a discussion of my research methodology. Firstly, I discuss why I chose qualitative methodology as my research methodology. In this part, together with presenting how I benefitted from the basic principles of hermeneutics and phenomenology while formulating my research questions and my interview guide, I critically consider my own positioning in the field as a part of ‘self-reflexivity’ discussion. Secondly, I present my fieldwork experiences by referring to the design of my questionnaire, structure of my interviews and detailed information about my respondents. In this part, I provide detailed information about how I conducted my interviews. Finally, I discuss how I deciphered the data considering the ways data was collected and analyzed.

Chapter Two consists of the theoretical background of my research. In this chapter I present a brief discussion of the related literature and develop a theoretical and conceptual framework which consists of theories on marriage systems (endogamy and exogamy) and on ethnic endogamy as a basis of cultural identity. Then, I elaborate on major theories on kinship and endogamy together with considering the potential roots of endogamy. Finally, I discuss the issue of racial and ethnic intermarriage with respect to the concepts of social distance and social boundaries of ethnic groups.

Chapter Three is an introduction to the analysis of the data. In this chapter, firstly, I discuss the practice of endogamy in Northern Cyprus with respect to pressure from family members, peer-group pressure and social pressure. In the following section I discuss the role of cultural identity in the perception of Turkish Cypriots towards interethnic marriages. Furthermore, in this section, I also focus on the status of women

in the Turkish Cypriot culture considering interethnic marriages. Finally, I discuss the influence of interethnic and intraethnic marriages on the integrity of the community within the frame of cultural continuity, transmission of community language, and the continuation of Cypriot blood.

Chapter Four consists of two main sections. In the first section, I analyze the perceptions of my respondents towards endogamy and exogamy in the frame of social boundaries, social distance and personal autonomy. In the second part, I argue that endogamy in Northern Cyprus is ‘selective’. Hence, I discuss the selective nature of endogamy with respect to gender, education, occupation, and religion.

Chapter Five is the concluding part where I briefly summarize the main findings of my research together with the contributions of my research to the literature. Besides, I also propose future research suggestions considering the strength and the limitations of my work.

## **1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.3.1 Why Qualitative Methodology?**

For addressing the needs of the research question and the research problem of my study, I used qualitative methodology. The primary source of data in this study is the in-depth interviews carried out in Cyprus during July and August 2017. Additional data was obtained through participant observation which is another primary source of information providing first-hand information.

When formulating my research question and my interview guide, I benefitted from the basic principles of hermeneutics and phenomenology. Phenomenology is a philosophical stance developed by Edmund Husserl in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its focus is on lived experience and intentional consciousness. In other words, phenomenological sociology aims at understanding everyday life and lived experiences. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith, “Phenomenological studies will

thus focus on how people perceive and talk about objects and events, rather than describing phenomena according to a predetermined categorical system, conceptual and scientific criteria” (2014, p. 8). Hermeneutics was developed by Martin Heidegger in 1960s. This philosophical stance is based on the idea that if one attempts to understand the experience of others s/he should walk in their shoes. Hermeneutics and phenomenology are ontology oriented philosophies. As István puts forward, “Humans are understanding, so to speak all along. What they understand are not matters of fact out there in the world but the way they find themselves in the world involved in it and coping with it” (1998, p. 11). Not only ontological reality is highlighted in hermeneutics, but the interpretative activity is of great importance as well. Benefitting from hermeneutics necessitates understanding how subjects make sense of the world through interpretative activity. In this context, the qualitative research strategy seems more fruitful since it privileges words over numbers. Giving priority to words rather than numbers helps a researcher to empathize with the respondents and makes it possible to work on the ‘meanings’ as well. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) argue that,

Qualitative researchers are mainly concerned with meaning (e.g., how individuals make sense of the world, how they experience events, what meaning they attribute to phenomena). In other words, they are more preoccupied with the quality of experience, rather than causal relationships. (p. 361)

By adopting a qualitative methodology, my objective was to understand and analyze the *meanings* Turkish Cypriot women give to marriages based on ethnic ties. How Turkish Cypriot women make sense of their experiences was another focus point in my research. Both the experiences and perceptions of the respondents were used for digging up further information about the issue under investigation.

To avoid hasty generalizations, attaching particular importance to the social context was essential as well. Qualitative research “has an unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about *how things work in particular contexts*” (Mason, 2002, para. 1). Since the research question requires to understand the motivations behind the norm of endogamy among Turkish Cypriot people, taking individual members’ point

of view, thoughts and behavior into consideration was very important during the research. Moreover, the participants were expected to have a chance to express their thoughts in their own terms. In this context, elite-biased knowledge about the community was neutralized to a certain extent.

Since the primary motivation behind the research was to understand the lived experience, it was necessary to step into the participants' shoes. As Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) argue, by empathizing with the respondents, "the researcher is thus moving between emic and etic perspectives" (p. 6). Since I am a member of the Turkish Cypriot community, I had the chance to develop an emic perspective. As we are members of the same ethnic community and sharing similar cultural and social backgrounds, it seemed that my participants easily established a strong connection with me. The interviews proceeded in a trustful and comfortable atmosphere. This was not only beneficial for obtaining the required information during the interviews but helped me to improve my methodological stance as well. I was also able to develop the etic perspective by looking at the phenomenon through the lens of sociological theories and concepts. Moving between the emic and the etic perspectives granted me the privilege of forming bonds between the individual cases and my research problem. Forming this connection was at the center of my research. Moreover, I was keen on considering the social and cultural contextuality while analyzing the data through the lens of sociological concepts. In this respect, I also tried to prevent my analysis from falling into the trap of generalization.

In the field, I used the sociological perspective and always tried to be conscious of my position. Self-questioning was an essential component of my research process. As a component of my training for the field, I placed special emphasis on the issue of self-reflexivity. For a solid qualitative research, questioning my assumptions and my position in the field was fundamental. Mason (2002) argues that reflexivity "means thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your thoughts, actions and decisions shape how you research and what you see" (p. 5). It was clear that adopting a self-reflexive perspective would demand serious emotional labor. Self-

reflexivity is related to the validity and reliability of the research. Le Compte and Goetz (1982, p. 32) define validity as “validity in research is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings” (as cited in Brink, 1993, p. 35). Moreover, Selltiz et al. (1976, p. 182) argue that reliability “is concerned with the consistency, stability and repeatability of the informant’s accounts as well as the investigators’ ability to collect and record information accurately” (as cited in Brink, 1993, p. 35). For obtaining trustworthy information, Brink (1993) argues that “every researcher should examine and declare his underlying values and assumptions in light of the research situation so that they can be considered when reading the research” (p. 36). Following Brink’s argument, I believe it is necessary to comment on and consider my own positioning in the field.

During the research, being both an insider and an outsider of the Turkish Cypriot community, I had an advantaged epistemic location. On the one hand, I was a young, Turkish Cypriot woman who has strong social and cultural bonds with the community. On the other hand, I was a researcher who studies and lives in Turkey. This dual positioning provided me the ground for understanding the cultural and mental map of Turkish Cypriot people from a privileged position. I experienced self-reflexivity strangely. During the interviews, I was gathering information as an insider. I gained the trust of my respondents as a co-ethnic and gathered information which would not be given to an outsider. The idea of sharing the information which I obtained from the community with the ‘outside world’ is somehow a challenging experience. I was the person who asked the questions and gathered information from the interviewees. I had a map of theories in my mind during the interviews. However, I knew that interviews would proceed like daily conversations. It was a challenging experience for me to ‘act’ like I was just chatting even though respondents were very aware of my intentions as a researcher.

I speak the language of the community which is a dialect of the Turkish language spoken by Turkish Cypriots both in Cyprus and among its diaspora. The interviewees were very pleased to hear that I speak the Cypriot dialect which positively influenced



our conversations. As respondents also admitted, individuals who form strong bonds with their ethnic identities feel warmer, confident and secure when they are exposed to the language they use in their daily conversations – the language of the ethnic group. I had full command of the cultural and social codes of the community. Therefore, not only my ethnic identity but social and cultural codes which I am familiar with helped me to improve the quality of the data during the research.

### **1.3.2 Experiencing the Fieldwork**

I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with thirty middle-class women who were members of the Turkish Cypriot community. By adopting a semi-structured interview technique, I had the opportunity to ask my respondents more detailed questions besides the ones in my interview guide. Using a semi-structured interview guide during the research offered me the opportunity to examine endogamy thoroughly. As Kajornboon argues, the strength of semi-structured interviews is that “the researcher can prompt and probe deeper into the given situation” (2005, p. 5). Probably, Patton’s (as cited in Kajornboon, 2005, p. 5) argument can point out the reason why I preferred a semi-structured interview format. Patton argues that during the interview a researcher can “... explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject ... to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined” (2002, p. 343). Another function of conducting semi-structured interviews in a research is worded by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) as follows:

Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher and the participant to engage in a dialogue in real time. They also give enough space and flexibility for original and unexpected issues to arise, which the researcher may investigate in more detail with further questions. (p. 5)

As another data collection technique, participant observation was carried out that enriched the qualitative data. As a member of the Turkish Cypriot community, I am familiar with the cultural activities related to marriage. Moreover, since I was born and

raised in North Cyprus, I have participated in various ceremonies throughout my entire life such as weddings, henna nights and other cultural activities related to marriage ceremonies. During my fieldwork, I participated in ceremonies and weddings which are relevant for grasping the dynamics of mixed marriages. When I participated in these weddings, I was able to do a small-scale research on the public opinion about mixed marriages by asking people their thoughts and feelings about the wedding. Therefore, I had the chance to observe the social atmosphere in those ceremonies. Besides, even though I was born and raised in Nicosia (the capital city of Cyprus), I always had the chance to visit a rural area (at least once a week) since my parents are from Fota<sup>5</sup>, and my grandparents used to live in the same village. These visits gave me the chance to observe and participate in rural life. Especially during my fieldwork, I paid particular attention to participate in weddings and cultural events that took place in different villages in Northern Cyprus. During one of our visits to my grandparents, I found a letter which was sent to my grandfather from Saudi Arabia by his sister's children. Then, I learned that my grandfather's sister was sold to an Arab man when she was younger than fifteen. As my grandfather told, she had to leave her children behind and come back to Cyprus after the death of her husband. Her arrival was immediately followed by a marriage which was arranged by her family. I was a little child when I found the letter, and I still remember how surprised and puzzled I was while listening to the unusual life story of *Afet Hala*<sup>6</sup>. This was one of the reasons why I choose to study endogamy in Cyprus.

Participant observation gave me a better understanding of the social context and the issues about exogamy. It can be said that the validity of this study might have been increased in this way. As Kawulich (2005) argues, "validity is stronger with the use of additional strategies used with observation, such as interviewing, document analysis, or surveys, questionnaires, or other more quantitative methods" (p. 9). In this respect,

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<sup>5</sup> A village in Kyrenia

<sup>6</sup> Tur. Aunt

interviewing and participant observation as primary data collection methods complemented each other for obtaining qualified information for my study.

I used snowball sampling to identify potential subjects in the community and asked my respondents for other potential interviewees. I took advantage of my own social ties to reach the potential subjects. As mentioned above, semi-structured interview questions were asked to respondents<sup>7</sup>. When selecting my respondents, being a 'Turkish Cypriot' was determined according to the birthplace of the respondents' parents. All of the respondents' parents were born in Cyprus. Only two respondents were exceptions. One respondent's father was a Turkish Cypriot born in Turkey. The respondent's grandparents were Turkish Cypriots who migrated to Turkey during the wartime in the 1960s. Her father was born in Turkey and then came back to Cyprus during his early childhood. The second exception was another respondent's mother. Her mother was born in England in a Turkish Cypriot family and then moved to Cyprus permanently. These two cases reflected different social backgrounds and enriched the data during my fieldwork.

The interviews are divided into two main groups with respect to age. Half of the interviews were conducted with women who were under the age of 40, and the other half who were over the age of 40. Fourteen of the women who were under the age of 40 were between the ages of 25 and 30, and one was 39. The second group of respondents were over the age of 40, five of them were between the ages of 40 and 50, seven of them between 50 and 60, and three of them between 65 and 75. Two of the respondents in this group were divorced. Only one respondent was unemployed. In North Cyprus, women's labor force participation is higher when compared to Turkey. Therefore, it was not an easy task to reach unemployed middle-class women during my fieldwork. Most of the women prefer to participate in the labor force owing to the lack of cultural and social norms preventing women from having a job. Considering the differences in the attitudes of the people living in rural and urban areas was significant as well. Differences between rural and urban areas indicate how the mental

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix A for the interview guide in Turkish and Appendix B for the English translation.

map of people changes with respect to where they live. In other words, growing up in a rural or urban settlement influences individuals' perception towards social change. Generally, it is expected that women who live in urban areas would be more open-minded when compared to women who live in rural areas. Therefore, it was necessary to formulate a category based on the division between rural and urban areas. Only three of the respondents were habitants of rural areas. However, most of the women aged over 40 grew up in rural areas.

Marital background of the respondents was considered with respect to ethnicity as well. Eleven of the total respondents were either married exogamously (a total of five women) or witnessed an exogamous marriage in their close-knit families (a total of six women). The partners of those women who were married exogamously were from Palestine, Turkey (from Giresun, Tunceli and Hatay) and Pakistan. Interviewing those who were married to outsiders helped me to understand the general attitudes and opinions in the community towards endogamy and exogamy from different perspectives. The respondents who married exogamously reflected how this process was experienced. On the other hand, respondents who married endogamously reflected the other side of the coin. They provided me with the information about how exogamous marriages are perceived from the outside.

The interview questions were designed in a modest sense. The questions were formulated in a way that participants could easily understand. Interviews proceeded like daily conversations. Average time spent for an interview was about forty minutes. During the field work, I always tried to provide a comfortable and a warm atmosphere for the participants. For this purpose, most of the interviews were conducted in naturalistic settings like public places, cafe's, restaurants or at the respondents' homes. All of the interviewees were volunteers<sup>8</sup>. Participants were free to leave at any time if they felt uncomfortable during the interview. To ensure confidentiality, I used

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix C (in Turkish) and Appendix D (in English) for viewing the voluntary participation form which includes the research procedures in line with the regulations of the Applied Ethics Research Center (UEAM), Middle East Technical University.

pseudonyms to anonymize the participants. Interview material was collected in the form of audio recordings and detailed notes.

This study aims to understand the ways individuals experience and perceive marriage with respect to ethnicity. How Turkish Cypriot people (specifically Turkish Cypriot women) define and perceive marriage on the basis of ethnic identity is my key concern. Besides, understanding and analyzing the motivations behind endogamous marriages is equally important. Therefore, the design of the questionnaire was in line with the research problem. For this purpose, I formulated the interview questions in a way that would provide me an in-depth exploration of information about the lived experiences of my participants. This, in turn, would enable me to understand the motivations, perceptions, and comments of my respondents about endogamous marriages. Some of the interview questions that reflect this intellectual puzzle are as follows:

- Where and how did you meet your spouse?
- Can you tell me how you experienced the process of marriage?
- Did you face any problems during the process of marriage?
- Do you think that there are hidden rules about choosing a spouse that people do not openly talk about? Did you feel the pressure of these hidden rules?
- Before marrying, did people ask you about the ethnic origin of your partner or his family's? If yes, how did you feel about these questions?
- How would you feel if your children decided to marry a person with a different ethnic origin?

I designed the interview questionnaire based on six categories. The first category is related to the socio-demographic attributes of the respondents. In this part, I asked questions about age, gender, place of birth, marital status, occupation, residential address, and educational background of the respondents. In the second category, I formulated questions to understand how women experienced their marriages. These questions aimed at finding out the social conditions and the social environment the respondents met with their partners. These questions also addressed the mate selection process since this incorporates the attitude of social circles and the norms and values

around marriage practices. The third category is comprised of questions that consider women's ideas about endogamous and exogamous marriages. In this part the questions aimed at understanding the former generations' attitudes towards inter-ethnic marriages. Respondents were asked to comment on the advantages and disadvantages of endogamous and exogamous marriages. Also, this part includes questions about the role of ethnic marital-endogamy in sustaining the solidarity and integrity of the community. The following category examines how socio-economic and gender differences influence the social norms of marriages. The fifth category consists of questions about the culture and language of the community which aimed to find out the ways marital endogamy influences and transforms the distinctive language and the traditional culture of the community under study. The significance of language and culture in the ethnic identities of Turkish Cypriot people was considered as well. The last category measures the influence of family and peer pressure in ethnically-mixed marriages. This part also includes questions about the role of personal autonomy in resisting such social pressure.

Turkish Cypriot community is a small one in terms of its population size. The population is homogeneous when compared to most countries in the world. This makes 'gossip' a very important issue in the lives of the people. Gossip, as one of the mechanisms of social pressure, influences the way people live. During the interviews, most of the respondents expressed their concerns about this issue. This posed certain limitations to the research. In the eyes of the respondents I was also a member of that community; therefore, they felt that their identities were not anonymous. Even though I ensured confidentiality, I could observe their anxiety about anonymity. Some respondents even asked whether I found their ideas as reasonable, conservative or modern at the end of the interview. The social image that they projected to me while interviewing them seemed to be important for the respondents.

The subject of the research was interesting for the respondents which posed both advantages and disadvantages in obtaining information. They were talkative in sharing their experiences and ideas. This improved the quality of the data. However, since the

topic of the research was ‘marriage’, respondents easily drifted away from the topic. Most of the respondents were keen on sharing the problems they experienced in their families in a detailed way. In this context, trying not to stray away from the topic being discussed was sometimes challenging. This also made preserving the structure of the interview more challenging. Moreover, the unwillingness of the respondents for audio recording posed a limitation as well. They were quite comfortable while the audio recording was off. Some of the respondents did not accept audio recording and preferred note-taking instead.

Interviews with elderly women proceeded in an unusual way. I had three interviews with women who were aged over of 65. Two of these women, who were between the ages of 75 and 68, had some difficulties in understanding the questions. Both of them were uneducated, and their social lives were limited to the social relationships in the village where they lived. Thus, I had to simplify the questions during the interviews. Nevertheless, even in a simplified sense, they shared their ideas and experiences, and the information that I obtained from them was of great value for the research. Especially when considering the influence of social change with respect to the perception and experience of endogamy, the elderly respondents’ words and expressions were quite informative and valuable.

### **1.3.3 Deciphering the Data**

In social sciences, researchers use different ways of analyzing data that is obtained through research. The research question influences the ways data is collected, analyzed and deciphered. Besides, the process of analyzing data can differ depending on the methodological stance of the researcher. In line with my methodological positioning, I put an effort to analyze the data by focusing on the perceptions and the meanings Turkish Cypriot women attach to the role of ethnicity in marriages.

A close reading of the transcripts was the initial step of data analysis. To analyze the data obtained through my research, firstly, I studied the recurring patterns. I reviewed and reread the interviews multiple times until I found the expressions and statements

of the respondents which were repeated throughout the whole study. In this way, each reading provided me with new insights and ideas. Then, I worked on finding meanings in the repeated claims and statements with the help of sociological concepts and the theoretical background of the research. I tried to determine the meaningful differences in the responses of the interviewees considering their socio-economic backgrounds. As the second stage, the significant phrases and emotional responses in the interviews were highlighted. For each interview, I took notes of my own reflections and attempted to generate an intellectual puzzle after reading all of the interview material. At this stage, I stayed focused on language use, content, and context of the interviews. Moreover, I considered both the information (what was discussed) and the interpretations of the respondents simultaneously. The third stage was the process of transforming my notes into themes. At this point, I preferred to focus on my own notes rather than the transcripts. I should note that this was a challenging stage since it involves a higher level of abstraction. In other words, this was the stage where both theory and data should be engaged. The final part was grouping the themes in accordance with conceptual similarities, examining the connections between these themes, and then making a list of significant themes and subthemes. During the writing process, I used extracts from the interviews. As well, I put an effort in forming connections between the expressions of an interviewee, the theoretical background of my study and my own evaluations about the issue. I preferred to integrate the respondents' own words with my arguments for two reasons. As Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) argue, using the respondents' own words serves two functions: "1. it enables the reader to assess the pertinence of the interpretations, and 2. it retains the voice of the participants' personal experience and gives a chance to present the emic perspective" (p. 9). Another reason for using the interviewees' own words is that it reduces the possibility of producing an elite-biased knowledge which is something undesirable. Moreover, by appropriating an emic perspective, the chance of making hasty generalizations would be reduced to a certain extent.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 MARRIAGE SYSTEMS: ENDOGAMY AND EXOGAMY**

##### **2.1.1 Endogamy**

Endogamy is defined by Barnard (1997, p. 475) as “a system of marriage in which individuals can only marry those from the same kinship group” (as cited in Dzimiri, 2014, p. 114). Another definition is provided by Schaefer and Lamm (1998) who suggest that endogamy derives from the Greek word ‘within’ (as cited in Dzimiri, 2014, p. 114) and from the word ‘gamous’ meaning marriage (Saleem, Chaudry, and Riaz, 2015, p. 1603). In other words, marriage within one’s own social or ethnic group, caste, religion or sect is called endogamous marriage (Saleem et al., 2015, p. 1603). As Saleem et al. suggest, Ferguson McLennan (1970) was the first who has introduced the terms of endogamy and exogamy into anthropology literature (p. 1603). They argue by echoing Warereggers (2002) that the practice of endogamy can be traced back to Mesopotamian times, i.e., the Neo Babylonian period, where consanguineous endogamy was observed (p. 1603). Therefore, endogamy can be defined as one of the ancient indigenous marriage patterns (p. 1603).

Endogamous marriage is also called as ‘intra-marriage’ which points out to the marital unions occurring at the inter-group level. It determines the groups within which a marriage partner should be found, and specifies ethnic groups, classes, and social groups to find a marriage partner from. Besides, sometimes it indicates the groups that are not allowed to find a marriage partner from. Therefore, endogamy requires a member of a specific group to marry a member within a specific social group.

In accordance with the functionalist perspective, endogamy as a marriage system helps to maintain community identity, status and uniqueness. It defines group boundaries

and often applied on a society-wide level. Endogamy encourages bonding and group affiliation. Especially minority groups prefer endogamous marriages to keep their cultural distinctiveness alive. Since the cultural backgrounds of the spouses are similar, endogamous marriages are relatively more harmonious (Dzimiri, 2014, p. 114-117). By referring to Rosenfeld (2008), Saleem et al. (2015) underlines that endogamous marriage is the *only* way through which new generations can recognize their forefather's traditions and values, and transfer them to the next generations (p. 1603).

Indisputably, the motivation behind the practice of endogamy is the formation of family. Seligman (1950) puts forward the importance of the unit of family in terms of transferring their cultural history to next generations since "it is difficult to form a picture of human society without family, for not only is it the group where the child grows up and forms its first emotional attachments, but it is the framework within which our social heritage is handed down from one generation to another" (p. 308). Besides, ethnic endogamy favors, promotes and guarantees the presence of an ethnic group. In other words, it prevents an ethnic community to be dissolved. As Stevens and Swicegood (1987) argue, "... ethnic endogamy perpetuates ethnic descent groups as viable social entities by allowing the intergenerational transmission of unique cultural attributes and the re-creation and solidification of bonds of ethnic group identification and affiliation" (p. 73).

'Group identification' is the key term explaining the process of transferring common social history to the next generations of the group. Group identification is defined by Gordon (1964) as a 'sense of peoplehood' (as cited in Kalmijn, 1998, p. 400). Kalmijn defines group identification as an 'awareness of a common social history' (1998, p. 400). The relationship between endogamy and group identification is worth mentioning in the sense that stronger group identification suggests that the more people internalize the norms of endogamy, the more likely they prefer homogamous or endogamous marriages (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 400).

Dzimiri provides four types of endogamous division with reference to Schwimmer (2014, p. 115-117). These are village, lineage, caste, and class endogamy. Village endogamy derives from the motivation of transforming geographical boundaries into less permeable social ones. This happens by encouraging marriage within a territorial unit or a village. However, village endogamy is said to be far from a universal practice. The second type of endogamous division is lineage endogamy which favors parallel cousin marriages usually between the children of two brothers who are both members of their father's patrilineage. This type of endogamy is generally related with the motivation for maintaining property within the family line and avoiding the dissipation of inheritance through female inheritance or marriage exchange. In pastoral communities where the continuity of domestic herds is of great importance to families, it is possible to widely observe lineage endogamy. Haralambos and Holborn (2008) define caste as "hereditary social divisions that are distinguished from one another by property ownership, occupation, political position and often ritual status" (as cited in Dzimiri, 2014, p. 115). Caste endogamy requires marriage partners from the same caste group who are defined by birth; thus, maintain the purity of hereditary lines by enclosing exchanges within group boundaries. Class endogamy is similar to the caste system, yet it is less rigid allowing mobility for group members. However, it requires approval from the society according to wealth and related criteria when choosing a spouse. Although marriages between members of different status groups are permissible, couples are generally criticized and they face sanctions from the society. Dzimiri discusses some of the limitations of endogamous marriages as well. While referring to Haeri (2002), Dzimiri questions how arranged marriages can preclude physical intimacy. In arranged marriages, couples lack physical intimacy since the Western notion of 'love' is absent in this kind of marriage (2015, p. 117). However, this viewpoint lacks individual preferences to marry within the group. It is also based on the assumption that tradition is what matters and family members, especially the parents select the bride or groom for their children. Another limitation is that endogamous marriage provides a unicultural atmosphere for children. Thus, couples are less likely to respect different norms and values other than those held by their parents. It is possible to argue that endogamous marriages, to a certain extent, weaken

the development of universalistic values and multicultural ways of perceiving the world.

### **2.1.2 Exogamy**

Unlike endogamy, exogamy refers to mate selection from an outside community. The most accepted reason for explaining exogamy is to avoid incest relationship since related couples have the genetic disease risk for their children (Dow, Reed, and Woodcock, 2013, p. 4). Again, from the viewpoint of biology and biopsychology, exogamy refers to mating with those genetically less familiar (Barash, 1977, as cited in Tittmar, p. 55). According to Tittmar (1990), any breeding system adopted is rooted in 'genetic importance' that determines who mates with whom (p. 55).

Dow et al. refer to two advantages of exogamy. Firstly, union of spouses who come from different communities lead to more mobile households where they can share knowledge about the natural and social environment of different locations. Since they have kin in two different communities, they are welcomed in both. Secondly, in exogamous marriages, the potential pool for marriage partners is larger when compared to endogamous unions. Yet the benefit of choosing a partner from a larger pool diminishes when the groups themselves are larger since larger groups provide more opportunities for local matches.

Hurd (1980) also claims that exogamous marriages, too, like interracial unions, not only influence mate selection and family formation, but they also "force a society to reconsider its definitions of race and ethnicity" (as cited in Dzimir, 2014, p. 177).

## **2.2 ETHNIC ENDOGAMY AS THE BASIS OF CULTURAL CONTINUITY**

### **2.2.1 Culture and Ethnicity**

The bond between ethnicity and culture is a well-established one (see Barth 1969, Smith 1991, Giddens 2006). Most definitions of ethnicity refer to the existence of a distinctive culture of an ethnic group that differentiates the group itself from others. Thus, the group distinguishes itself from other groups on the basis of the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. Culture plays a subtle role when ethnic self-identification is under consideration since it provides a shared common ground for coethnics while they are interacting with each other. In this context, culture is the ground for sustaining group integrity.

Poole (1999) argues that culture as a concept is a notoriously difficult one. He discusses culture under three aspects. Firstly, he argues that "a culture consists of a gallery of meaningful or representative objects which those with the appropriate cultural knowledge and identity can interpret and evaluate" (p. 13). Secondly, he emphasizes the way this gallery of meaningful objects is created, recreated and modified. In other words, Poole claims that culture is a process rather than a product and it is continually redefined, remade, reaffirmed, and changed. Cultural objects can change meaning, sometimes become less central or new ones can emerge at certain times. Poole (1999) argues:

In a third sense, the concept of culture refers to the process by which people acquire the knowledge which allows them to understand the various cultural artefacts and to recognize them as their own. It is the process by which members of the culture come to understand the meaning of the objects which form the culture and, crucially, find their identity in these objects. (p. 13)

In this way, the meaning of objects can be negotiated, which allows individuals to acquire knowledge about various cultural artefacts. Poole argues that culture is 'bildung', i. e., education and formation, which refers to the German tradition of self-cultivation (p. 13).

Barth's (1969) approach to the role of culture in relation to ethnic groups is rather different. Barth is an important figure for the constructivist approach, who adds a new dimension to ethnicity by emphasizing ethnic identity as fluid and ready to emerge unpredictably. He prioritizes group boundaries over cultural stuff by arguing that ethnicity is a form of social organization and that ethnic groups are culture-bearing units which lead to the flourishing of organizational structures. Rather than employing the concept of *border*, Barth prefers to use the concept of *boundary* when approaching ethnic groups since boundary implies a more dynamic perspective than the concept of border which implies a static/fixed perspective. Barth argues that ethnic boundary defines the group; therefore, mental boundaries are prioritized over cultural stuff. Besides, rather than tracing the culture of an ethnic group, Barth focuses on ethnic history emphasizing the existence of different kinds of boundaries – mental, cultural, and social - through which he explains the process of boundary-maintenance. The process of boundary-construction functions to create cultural differences between groups. Barth (p. 9) provides a critique of the 'naïve' assumption that geographical and social isolation are the critical factors creating cultural diversity. As he continues, empirical investigation of cultural boundaries provides two challenges against such a position. First and foremost, categorical ethnic distinction does not depend on the isolation of an ethnic group stemming from absence of information, mobility or contact. On the contrary, one needs to understand how, despite changing membership or participation dynamics in a group, certain categories based on the social processes of exclusion and incorporation are maintained. Secondly, persistent and stable social relationships are maintained across boundaries which are generally based on dichotomized ethnic statutes. Barth argues that ethnic distinctions are not based on the absence of contact, rather "ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built" (p. 10). Besides, Barth approaches the issue of boundaries and culture by arguing that boundaries are maintained between ethnic units and in each case by a limited set of *cultural* features. Therefore, by shedding light on the historical construction of ethnic groups and consequently ethnic identities, Barth provides a challenging view against primordialism and paves the way for the

emergence of a new paradigm for studying ethnicity in the 1970s. Culture-oriented approaches are now transformed into ones that valorize the political, social and economic processes in the formation of ethnic identities and groups.

When considering the significance of the term culture in relation to ethnicity and endogamy, Smith's definition of an *ethnie* should be introduced. Smith defines an *ethnie* as an ideal type of an ethnic community and lists six attributes of it (1991, p. 21). These are a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or two differentiating elements of a common culture, an association with a specific 'homeland', and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population. As he argues, the more these features are shared or possessed by a given population, the closer it gets to the ideal type of an ethnic community. Besides, he distinguishes between an ethnic community and race. Race implies that a social group possesses unique biological traits that allegedly determine the mental attributes of the group. With respect to a common culture, he argues that only varying elements of a common culture which distinguishes a given population from others may indicate the more objective attributes of an ethnic community. As Smith writes, "language, religion, customs and pigmentation are often taken to describe objective 'cultural markers' or differentiate that persist independently of the will of individuals, and even appear to constrain them" (p. 23). Afterwards, he argues that *ethnie* is anything but primordial. As the subjective significance of these attributes *waxes and wanes* for the members of an ethnic community, so does the self-awareness of group membership and group cohesion. Besides, when these attributes are intensified and gain significance, the sense of ethnic identity and ethnic community can be strengthened as well (p. 23).

### **2.2.2 Language and Endogamy**

A distinctive language is of great importance for the viability of an ethnic group since it has a pivotal symbolic value for the group members to distinguish themselves from others. Members of an ethnic group share a unique language which helps them to sustain group boundaries and which also perpetuates the solidarity and integrity of the

group. It not only functions as an integrative force in terms of in-group social relations but also serves as a barrier towards other groups as well.

Language possesses a *dual character* since it shapes both in-group and out-group social relations. As Edwards puts forward, cultural heritage of a group can be symbolized by a unique language even if it is not spoken by all of the group members. Since group members who share a unique language have more opportunity to access their cultural heritage, they form more persistent identification with the group they belong to (as cited in Stevens and Swicegood, p. 73). Thereof, self-identification is advanced by using and sharing this unique and distinctive language. By referring to Lieberman (1970), Stevens and Swicegood argue that the disappearance of an ethnic group's distinctive language is generally associated with a necessary step towards the acculturation and eventual assimilation of the group (p. 73).

Stevens and Swicegood also argue that there are at least two ways of forming a relationship between the language characteristics of an ethnic group with levels of endogamy. First and foremost, individuals who have a non-English mother tongue are more inclined to marry endogamously. Second, "beyond the preferences related to individual characteristics, features of the linguistic context, specifically the relative size of the minority-language subgroup and the rate of linguistic assimilation, also generate variation among ethnic groups in levels of endogamy." (p. 75). Although Stevens and Swicegood propose these two hypotheses for the United States, their arguments are adaptable to different sociocultural contexts. When ethnic groups encounter the threat of assimilation, they may strengthen their self-identification with the group and hold on to their distinctive language as a reaction to the process of acculturation. Likewise, transfer of their distinctive language to the next generation of coethnics stands as an important motivation behind this process. Promoting the use of a distinctive language is expected to sustain the viability of an ethnic group for future generations.

In terms of ethnic group cohesion, Janowitz argues that the process of group assimilation and intergroup and intragroup relations are the two processes that



influence the relationship between language and ethnic group. These processes are intergenerational language retention and mother-tongue shift. The former is the key feature of ethnic self-conception and ethnic solidarity (as cited in Stevens, 1985, p. 74). Stevens claims that intergenerational language retention is crucial for ethnic minority groups. Firstly, by referring to Parsons (1975) and Fishman (1975), respectively, she points out that unique languages are repositories of culture and also the symbolic elements of ethnicity. As Giles argues, ethnic markers in speech, which are often heard as an accent, works as an identification marker for ethnic-group members which is gained through their mother-tongue (as cited in Stevens, p. 74). Mother tongue shift, on the other hand, is associated with assimilation.

### **2.3 KINSHIP AND ENDOGAMY: SOURCES OF ETHNO-CULTURAL IDENTITY**

Whitmeyer writes that there are a number of scholars developing the idea that ethnicity and kinship are fundamentally related (1997, p. 163). When kinship is regarded as the core of ethnic behavior, the family becomes more and more important as the unit of analysis. In this context, endogamy can be understood in relation to the concept of kinship. Whitmeyer challenges this view by arguing that ethnic groups ‘typically’ consists of much more than kin. Referring to Van den Berghe’s (1981) concept of ‘putative kinship’ and Keyes’ (1981) concept of ‘cultural kinship’, Whitmeyer argues that the above-mentioned approach has two basic shortcomings. Firstly, he argues that ethnic groups sometimes consist of members who do not share a common origin or who are not closely related. Secondly, by referring to Yinger (1994), Whitmeyer claims that “all seemingly possible ethnic groups do not form” (p. 163). He argues that this approach is limited in explaining the process of ethnic group formation since it “is invoked only after ethnic phenomena appear” (p. 163). He also points to the limitations of cultural and instrumental approaches to ethnicity. The former refers to people’s way of defining their ethnicity in a multitude of ways depending on a cultural context, whereas the latter refers to elite based mobilization of ethnic identity. Whitmeyer

suggests that none of these approaches are effective in understanding ethnic behavior since he himself conceptualizes ethnicity as a universal phenomenon based on universality rather than culture-specific grounds. In this context, he challenges the instrumentalist approach by arguing that “leaders do not always succeed in their ethnic mobilizations” (p. 163). The instrumental approach gives information about the activation of ethnicity, but it is limited in terms of providing explanations for the creation of ethnicity. He claims that “even should elites shape the constitution and form of an ethnic group, and guide its actions, there must be something for the elites to shape, something with which they can work” (p. 163). Whitmeyer aims to develop an evolutionary approach when discussing the relationship between ethnicity and endogamy by arguing,

Namely, that it makes evolutionary sense for people to have, among other motivations, a particular motivation that can lead them to behavior benefitting a particular set of people. This is an *endogamous set*, typically the *minimal endogamous set*, of people to whom they belong. When members of such a set perform such behavior, we have what is often called as an ethnic group or ethny. (p. 164)

The evolutionary motivations of individuals lead them to confer benefits to relatives or genetically similar ones. Whitmeyer (1997) claims that in many situations people prefer to help the minimal endogamous set of people. This is because “such help mostly will be restricted to providing benefits that are nearly ‘non-rival’ - benefits that group members can ‘consume’ without making others consume less” (p. 162). Whitmeyer argues that such behavior is a (partial) explanation of pro-ethny behavior (p. 162). A position which favors the Darwinian approach to ethnic groups suggests that ethnicity and endogamy are tightly related and that endogamy can be accepted as a cause of pro-ethny behavior (p. 170). With respect to marital endogamy, Whitmeyer (1997) argues that “marriage within ethny may be in part a pro-ethny behavior or an effect of ethnic identity” (p. 170).

Patrilineal and matrilineal systems of descent also play a crucial role in ethnic differences related to marriage. For instance, late marriage is generally associated with

greater independence of women which can be seen in matrilineal systems rather than patrilineal systems (Kaufman and Meekers, cited in Arnaldo, 2003, p. 144). By citing Burch (1983) and Gluckman (1950), Arnaldo claims that matrilineal societies display lower levels of polygyny compared to patrilineal ones, and also divorce rates are expected to be lower among patrilineal societies than the rates in matrilineal ones. A patrilineal system requires women to transfer their reproductive power to their husband's lineage through the payment of bride wealth which makes divorce more difficult since the bride wealth is expected to be returned in the face of divorce (p. 145).

## **2.4 POTENTIAL CAUSES OF ENDOGAMY**

Gordon (1964) argues that endogamy is a fundamental indicator of group cohesion and solidarity which also functions as a mechanism of social isolation from other groups (as cited in Rosenfeld, 2008, p. 3). Ethnic, racial and religious groups perpetuate themselves through endogamy which maximizes the chance of their children to be raised in endogamous marriages where they can internalize group values, acknowledge their group identity and transfer it to the next generation.

Kalmijn (1998) states three potential reasons for the emergence of endogamy. Firstly, individuals seek a mate similar to themselves. Secondly, it is the interference of third parties like parental social pressure for 'appropriate marriages'. Thirdly, residential segregation or constraints on the exposure to socially different people can be seen as another potential reason for endogamy. Leeuwen and Maas (2005) developed a new model based on Kalmijn's ideas about the potential reasons for the emergence of endogamy (p. 5). They suggest five clusters in addition to those suggested by Kalmijn. They add new dimensions like the distinction between the factors influencing the chances of encountering marriage candidates. They discuss the degree to which geographical marriage horizons shrank or expanded influence the chance that partners meet each other. For Leeuwen and Maas, the influence of third parties includes

pressure not only from parents but also from peers and community members favoring certain partners from certain social classes while rejecting others. The marriage market influences the likelihood of meeting with a potential marriage partner. Meeting with a potential marriage partner is influenced by the likelihood of meeting within a specific/certain geographical region as well as the size of that region. Geographical isolation of a group is another factor influencing the encounter with potential spouses which also effects the composition of a group. For instance, a higher degree of social heterogeneity can imply higher chances of exogamy. As Leeuwen and Maas argue, a country which is religiously or ethnically more diverse would have higher rates of exogamy compared to a less diverse one. In other words, “a country that becomes more diverse in the course of time will witness an increase in the proportion of exogamous marriages” (2005, p. 9). Homogeneity of a community does not only influence the degree to marry endogenously or exogenously, but also has an effect on the way community exerts pressure on the non-conformists members. A homogeneous small community is expected to exert more pressure with regard to norms about mate selection compared to a larger community composed of a heterogeneous population where different sets of norms coexist (Leeuwen and Maas, 2005, p. 14). Moreover, homogeneity of a group also influences the degree of group identification. Younger generations’ strong identification of themselves with the group depends to a great extent on the homogeneity of the networks they grow up in. Living in a neighborhood that is homogeneous in terms of the social and cultural characteristics of their parents, adolescents are more likely to develop self-identification with that group as well (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 401).

It is known that the gender dimension is also effective in influencing marriage patterns, especially those based on endogamy and exogamy. In some societies, more parental pressure is exerted on daughters than sons of a family. This is based on the transmission of family property or family status through the male line rather than the female line, which shows how parental pressure can change in accordance with gender and inheritance system as well (Leeuwen and Maas, 2005, p. 12). Therefore, if the status of the family is largely depended on the status of the husband, it is expected that

during the partner selection process families pay more attention to the status of the 'male' partner.

Leeuwen and Maas (2005) also contribute to the discussions about 'personal autonomy', which can be defined as an individual's initiative to resist such pressure. Personal autonomy is also related with one's ability to use personal resources to challenge or withstand community pressure (p. 5). In terms of personal choices, they suggest that people 'trust' individuals from their own social circle who shares similar tastes, character and future earning capacity compared to someone who is alien to them. Leeuwen and Maas support this argument by giving reference to Kalmijn (1994) who has followed Bourdieu (1984), and wrote that most people have a tendency to prefer a mate who shares similar values, tastes and a similar cultural background, yet most people would not mind having a partner from an economically higher class (p. 17). When taking into account the dimension of personal preferences, it is necessary to mention 'romantic love' as a phenomenon which gained ground after the eighteenth century in the Western world. The romantic love perspective argues that people prioritize affection and personal compatibility in mate selection (p. 18). Although Leeuwen and Mass developed an analysis based on class endogamy, their contributions can be useful in understanding and giving meanings to ethnic endogamy as well.

In the literature, different types of endogamous marriages based on racial, religious, educational and ethnic prerequisites have been discussed widely. Importance of racial endogamy is crystal clear in the case of the United States where interracial marriages were banned until the Supreme Court deemed anti-miscegenation laws as unconstitutional in 1967 (Kitch, 2016, p. 1). Educational endogamy is generally discussed in terms of modernization theory. As Rosenfeld argues (2008, p. 7), modernization theory assumes that as societies modernize, ascriptive dimensions of stratification (race, religion and inherited social positions) will eventually dissolve and be replaced by other forms of stratification based on skill and formal education. Consequently, rising importance of education will eventually lead to a rationalized

society where individuals spend more time with those with similar educational achievements. Together with the increase in women's socioeconomic status, education will play a stronger role in terms of marriage and mate selection. As Rosenfeld summarizes, "*modernization theory* implies that as racial endogamy has declined, educational endogamy should have increased" (emphasis added, p. 7). Smits et al. (1998) also reclaim that late stages of modernization should weaken all types of homogamy and endogamy as young adults become more independent. As a consequence of late marriage, educational endogamy is also expected to diminish.

Rosenfeld also claims that there is a relationship between secularization and religious endogamy. As Wilson (1976) argues, secularization theory proposes that modernity diminishes the influence of organized religion over historical time (as cited in Rosenfeld, p. 9). A decline in the organized form of religion can lead to a decline in religious endogamy since clerical leaders will lose authority in arranging marriages due to the diminishing role of worship houses and religious schools. As a consequence, individuals will find a chance to meet people from different religious backgrounds which will lead to a decline in the social barriers that divide people according to different faiths (p. 9).

## **2.5 RACIAL AND ETHNIC INTERMARRIAGE: THE QUESTION OF SOCIAL BOUNDARIES AND SOCIAL DISTANCE**

When endogamy is under consideration, the issue of intermarriage can give us clues about how interaction across groups occurs. Merton defines intermarriage as "a marriage between persons belonging to different groups" (cited in Fulas-Souroulla, 2008, p. 118). Besides, Fulas-Souroulla wrote that the first generation of sociologists who studied intermarriage defined it as a deviance from the norm of homogamy. Studies on intermarriage generally prioritize the terms of majority and minority groups and also the interaction of these groups on the basis of social distance. Studying intermarriage informs us about social change in general, and about the changing

boundaries of ethnic, religious and racial groups in particular. In the case of endogamy, intermarriage is not allowed or generally not preferred which points out to the 'closed' nature of a given group. When there is intermarriage, it is possible to assume that the group tends to be more tolerant and open to others. Factors influencing the openness of any group may depend on economic, political and cultural reasons and may vary depending on the context.

Inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic marriages are generally associated with 'social distance' between groups. Increase in interethnic marriages suggests that group boundaries have weakened and intergroup social distance has declined. This means that social barriers have broken down in terms of social interaction and intimacy. Besides, increasing interethnic or interracial marriages indicate that partners accept each other as 'social equals' (Qian and Lichter, 2007, p. 68). Also, mixed children from intermarriages have the potential to blur the lines of sharp distinction between groups. Therefore, as Bean et al. (2004) suggest, this type of marriages can break down the persistent economic, cultural and racial/ethnic distinctions between groups (cited in Qian and Litcher, p. 69).

Inter-marriage or intra-marriage patterns are generally studied through the framework of assimilation theory mostly in immigrant-receiving countries. These types of studies emphasize the terms social integration and assimilation to understand various marriage patterns between different ethnic, racial, religious or immigrant groups. Park and Burgess (1969) claim that assimilation is "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (p. 735). Intermarriage, therefore, is seen as the best exemplifier of this fusion and interpenetration; it is associated with the final step of the assimilation process. However, critiques accuse classical assimilation theory of being ethnocentric since it assumes that a natural progression occurs that would lead to the assimilation of the newcomers into a better way of life. That is, into the lifestyle of immigrant-receiving countries. This assumption suggests the existence of hierarchy between

different social groups where the dominant lifestyle in immigrant-receiving countries is seen as the superior one. Kalmijn (1998) discusses the significance of intermarriage as follows:

What makes an intermarriage sociologically relevant lies in its inherent dynamic: It is not just a reflection of the boundaries that currently separate groups in society, it also bears the potential of cultural and socioeconomic change. While marriage patterns are in this sense telling social indicators, they do not tell us everything. (p. 397)

He continues by arguing that if members of the two groups do not prefer to marry each other, this does not necessarily indicate that both groups are 'closed' groups. If one group is open and the other closed, endogamy can still take place. Secondly, marriage patterns are the result of both preference and opportunity. The composition of local marriage markets, group size or social segregation can be the potential reasons behind the motivation of marrying someone. In this case, endogamy does not necessarily suggest that one has a high level of social distance toward a certain group. Marriage patterns can tell us which groups interact with whom. However, they do not give us information about 'why' they interact. Thirdly, demographic trends also play a serious role in shaping marriage patterns. The rise of cohabitation, increasing levels of divorce and declining marriage rates suggests that marriage by itself cannot be taken as a differentiation factor when analyzing the relationships between different groups in a given society. That is to say, if mixed marriages are likely to break up, it is not possible to conclude that a high rate of ethnic intermarriage indicates that social groups interacting with each other are open groups (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 397).

Education is another critical factor influencing interethnic marriages. For instance, many studies have found that members of ethnic or racial minority groups who are highly-educated tend to marry more exogamously when compared to their lesser-educated peers (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 413). Considering the two factors mentioned above, opportunity and preference, two interpretations can be provided to explain this link between education and marriage as Kalmijn suggests. First, better-educated members are more exposed to social settings like colleges and to occupations with a high-status



where they can from relatively small groups. Second, highly-educated people whether from the majority or a minority group can develop more individualistic attitudes which lead them to adopt a universalistic viewpoint that disfavors ascribed statuses stemming from family or community origins. In the process of deciding whom to marry, they pay less attention to ascribed characteristics (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 143).

Integration, as well, is an important concept when considering intermarriage. As Kalmijn and Tubergen argue, ethnic intermarriage is a significant indicator of social integration in the migration literature (2006, p. 372). According to Kalmijn (1998), children of mixed marriages have a lesser tendency to identify themselves with a single group, and also a lesser negative attitudes towards other groups (cited in Kalmijn and Tubergen, 2006, p. 372). Nevertheless, the attitudes of the children, the expanding or narrowing boundaries of group membership or the practice of endogamy or exogamy can change depending on the context which is influenced by group differences. Social, cultural, political, and economic factors can strongly influence the marriage practices of groups. It is also important to note that sometimes high levels of exogamy do not necessarily imply integration. In some instances, lack of cultural and economic differences between the native population and foreign-born individuals can be an important factor encouraging exogamous unions.

The term ‘mixed marriage’ is problematized by Fulas-Souroulla (2008) who argues that “the term ‘mixed’ assumes a difference of identity and implies inequalities that are incompatible with ideals of equality” (p. 118). Rather than using the term mixed marriage, ‘inter-societal marriage’ is preferred since it better explains the union of two individuals from geographically separate societies (p. 118). However, this conceptualization is not powerful enough to fully understand the marital unions occurring between different social groups living within the boundaries of the same country or within the same geography who are members of a single society.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ENDO GAMY IN NORTHERN CYPRUS: MARRYING WHOM?**

#### **3.1 THE PRACTICE OF ENDO GAMY IN NORTHERN CYPRUS**

In this section, firstly, I will discuss the concept of endogamy with respect to modernization thesis. Modernization thesis is significant to understand endogamy practices in Northern Cyprus. Secondly, I will analyze marriage patterns by considering different ways of mate selection through the stories and narrations provided by my respondents. Accordingly, I will probe into the ways of how mixed marriages are perceived, lived and experienced referring to differences and peculiarities throughout generations. Thirdly, I will discuss marriage patterns with respect to family pressure, peer-group pressure and social pressure since the sources and types of pressure reveal detailed information about the cultural codes in a given society which feed into forms of ethnic identity and belonging and which also define the limits of intolerance toward outsiders. Through analyzing endogamous practices, I will discuss the nature of social and cultural change that has occurred in the sphere of endogamy in Northern Cyprus. After outlining the shifting patterns of marriage, I will discuss how ethnic endogamy is still favored and experienced among Turkish Cypriots with reference to different time periods and social contexts.

Modernization thesis suggests that status relations based on “ascription” will be replaced by “achievement” as societies modernize. Thus, according to the modernization thesis, age, race, religion or inherited social positions will eventually dissolve. The ethnic identity of individuals is one of these inherited positions. Therefore, it is assumed that as societies modernize, marriages around ethnic ties will also diminish. As the respondents stated during my fieldwork, the young generation of Turkish Cypriot women do not favor endogamy, instead they value the achieved status of individuals. However, the same generation still thinks that ethnicity is important to

a certain extent since they mostly 'prefer' co-ethnic marriages over others. Nearly all of these respondents argued that cultural harmony is the key factor in a marriage independent of the ethnic origin of the couples whereas nearly seventy percent of this generation stated that marrying a co-ethnic will increase the integrity of the Turkish Cypriot community in the face of political assimilation. A few respondents from the younger generation argued that the population of the native Cypriots in Northern Cyprus is threatened by the continuous arrival of immigrants from other countries, especially from Turkey. It was believed that children born out of endogamous marriages will internalize the 'pure' Cyprus culture and that this culture will be transferred to the next generations as endogamy continues to be imposed upon future generations. Those who argued that pure Cypriot blood will be ensured through endogamy were between the ages of 25 and 55. This same group also believes that intra-ethnic marriages guarantee the continuation of their community in the future. Even though they had different reasons for backing their preferences, it is clear that the political and social background of the Cyprus community influences their attitudes towards mixed marriages as will be discussed in the following pages.

Modernization thesis also assumes that with the rise of education levels, educational endogamy will increase while ethnic endogamy decreases. During the study, nearly all of the respondents argued that education level is of great importance for the well-being of the family and the continuity of the marriage. They said that the education level of couples is important not only in exogamous marriages but also in endogamous marriages. While keeping the modernization thesis in mind, it was expected that older generations would favor ethnic endogamy rather than educational endogamy. However, respondents from different age groups support the idea that both parties should have the same education level in a marriage. The younger generation was referred to as being 'modern' by the elderly respondents who were seen as having flexible attitudes towards mixed marriages. During my fieldwork, educational endogamy was observed simultaneously with ethnic endogamy. Although the younger generation gives more importance to education level or social status when compared to race, ethnicity or religion of individuals, they promote educational and ethnic

endogamy simultaneously. Increasing education levels do not directly lead to a decrease in the level of ethnic marriages. My respondents stated that individuals should choose their partners from similar educational backgrounds; however, most of them still prefer to marry someone from their own ethnic group. Modernization thesis simplifies the relationship between endogamy and modernization by assuming that all societies will follow the same path. This study shows that not all societies follow the universal route as suggested by modernization theory. That is, the social and cultural context in a given society shapes the path to be followed.

Endogamy is still prevalent in Northern Cyprus even though the imposed manner of endogamy upon Turkish Cypriot people has changed to a certain degree. From a broader perspective, endogamy diminished in its intensity and power throughout generations, yet it is still an important component of daily life. In this context, I will now discuss how women from different age groups experienced interethnic marriages in Northern Cyprus. Before the 1950s and 1960s, besides certain exceptions, endogamy was imposed upon the younger generations more intensely than it is today. In other words, most of the marriages were in the category of ‘forced marriages’ until the 1970s. In some cases, there were exceptions as well<sup>9</sup>. During the British colonial rule in Cyprus, especially between the 1920s and 1950s, thousands of Turkish Cypriot girls who were between the ages of 11 and 18 were sold to Muslim Arab men as brides (Paraskos, 2015, p. 1). By echoing Cahit (2014), Paraskos argues that the sale of women was linked to the rise of extreme poverty in Cyprus during the 1930s (2015, p. 1). During my fieldwork, several women referred to these stories. Some of these brides who were sold in the past were the relatives of some of my respondents, and some were from my respondents’ close-knit families. Besides the tragedy of these young girls, mixed marriages were rarely practiced<sup>10</sup>. Between the 1950s and 1970s, people

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<sup>9</sup> For further information on the matter, see Cahit, N. (2014) *Brides for sale*. Nicosia: TCAUW, Turkish Cypriot Association of University Women.

<sup>10</sup> “It is important to note that although a secular family law was introduced in 1950, the marriage between a Muslim women and Christian man remained forbidden” (Kizilyurek, 2003, p. 200).

used to feel obliged to meet the expectations of their families about marriage. Individuals did not have the chance for persuading their families about whom to marry when their actions were severely challenged by others. Especially, developing personal autonomy was very difficult for women at those times. In other words, their social, cultural and economic resources were not powerful enough to stand against or challenge the expectations of others. Elderly respondents said that before the 1970s, arranged endogamous marriages were the norm. The general pattern was in line with ethnic-marital endogamy. Generally, ‘village endogamy’ was the dominant pattern. Consequently, in an underpopulated village, this led to the flourishing of ‘lineage endogamy’ as well. In those years, only in villages where the Greek and Turkish Cypriots lived together, there were mixed marriages. However, they were few in numbers<sup>11</sup>.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, Cyprus was in the process of being divided into two parts. The Greek Cypriot population in Northern Cyprus migrated to the Southern part whereas Turkish Cypriots who used to live in the South migrated to the North<sup>12</sup>. The military intervention of Turkey in 1974 was a turning point in the history of Cyprus. After the intervention, a decent amount of the population from Turkey was placed into Northern Cyprus<sup>13</sup>. Marriage patterns also started to change deriving from the political changes all over the island. As the settlers of Northern Cyprus became less homogeneous with the arrival of new immigrants from Turkey, ethnically mixed marriages started to take place more frequently than ever. Despite these changes,

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<sup>11</sup> In mixed villages, Christian and Muslim intermarriage was not permissible in either community in the past. As one of my elderly respondents noted, mixed marriages were rarely practiced due to religious principles which banned interfaith marriages.

<sup>12</sup> Gürel and Özersay (2006, p. 3) write that 45 thousand Turkish Cypriots from the South migrated to the North and 142 thousand Greek Cypriots from the North migrated to the South. Purkis and Kurtuluş define this process of population exchange as ‘de facto spatial segregation’ (Purkis and Kurtuluş, 2013, p. 2).

<sup>13</sup> According to Purkis and Kurtuluş (2013), the first migration wave from Turkey was because of a special protocol called the ‘Agricultural Labour Agreement’ signed between Turkey and the TFSC (Turkish Federate State of Cyprus, declared in 1975 and existed until 1983) in 1975. The aim of this agreement was to receive approximately 30 thousand immigrants from Turkey to fill the gaps in the various sectors of the labor force in North Cyprus (p. 5).

marrying someone from Turkey was still disfavored by Turkish Cypriots during these years. For the following generation, those who had married between the 1980s and 1990s, endogamy continued to be the norm for marriage. Most of the women in this generation told their stories about how they have met their partners via their relatives. Marrying someone from another community or country was noted to be a rare event in those times since they received reactions both from their families and their peer groups. The society was organized along ascribed statuses based on ethnicity, place of birth or race. Most of the women between the ages of 40 and 65 stated their concerns about mixed marriages. However, nearly half of these women noted that they would approve marrying an outsider unlike the older generation. All of these women confirmed that in Northern Cyprus marrying an outsider poses serious problems. They argued that in Northern Cyprus societal expectation is that Turkish Cypriot women should select a partner from their own community. However, the younger generation of women who married between the years 2000 and 2015 approached mixed marriages differently. They prioritized individual preferences in mate selection. When asked about their opinion about their children, most of them said that they would respect their children's will and support them in case they want to marry an outsider.

Understanding the meaning of marital endogamy for Turkish Cypriot people necessitates an analysis of the role of the 'family' in the marriage process. Starting from the 1950s and through the 1970s, mate selection was dominantly based on the decision of families rather than the individuals themselves. In other words, the Western notion of 'romantic love' was not at the center of conjugal unions. The decision-making process relied on the initiative of the fathers who were the heads of households. Most of the time families who knew each other for generations arranged the marriage of their children without taking their consent. The groom's preference or approval was important to a certain extent. My elderly respondents said that their husbands picked them as marriage partners. This was the dominant pattern in rural areas. Nevertheless, marriage patterns differed in urban settings. In urban places such as Nicosia, women could decide whom to marry. For instance, my 65-year-old respondent who had an urban background said that she met her spouse in the workplace where she was

working as a secretary. She decided whom she wanted to marry and then asked for permission from her parents. Her father's approval was of quite crucial for her, yet, she had the initiative to choose whom to marry. In other words, women from different socioeconomic backgrounds had different stories about their marriage history. Fatma (75), who had a rural background reminisced the story of her marriage experience as follows:

The landlord of the village told my father that my husband wanted to marry me. My father accepted their proposal. My family wanted me to marry. It was not my choice. They've known my husband before, since he was the son of my father's aunt. The same day, I learned that I was going to marry someone from our village. They said *Seni verdik* (*We gave you*, meaning that the family decided that she should marry the man who approached the family for their permission to marry their daughter) I'd seen my husband in the village once but I had no idea about marrying him. My parents directly took me to the marriage office. In those times, a girl couldn't say 'no' to her family about such things. It was the summer of 1963. Because it was wartime, we couldn't furnish the house. Immigrants from the south were coming to our village. I sewed a pink wedding dress but couldn't wear it. Then, in February 1963, we married. However, he was fighting in the battlefield. He was coming back home only about two times a week, sometimes only to take a shower. In the first year of our marriage, I gave birth to my twins. After the children were born, from 1964 until 1974, my husband didn't come home at all because of the war.

The stories of these two women are quite different even though their age gap was only ten years. Fatma has a rural background. She lived in a village where pastoral life was of great importance for the villagers. Seval, on the other hand, has an urban background. She was born and raised in Nicosia where economic life was not dependent only on farming as in rural areas. She had the chance to go to school and then have a job. However, in both stories, their families played a determining role in the process of their marriage. In the past, marriage was not seen only as a union of individuals, but it was more about the union of families. The norm of marrying someone was based on the initiative of families who used to select the proper candidate on behalf of their children. Potential candidates for a marriage were chosen predominantly from the community or the village they used to live in. Since families used to arrange marriages for their children, the ethnic roots of the possible candidates

were already checked before the marriage process began. In the long run, the homogeneity of the village or the community caused the formation of conjugal unions which were intra-ethnic in character.

Middle-aged women who married in the 1980s and 1990s experienced marriage differently. Both in the rural and the urban settlements, these women met their future husbands before their families were engaged in the process. Women had the personal autonomy to a 'certain extent' while selecting their marriage partners. Most of these women said that they met their future spouses in their workplaces or through the social ties of their relatives. Generally, they spent considerable time together with their spouses before marriage. Most of the time, these meetings were arranged or controlled by a family member or relative. Nevertheless, there were cases where women met their future spouses and spent time together outside their families' knowledge. The average time spent on knowing each other before the families have met was between three to six months. In the process of knowing each other, couples were meeting at patisseries. This generation of women noted that meeting at patisseries was the norm for young couples in those days. After the two parties decided to marry, spouses had to ask the permission of their families. The decision of male members of a family like older brothers was significant in the mate selection process as well. Relatives played a significant role in the meeting of the two families. It was not a forced or an arranged marriage as in the case of women from older generations.

The role of the family in mate selection was different for the following generation who married between the years 2000 and 2015. The family continued to play a crucial role in the decision-making process. However, these women had the chance to introduce their boyfriends to their families before the marriage process began. The initiative of the family was outstanding even though it was not the main 'mover and shaker' of the situation. The main motivation behind their marriages was not to form a family as did the former generations. Instead, they calculated the pros and cons of these options. They prioritized the character of their spouses, his social status, education, and cultural accumulation while selecting whom to marry. Most of these young women met their



spouses via their peer groups or social environment. Unlike their mothers who met their spouses in the workplace, nearly all of these young women met their husbands via their social ties. All of these women said that 'romantic love' was at the center of their marriage. Most of them spent considerable time with their spouses before they married. They spent time together as 'couples' or 'lovers'; therefore, it was more than only getting to know each other as it was the case in the previous generation. Flirting was an important component of their relationships. They believed that marriage should be based on 'love' while rejecting most of the other limiting rules and the expectations of the larger society. Besides romantic love, cultural similarity, tastes and consumption patterns was said to play a subtle role in the decision-making process. The main point is that the 'achieved status' of the people they meet appears to be of great value when deciding to marry compared to their 'ascribed characteristics'. Most of these women emphasized that selecting a mate is a matter of personal preference. They attach more importance to the initiative of the individuals themselves, which means personal freedom is much more significant for this generation of women rather than the decisions of their families.

The role of the family in the marriage process influences the way mixed marriages are experienced and perceived by the community. Nearly ninety percent of my respondents said that family is more important than peers in influencing the mate selection process. Since couples are exposed to more social pressure in the case of mixed marriages, the family's moral and material support becomes very important. However, most of them also stated that their family's attitude about the ethnic origin of the spouses minimized when compared to the previous generations. My respondents from all age groups argued that the younger generation of Turkish Cypriots started to make their own decisions independent of their parents. Therefore, the influence of families on endogamy has diminished in time.

Social pressure is an important factor influencing the process of marriage; however, the sources, the nature, and the types of social pressure have changed over the years. I will discuss how the younger generation of women transformed the traditional values

about marriage in Northern Cyprus. Between the 1950s and 1970s, social pressure was exerted on young women who were seen as marriageable. Marriageable age was often set at 15 or 16. Social pressure was mostly exerted by a small circle of people, such as relatives, on the families with young girls. This situation applied to the next generation of women who married between the 1980s and 1990s as well. The transformation of the nature of social pressure about whom to marry also took place during these years. Marriageable age increased to 18 or 20 for this generation. This time, rather than the relatives, the families of the young girls exerted pressure on their daughters about whom to marry. Since these women met their future husbands outside their families' knowledge, they wanted to marry for having a romantic relationship without being exposed to social pressure. Romantic relationships outside marriage were inconvenient for the Turkish Cypriot people. Families were afraid of the gossip mechanism. The conservative attitude of families was challenged by the young generation of women who married between 2000 and 2015. Unlike the former generation of women, these young women were allowed to have boyfriends. However, they faced many difficulties while spending time with their boyfriends. The source of social pressure was not their peer groups, but rather their families and relatives. Three of the fifteen women aged from 25 to 35 said that they had to marry because of their unexpected pregnancies. They wanted to get engaged or marry so they would not be exposed to social pressure. As in the case of Eliz, to act freely in her relationship she needed to win the society's approval by getting engaged first and then marrying her boyfriend. Eliz, who was a 27-year-old working woman living in an urban area commented on her marriage experience as follows:

I met my spouse in our neighborhood where we used to have mutual friends. I liked him when I first saw him. It's been thirteen years since we've started a relationship. We decided to marry not only for the sake of 'being married', but we wanted to live together and see each other more often. First, we decided to get engaged to spend more time together, without being exposed to social pressure. We had to wed families to our relationship. My father was not a conservative man, however, he didn't want to meet my boyfriend before things got serious.

The best way to understand the intensity of social pressure about endogamy is to focus on the statements and stories of the respondents who married exogamously. My respondent, who is married to a Turkish man from the Black Sea region, described how she felt the pressure of endogamy during her entire marriage experience. She met her husband during her university education in Turkey. She said that even during her university years she had concerns about how her parents and social environment would react to this type of a union in the future. She stated that her friends gave approval and supported her decision, unlike her family. In the beginning, her family did not approve of her partner since he was from Turkey. The place they would live after marriage and the possible problems which could arise from cultural differences were the primary concerns directed at her at this stage. She said that she felt uncomfortable about these questions. Her husband was also exposed to the same questions from his relatives in Turkey. Both sides experienced their marriage in a distressful way.

In line with the stories of these young women, peer pressure was observed to be less than the reactions of their families. The young generation of women has flexible ideas on mixed marriages. Their friends, as well, think in the same way. Most of the women between the ages of 25 and 35 stated that it is the old generation who condemns this kind of unions. However, for these young women marrying exogamously was not an easy path to follow. Even though they are more flexible about mixed marriages compared to the previous generations, they receive criticisms from their social environments. Nergül, a 35-year-old young woman who had an exogamous marriage, said that her family negatively approached her decision to marry a Palestinian man. When Nergül was getting married, her family was exposed to social pressure as well. In her words:

I met my husband during my time at the university. We met in a bar. In two years of time, we decided to marry. Our families were not living in the same country, so we needed to marry to be able to live together after graduation. At first, my parents opposed our decision to marry. They were afraid of social pressure. When my parents opposed my decision, I told them I would never marry another man other than my boyfriend. In the course of time, they had to approve it. Since the political situation in Palestine was quite complicated, they had concerns that I would live in Jerusalem. My

grandparents welcomed our marriage since my boyfriend's name was Mohammed, and he was a Muslim Arab. My grandmother was the only one who welcomed this decision at first.

About Nergül's story, I wanted to get more information from the other members of her family so I could obtain more detailed information about the dynamics of her marriage. For this purpose, I interviewed Nergül's mother to understand how she experienced this process. Also, Nergül's brother was married to a Scottish woman. When I asked Nergül's mother how she approached to the issue of mixed marriages, she replied:

I would refuse this kind of marriage. Culture, fear... The unknown places and families... You don't know what you are going to face... You have an idea about native people, but foreign people are unknown. It's something unfavorable. I welcome persons from our own community when it's about marriage. At first, I didn't approve of my children's marriages. I had concerns because we had no idea about their families. Differences in religion, culture and language were also a problem for me. The most important problem was social *pressure*. I was worried about what other people would say about this situation. I know that in Northern Cyprus nearly sixty percent of the population would disapprove of this type of marriages. In the course of time, as parents, we had to approve our children's marriages with people from other countries. It was something compulsory. Unfortunately, my son-in-law is Palestinian, and daughter-in-law is Scottish, but they are educated. That is why cultural differences didn't pose serious problems for us.

Even though the young generation of women had a more flexible attitude towards interethnic marriages, the reactions from their social environment and their families posed serious problems in their marriages. While Nergül emphasized romantic relationship and living together with her boyfriend, her mother had concerns over culture, language, place of living, and education. In general, the above statements of my respondents show how age differences influence the way interethnic marriages are perceived and experienced by the larger community.

Distrust of foreigners influence the way interethnic marriages are perceived and experienced in North Cyprus. First, I will touch upon how the perception of a 'foreigner' has changed in time. Then, I will analyze how distrust of foreigners

influences the perception of interethnic marriages. The word ‘foreigner’ has different meanings for people from different age groups. My elderly respondents who were aged over 70 used the term foreigner as individuals from a geographically distant village. Even brides from different districts were seen as foreigners by the elderly population whereas the middle-aged and young women understood the word ‘foreign’ as individuals from other countries.

Most of my respondents stated that they prefer and defend endogamous marriages due to a lack of trust in foreign people. Nearly half of my respondents argued that Turkish Cypriot people prefer co-ethnics over others in every sphere of social life. Therefore, ethnic prejudice is a part of social life. There is a widespread opinion that foreign people, especially immigrants from Turkey, are ‘untrustworthy’. This opinion derives from the spread of unfavorable experiences and stories about people from different ethnic backgrounds. These stories prevent families from building a healthy trust relationship with the family of the other party. Respondents from different age groups (Ayşe 54, Nejla 32, Öznur 28, Şermin 57, Fatma 75) stated that Turkish Cypriot people do not trust people without meeting and knowing their families closer. In other words, they are afraid of the ‘unknown’. My other respondents (Hürmüs 54, Asya 28, Şenay 39) argued that trusting a native is more comfortable and this enables a more smooth process of marriage. Exogamous marriages are seen as a threat to a healthy family life. One of my respondents, Hatice, who was a 68-year-old woman, stated how distrust of foreign people influenced her marriage experience. In her words:

My husband was a Kurdish man from Tunceli, Turkey. He came to Cyprus to help the newly arrived immigrants to settle. We met after 1974, in Nicosia. We first saw each other at the bazaar in an old town. He wanted to marry me. Before visiting our home, his father sent a messenger to deliver his proposal request to my parents. Then his family came to our village to ask for my family’s will for our marriage. My family accepted their proposal. However, my brothers had no trust in Turks even though they were fighting together with the soldiers of the Turkish army in the battlefield. I have five brothers. They objected to my parents about our marriage because they had no idea about my husband’s family. My husband was not from our village, even not from our country. My brothers argued that he was a foreigner and they had no trust in him.

In the story of Hatice, the groom was a Kurdish man. However, during the interview, she defined her husband as a 'Turk' since he was from Turkey. Even though her parents approved their marriage deriving from their sympathy for Turkey, her brothers had concerns over 'trusting' in foreigners. In those years, trust issues towards immigrants from Turkey had not yet developed. This became more of an issue for the future generations. In the story of Hatice, her brothers' concern was not directly developed against people from Turkey but against everybody who was not from their village. They used to prefer a co-ethnic as a marriage partner since they would have many networks to perform a background check about someone who wants to marry their sister. As Leeuwen and Mass argue, people more easily trust individuals from their own social circles who share similar lifestyles, tastes, earning capacity, and character when compared to a stranger who is alien to them (2005, p. 5).

During the study, the dichotomy of traditional versus modern was referred to while considering the changes in the attitudes towards the ethnic basis of marriages. Most of the women between the ages of 40 and 65 claimed that the Turkish Cypriot community has become modernized in the course of time. They associated being modern with the flexibility of the rules on marriage. Emphasizing personal freedom in the decision-making process, especially in mate selection, was perceived as a step towards a modern society. They acknowledged that arranged marriages are old-fashioned. The rule that marriages should occur within the same ethnic group is seen as 'traditional'. Disregarding the ascribed status of individuals in mate selection and in the formation of the family is defined as open-mindedness. The women between the ages of 25 and 40 claimed that the younger generation of Turkish Cypriots is not conservative in terms of marrying an outsider. They said that younger generations are educated; thus, had the chance for opening to the world. They prioritize the emotional connection and relationship between the couples rather than their nationality or country of origin. They prioritize the skills, level of education, and cultural harmony over ascribed characteristics. They approve that marrying an outsider leads to various kinds of social pressure. The source of this reaction is not their peer groups but mostly the older generations. The uniqueness of ethnic-marital endogamy in Northern Cyprus is that,

even though the young generation of women said that they think marrying an outsider is natural, most of them still prefer a native partner over others. I will discuss this issue further in the following sections whenever relevant. I now discuss how Turkish Cypriots differentiate themselves from outsiders.

### **3.2 ‘US’ AND ‘THEM’: WOMEN AND CULTURAL IDENTITY**

In this section, I will discuss the role of cultural identity in the perceptions of Turkish Cypriot people towards interethnic marriages. Firstly, I will discuss the influence of culture on the distinction in which Turkish Cypriots make between themselves and others. Secondly, I will provide the significance of cultural distinctiveness in the self-identification of Turkish Cypriots. Accordingly, I will outline the central characteristics of Turkish Cypriot culture. For this purpose, I will discuss the family structure (in the context of physical distance and interfamily relationships), religion, local cuisine, and language based on the perceptions of my respondents in order to have a better understanding of the dynamics of endogamy. Finally, I will discuss the significance of women’s status in the cultural identity of Turkish Cypriots in the frame of gender segregation, women’s place in social life and women’s clothing.

The most implicit feature of an ethnic group is the application of a systematic distinction between insiders and outsiders, which is referred to as the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Eriksen, 2010, para. 2). For Eriksen, this very principle enables the formation and existence of an ethnic group. Each ethnic group presupposes that their group is culturally distinctive, and this idea is continually promoted through daily interactions and cultural activities. Cultural distinctiveness plays a subtle role in the self-perception of the members of an ethnic group which also sustains the group’s integrity. I should clarify that while elaborating on the cultural distinctiveness of the Turkish Cypriot community, I will not locate objective cultural traits at the center of my analysis. As Hummell (2014) argues, although ethnic categories incorporate culture, this is not a simple one-to-one relationship (p. 49) since the current ‘objective’

cultural traits can change over time, place and situation even though the group sustains its presence in the face of these transformations. Therefore, culture will be referred to as the means by which an ethnic group asserts and defines itself. Referring to Barth (1969), I argue that enhancing our understandings about ethnic groups necessitates to give attention to the maintenance of group boundaries through social interaction and dichotomized ethnic statuses. Therefore, I will discuss the cultural identity of Turkish Cypriots by referring to the social interactions occurring between Turkish Cypriots and the outsiders. In Northern Cyprus, cultural distinctiveness is of great importance in terms of the self-identification of Turkish Cypriots deriving from the strong bond between their ethnic identity and their culture which they perceive as unique and distinct. Blood, descent or genetics are rarely mentioned themes by Turkish Cypriots in identifying their ethnic identity. Instead, culture is the most important source of identity. In this context, I will analyze on which grounds they distinguish themselves from the outsiders and emphasize which features of their ethnic identity most.

The central characteristics of a culture constitute the uniqueness of an ethnic group. In other words, the boundaries of ethnic membership are determined in accordance with these central characteristics of culture which distinguishes group members from the outsiders. The most important attributes of cultural identity in the eyes of the members of an ethnic group also determine their attitudes about mixed marriages. Individuals with different ethnic identities in mixed marriages receive the negative attitude of others depending on the cultural gap between their own ethnic communities. Marriage within an ethnic group is one way of sustaining group integrity and guaranteeing the continuation of cultural distinctiveness through generations. As Leeuwen and Maas argue, social identities of marriage partners are the most sensitive indicators of community feelings (2005, p. 1). In this context, who marries whom without being exposed to social pressure or alienation shows the limitations and boundaries of each social group. Therefore, understanding endogamy and exogamy by prioritizing the role of culture inform us about both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic social relationships.



When considering interethnic marriages in Northern Cyprus, how Turkish Cypriot people distinguish themselves from the outsiders plays a key role. This process determines who is an outsider and who can be an insider. During the field study, when their ideas on endogamy were asked to the respondents, nearly all of them referred to the importance of ‘cultural difference’ as the key issue with regard to mixed marriages. Most of them stated that they do not welcome mixed marriages since mixed marriages spark off cultural conflicts. It is a threat to the integrity of the family and generates conflict which harms the wellbeing of a marriage. Besides, for the respondents, marrying an outsider can harm the ethnic homogeneity of the community. There were a variety of different responses about the issue of cultural and ethnic homogeneity. For instance, while young respondents emphasized the relationship between partners, older generations have concerns on this issue at the societal level. Despite the variety of reactions towards this issue, respondents’ attitudes, in general, show that nearly all of them believe in the idea that cultural homogeneity maintains harmony in a marriage. The children born out of mixed marriages are expected to internalize a ‘hybrid culture’ rather than the ‘pure Cypriot culture’. Thus far, it is clear that respondents perceive cultural difference as a serious problem in mixed marriages. However, this can be a descriptive inference which cannot answer the questions of ‘how’ and ‘why’. At this point, without clarifying how they perceive their distinctive culture, it is not possible to figure out on which grounds they promote endogamy. Therefore, I will discuss the central characteristics of the Turkish Cypriot culture with respect to family, religion, and food, followed by language which is the most mentioned marker of Turkish Cypriot identity. Furthermore, I will elaborate on the significance of women’s status in the Turkish Cypriot culture.

When asked about on which grounds cultural conflicts can be experienced in a mixed marriage, most of my respondents referred primarily to family relationships. I will discuss the role of family in the Turkish Cypriot culture with respect to physical distance and interfamily relationships considering the fact that how family is perceived, lived and experienced is an important component and a distinguishing mark of Turkish Cypriot culture. Family is seen as a protective and an intimate sphere.

Members of families provide financial and emotional support to each other in every stage of their lives. Marriage is an important stage over others. Despite the presence of a newly formed family by young couples, the extended family continues to provide care and support for their children throughout a lifetime. This type of family structure was defined as a “protective family” by my respondents. Most of the respondents argued that they have a high tendency to provide ‘protection’ for their children when compared to families in other societies. This emotional and financial support has different consequences. By providing support, parents find it natural to interfere in the lives of their married children. This care-support mechanism can be transformed into a power relationship through which parents can control the lives of the young even after they marry.

Physical distance is another essential component of family relationships. Most of the respondents stated that the distinguishing element of family relationships is that every parent wants their children to live nearby since physical distance is seen as a threat to the integrity of the family. In one way or another, the unity of the family should be protected. In this way, the integrity and intimacy of the family would be guaranteed. Without exception, all of the respondents stated that the location of residency of their children after marriage (post-marital residence) has a vital importance. If one party is from another country, there is a possibility that young couples may move abroad permanently after marriage. This is not solely an issue of emotional attachment, but parents do not want to lose surveillance over the lives of their children. My respondent, a 47-year-old woman living in an urban settlement, stated that family plays a key role during the marriage process. Besides, she argued that eighty percent of the Turkish Cypriot population would agree that the family plays a vital role in the marriage of their children. When asked about the importance of the country where the newly married couple would live, she replied:

Most of the families want their children to marry someone native because they want their children to stay in the country or even in the same city after marriage. This is the reason they oppose marrying someone from other countries. This is intrinsic to Cypriot families. If their children want to

marry someone from another country and they decide to live in Cyprus, they don't oppose their decision that much.

Attitudes of families on physical distance change depending on the country as well. Most of my respondents stated that they prefer European countries over Muslim majority countries to live. They claimed that European countries are 'modern', and therefore can provide more prosperous living standards for their children. On the other hand, Muslim majority countries are seen as conservative, which can pose problems for secular Turkish Cypriot women. The respondents also discussed the relationship between the family members during the study. They said that family structure in North Cyprus is different from other places. Most of them said that extended family is important to Turkish Cypriots. However, extended family members do not interfere in the important decisions of married couples. For instance, most of the respondents compared the families in North Cyprus with the family structure in Turkey. They referred to the status of the father-in-law and mother-in-law in Turkish families. According to their statements, in North Cyprus, couples show respect to their partner's parents, but the nature of the relationships with in-laws is different from the Turkish case. Especially, the relationship between the bride and her mother-in-law is not hierarchal as it is in Turkey. Mother-in-law has not conferred any rights to exert power over the bride in Northern Cyprus. She cannot give orders to her daughter-in-law, and she is not able to command her. When compared to the family structure in Turkey, in Northern Cyprus this relationship is mostly based on the socialization of families and friendship. It should be noted that my respondents' perceptions of the family structure in Turkey show varieties depending on the regions they know in Turkey. Most of them referred to the family relationships in 'Eastern' Turkey while distinguishing Turkish Cypriot families from the families in Turkey. When comparing family relationships in North Cyprus with Western families, most of my respondents argued that in the West children are granted more individual freedom, but their relationships with their families are quite distant. They defined the Western type of family relationships as cold, insecure and unattached. Thus, the way Turkish Cypriots define their family relationships is shaped by their views on Eastern and Western types of families as two

contrasting types. Defining families with reference to the dichotomy of Eastern versus Western types of families simplifies the issue under investigation. However, it should also be noted that this comparison derives from the expressions and views of the respondents which basically revolves around women's rights and freedom and which is closely related to their selection of a marriage partner.

Besides family relationships, Turkish Cypriots refer to 'religion' and 'religiosity' while drawing the boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. Now, I will discuss the significance of religion in the Turkish Cypriot culture. I will consider the religious identity of Turkish Cypriots within the limits of mixed marriages and cultural conflict. The secular character of daily life is one of the distinctive elements of Turkish Cypriot ethnic and cultural identity. My respondents emphasized the secular character of the community as something peculiar to Turkish Cypriot culture. First, they drew the line between 'us' and 'them' on the basis of religiosity in daily life. Even though Turkish Cypriot people define themselves as 'Muslims', Islam is not a rigid factor in the regulation of their daily life. For instance, most of my respondents referred to religious holidays as if they are cultural activities. Turkish Cypriot people do not attend religious ceremonies too often nor do they benefit from religious texts in their daily lives. Only on special occasions, like religious holidays or *bayrams*, men visit mosques. Other religious ceremonies like mawlids or *mevlüt*<sup>14</sup> are chanted differently from the mawlids in Turkey. Rather than reciting Quran, chants constitute the large part of mawlids in Northern Cyprus. This routine typically belongs to native Turkish Cypriots.

During my fieldwork, when asked about mixed marriages, religion was referred to frequently as a source of cultural conflict between partners. In line with the expressions of my respondents, marrying someone who is a member of another religion poses difficulties. While the younger generation said that these difficulties can be manageable if partners have respect for each other, the older generation claimed that religious conflicts cannot be overcome. Most of my respondents claimed that Turkish Cypriot people's way of living Islam is different from other Muslim majority

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<sup>14</sup> Singing hymns for special occasions like deaths, anniversaries, births or circumcisions.

countries; they emphasized that Turkish Cypriot people are ‘modern’. They used the word ‘modern’ as a synonym for a secular way of life. The ones who object to mixed marriages argued that Muslims, in general, are conservative when compared to Turkish Cypriots. They are close-minded, devoutly religious; thus, not modern. However, there are generational differences in the ideas of respondents towards religious variations. Older generations, admitting that Muslims from Turkey or Arab countries are conservative, still said that they prefer a Muslim over members of other faiths. The differences in attitudes of different age groups towards interfaith marriages can give us clues about the changing role of religion in their daily lives. Religion was of higher importance in the lives of older generations when compared to younger Turkish Cypriots. Before nationalism sprung in Cyprus (during the British colonial period), the fundamental element that differentiated the two communities of Cyprus was their religious identity. In other words, the older generation have lived in a society where the two communities were distinguished from one another on the basis of religious identity as Muslims versus non-Muslims. In this regard, they perceive religion as a central part of their identities. Consequently, they have serious objections towards interfaith marriages. Differently, most of the young respondents said that they are not religious people; thus, they do not attribute importance to religiosity in the context of interfaith marriages as well. Although the younger generation admitted that different religious identities create problems in interfaith marriages, they prioritize cultural identity over religious identity. Religious differences are important only because different faiths in a marriage relationship may spark off the existing cultural differences. In this respect, when compared to the older generation, the younger generation (below the age of 35) is more likely to identify religious conflicts as a part of cultural ones.

In North Cyprus, traditional food is also seen as an important component of Turkish Cypriot culture. While Cypriot cuisine is perceived as a significant cultural indicator, it was not frequently mentioned when compared to family relationships, religion, or language. Only when asked what kinds of cultural conflicts may arise in mixed marriages, they referred to the differences in eating habits which they perceived as

more manageable than other kinds of cultural conflicts. During the interviews, my respondents said that in mixed marriages partners have different tastes in food and this can cause some problems. One of my respondents (Fezra, 28), whose husband is from Turkey, talked about the ways how different eating habits created problems in her marriage. For example, she said that soup is cooked as the main dish in Turkish Cypriot culture whereas it is only a starter in her husband's culture. Furthermore, cultural differences in eating habits can also reflect the gendered dynamics of family relationships. For instance, planning, preparing and serving meals are mostly women's responsibilities in patriarchal societies. Differences in eating habits (such as the timing of meals or men eating first, then women and children eating separately, after the men) or food tastes (such as cooking style or ingredients) were referred to as potential sources of conflict in mixed marriages.<sup>15</sup>

As mentioned above, language is as an important marker of community feelings which also helps to sustain group integrity. Smith (1991) argues that language is one of the objective attributes of an ethnic community (p. 23). The distinctive language of an ethnic community is perceived as a fundamental element of cultural history by ethnic group members. Endogamy provides the ground for the transfer of community language to the future generations. In this context, to have a better understanding of endogamy in Northern Cyprus, how Turkish Cypriot people perceive the role of community language in interethnic marriages should be considered in detail. For this purpose, I will discuss the significance of the Turkish Cypriot dialect with respect to cultural differences in mixed marriages. Most of my respondents stated that their distinctive language (i.e., Turkish Cypriot dialect) is an important marker of their cultural identity; Turkish Cypriot dialect is the basic constituent of Turkish Cypriot culture. Similarly, they admitted that preservation of the community language is substantial for sustaining the presence of the Turkish Cypriot community in the island. Therefore, to preserve the Turkish Cypriot culture, the Turkish Cypriot dialect should be protected as well. Nearly ninety percent of my respondents said that this dialect is

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<sup>15</sup> I will discuss this issue further in the following pages with respect to women's status in the Turkish Cypriot culture.

of great importance for identifying themselves as Turkish Cypriots since it represents the ethnic and cultural identity of the community members. Some of my respondents admitted that speaking Turkish Cypriot dialect is obligatory for being a part of the Turkish Cypriot community. This dialect cannot be imitated and is only peculiar to Turkish Cypriot people. Moreover, most of my respondents claimed that it is their unique dialect which distinguishes them from the Turks. Only two of my respondents said that they do not attach particular importance to the language of the community. However, most of my respondents noted that in mixed marriages, the language barrier poses certain problems. Not only the differences in language, but even a dialect of the Turkish language can be a problem for the couples. One of my respondents, who is married to a Turkish man, said that she had problems in her marriage since the same words have different meanings in the two languages. In other words, differences in the use of the same language sometimes cause misunderstandings in their conversations. The language barrier in mixed marriage marriages leads to lack of communication between the families of the couples as well. Since older generations cannot speak English properly, there is no common language through which the parents of the couples can communicate with each other.

When Turkish Cypriot people distinguish themselves from other communities, women's social status in Turkish Cypriot culture holds a prominent place. My respondents referred to the status of women as the primary factor while mentioning cultural differences in mixed marriages. When asked about cultural conflicts in mixed marriages most of them emphasized how Turkish Cypriot people treat women. Therefore, it is important to discuss how Turkish Cypriot women define and perceive their distinctive culture with respect to their status in the society. This discussion will be based on gender segregation, women's participation in all aspects of society and public life, and women's clothing within the context of interethnic marriages.

Gender segregation is a social phenomenon obtainable in every aspect of social life. It poses serious problems for women in patriarchal societies. In North Cyprus, gender segregation is believed to be lower when compared to other Muslim countries.

Considering mixed marriages with Muslim men, most of the respondents emphasized the difficulties stemming from gender segregation. They perceived gender segregation as a component of Islamic tradition. That is to say; it is believed to be representing the traditional and conservative side of Islam. According to the statements of my respondents, marrying a Muslim man (other than Turkish Cypriots) is expected to bring gender segregation to higher levels. For my respondents, Turkish Cypriot community is 'modern'. They claimed that women confer more rights in social life when compared to other Muslim majority societies. When referring to these rights, they pointed to women's secular clothing, participation in work life and women's role in the family life. During the study, most of the women argued that the inferior social status of women in Muslim societies is a sign of backwardness. Besides, backwardness was associated with being 'traditional'.

Women's status in Muslim societies is seen utterly incompatible with the secular life in North Cyprus since it is believed that Muslim people, in general, are conservative. Furthermore, in the eyes of my respondents there exists a hierarchy within the category of 'Muslim men'. Arab men are believed to be the most conservative group. During the interviews, men from Arab countries were defined as backward and traditional. For the women in my study, Arab men are the most unacceptable group for a marriage. Turkish men from Turkey were referred secondarily to Arab men. However, Turkish men were distinguished with respect to regions in Turkey. Men from Eastern Turkey were seen as nearly similar to Arab men. İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir, the biggest cities of Turkey, were seen as modern cities and therefore, people from these cities were claimed to be more acceptable when compared to people from Eastern Turkey. Turkish Cypriot people, despite all these differences, perceive Muslim men as a homogeneous group. This attitude about 'Muslim men' in general overlooks all the above-mentioned differences, unifying them under one category. Most of my respondents disapprove marrying a man from Muslim countries on the basis of this categorization.

Most of the statements on interfamily relationships in mixed marriages were based on the role of women in marriage and family life. During the interviews, gender inequality



was referred to as a part of cultural differences in this type of marriages. Gender inequality was mostly discussed with respect to interfamily relationships. Especially while considering mixed marriages that occurred between Turkish Cypriot women and Muslim men from Arab countries or Turkey, respondents frequently referred to the status of women in the family. The role of women in the household and the nature of the relationship between the mother-in-law and the bride is essential to understand how Turkish Cypriot people define 'conservatism'. Most of my respondents stated that women are expected to be housewives who serve their husbands and her husbands' family according to the Muslim tradition. My respondents disapprove of a marriage of this type since they do not want their daughters to be exploited by her husband or his family. One of my respondents, who is married to a Kurdish man, shared the difficulties she experienced with her husband's family. She said that her mother-in-law demanded too much respect from her. She continued by giving an example of a conservative, Sunni family. By illustrating how the family meal is prepared in this type of a family, she referred to the disadvantaged position of women. For her, in this type of families, the bride has to cook and serve meals to the male members of the family first. Women are allowed to eat separately, after the men, whereas the bride has to wait until everyone finishes their meal.

In North Cyprus, women have a high level of participation into the labor force. During my field research, it was not easy to find unemployed women to conduct interviews. Unemployment among middle-aged and young women in Northern Cyprus is quite rare. Only older generation of women, aged over 70, were 'housewives'. However, in the past, these women used to participate in the subsistence production of their families. Among my respondents, women's freedom to participate in the labor force is perceived as an indicator of modern society. Turkish Cypriot people believe that Muslim men will oppress Turkish Cypriot women in a marriage relationship. Thus, marrying a conservative man can prevent women from working. In this type of marital unions, women would be expected to fulfill the expectations and the needs of their husbands. They would have to perform traditional sex roles given to women such as being a housewife and internalizing motherhood as their primary social identity. In this

context, Turkish Cypriot women would be exposed to intense patriarchal domination. This would be a type of male domination which is not exerted on them in North Cyprus. This is the main reasons why the Turkish Cypriot people disfavor mixed marriages of this type.

Clothing of women is also significant for understanding the physical appearance of women in the Turkish Cypriot culture. The *hijab* and the headscarf were frequently mentioned during the interviews with a reservation. Turkish Cypriot people believe that the headscarf is a strong indicator of conservatism which is associated with male domination and oppression. The headscarf is also perceived as a sign of backwardness and conservatism. Most of the respondents claimed that a Turkish Cypriot woman would have to wear a veil and cover herself in the case of marrying a Muslim man. This means that they would not have the same standard of living after marriage. During my interviews, several women told their stories of mixed marriages which they have heard in their social environments. In most of these stories, Turkish Cypriot women who were married to Arab men were forced to wear veils; thus, exposed to male oppression as perceived by the interviewees. They continued by saying that these women had to leave their husbands and returned to Cyprus since they could not endure the life conditions in Arab countries. These unfavorable stories about mixed marriages are widespread. They strengthen the conservative and traditional image of Muslim men (Arab or Turkish) among Turkish Cypriots. Moreover, most of the respondents said that if the married couple settles into any Arab country or Eastern Turkey, patriarchal domination increases. However, if the couple decides to live in North Cyprus after marriage, male domination is expected to be reduced. Social life, norms, and expectations of the Turkish Cypriot society are believed to be secular and modern as mentioned above. Therefore, marrying a Muslim man cannot pose the same problems in North Cyprus as it would in his own country. For instance, he cannot force his wife to wear a *hijab*. One of the respondents, Sezgin, a 53-year-old woman married to a Pakistani man, said that she met her husband in a factory where they were working together in 1986. Unlike her contemporaries, she had the chance for having a relationship with her husband for about a year before marrying him. She said that her

parents did not welcome her decision to marry a Pakistani man. Especially her father had a concern that his daughter would move to Pakistan after marriage. Even though her parents did not welcome her decision, she said that they supported her to a certain extent. She received harsh criticisms from her social environment. Even though she is married to a Pakistani man, she said that she would not allow her daughter to marry someone from any Arab country. In Sezgin's words:

I was young. Marrying someone from another country was a really tough thing to do. I know it because I experienced it. It was only about the prejudices in their minds. I received strong reactions, especially from my extended family. They thought that my husband would make me cover my head. They told me that we would have conflicts because of cultural dissimilarities. Especially about the Muslim men, people have strong prejudices. Since my husband's father is married to more than one woman, they warned me about this issue. I know that in Muslim countries these types of things happen. I met with the family of my husband and I saw polygamy in their family. For instance, a foreign Muslim man wanted to marry my daughter but I didn't give permission. I told her that their lifestyle is really different from ours and that this type of marriage would pose plenty of difficulties for her.

Different from Muslim countries, marrying someone from Europe has positive meanings for Turkish Cypriot people. Young (between the ages of 25 and 40) and middle-aged (between the ages of 40 to 60) respondents welcomed marriages of this type warmly compared to the older generations. They mentioned the modern and secular way of life in European countries (such as England or Germany) and referred to higher living standards in those countries. Like European people, people from the United States of America were also welcomed for mixed marriages since women's social and economic status is perceived as higher in these Western countries. In other words, in a mixed marriage of this type, it is guaranteed that Turkish Cypriot women would not be exposed to male oppression. The older generations (60 and over), on the other hand, disfavor marriages of this type. They argued that since European people are non-Muslims, it is not favorable to marry someone from Europe. They emphasized differences in religious identities which can harm the well-being of the marriage. They argued that European people are non-Muslims and this can cause cultural conflicts in

mixed marriages. This derives from the fact that Turkish Cypriot people perceive their religious identity embedded in their cultural and ethnic identity. Moreover, some of them argued that marrying a non-Muslim man is not allowed in Islam, whereas a Muslim man can marry a non-Muslim woman. Older generations give higher importance to religion in their daily lives. They also prioritize their religious identity as an important component of their ethnicity. For my older respondents, different religious identities inevitably cause marital conflicts. However, they did not explain what they meant by 'marital conflicts'. Consequently, they could not clarify their arguments properly. Most of the time, their arguments relied on the unquestioned presumptions. Different from this, the younger generation believes that respect and love can overcome cultural and religious differences. They believe that the attitudes of individuals, such as respecting each other's religious background, can overcome such problems. Religious differences in mixed marriages will be discussed further in the following sections.

### **3.3 INTEGRITY OF THE COMMUNITY**

This section seeks to assess the influence of endogamy on the integrity of the Turkish Cypriot community with a focus on the hybridization of ethnic identity and the distinct Turkish Cypriot dialect with regard to exogamous unions. I will discuss the integrity of the Turkish Cypriot community with respect to three main themes: group continuity, cultural continuity and transmission of community language. Firstly, I will start by considering endogamy as a coping mechanism developed by Turkish Cypriots to ensure the presence and growth of the native Turkish Cypriot population. I will argue that the fear of 'extinction' among Turkish Cypriots is one of the reasons why endogamous unions are encouraged by the native population. Secondly, I will discuss how endogamy functions as an instrument for sustaining the cultural continuity of the Turkish Cypriot community. Finally, I will discuss the influence of endogamy on the transfer of community language to the future generations.

Marital endogamy is referred to as one way of sustaining group integrity for ethnic groups. It strengthens group identification by preserving the ethnic homogeneity of the group; thus, guarantees the presence of the ethnic group by passing on shared collective memory to the next generations. In other words, marital endogamy is an essential component of a group's effort to teach a group's collective memory to new members. As Assman and Czaplicka argue, "a group's memory preserves the knowledge from which the group derives awareness of its unity and peculiarity" (cited in Hirsch, 2015, p. 51). For this reason, especially minority groups prefer and favor endogamy to keep their cultural distinctiveness alive. As a marriage system, endogamy helps to maintain community identity, uniqueness and status. Moreover, endogamy is expected to enhance group identification and increase the integrity of the community by providing homogenous networks for younger generations in which they will be a part of. Since the homogeneity of the networks influences the degree of self-identification, endogamy increases the possibility for younger generations to identify themselves with the group more easily. As group identification increases, endogamy is expected to be internalized more intensely by group members. Furthermore, the rigid practice of endogamy may also indicate higher group identification. This mutual interaction between group identification and endogamy renders this discussion more valuable. Furthermore, since one of the primary motivations of this study is to find out how marital endogamy contributes to the maintenance of Turkish Cypriot identity and integrity of the community - in the frame of traditional culture and distinctive language - it is significant to discuss endogamy with respect to the integrity of the community by examining the statements of my respondents.

Interethnic marriages help to increase the population size of an ethnic community. In this context, it is important to understand the influence of endogamy on the continuation and growth of the native Turkish Cypriot population. Turkish Cypriots, as a relatively small community in terms of population size, have concerns about the continuation of their physical and cultural presence on the island. Deriving from the constant arrival of immigrants from different countries, Turkish Cypriot people started to feel uncomfortable with the current population number of native Turkish Cypriots

who live in North Cyprus<sup>16</sup>. Besides, ‘migration’ was particularly mentioned when respondents expressed their concerns about the decrease of native Turkish Cypriot population in the island which I will discuss below.

The increasing presence of Turkish immigrants in North Cyprus is the most debated issue concerning demographic changes in the island<sup>17</sup>. Purkis and Kurtuluş (2013) discuss the demographic changes in North Cyprus in the frame of spatial segregation and social exclusion of Turkish immigrants. They note that approximately thirty thousand immigrants from Turkey settled into North Cyprus in 1975. Two more migration waves followed the first wave of migration which continued until 2006 (p. 6). Even though the real number of Turkish immigrants living in North Cyprus is a much-debated issue, there are many studies which point to a large number of immigrants arriving in North Cyprus from Turkey (see Hatay 2005, Jensehaugen 2014, Purkis and Kurtuluş 2013).

While discussing the demographic problem in Cyprus, Hatay (2007) emphasizes the importance of demography in the island as follows:

The demography in north Cyprus is one of the most contested issues arising out of the island’s division. In particular, the number of indigenous Turkish Cypriots and Turkish immigrants who live in north Cyprus has long been a source of dispute not only amongst the island’s diplomats and politicians but amongst researchers and activists, as well. (p. ix)

Hatay argues that discourses about demographic danger and colonization are continuously used in local politics as politically constructed labels (2007, p. ix). Since

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<sup>16</sup> “Of the 1.16 million people in Cyprus, about 300,000 live in the north, although it's believed this number has climbed to 500,000, half of whom are Turkish settlers or Cypriot-born children of settlers” (Cyprus Population, from <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/cyprus>).

<sup>17</sup> According to Hatay, “The significance of demography in Cyprus changed after 1974 not only because of this ethnic homogenization of the two states, but also because of an influx of immigrants from Turkey. In addition to the resettlement of displaced Cypriots, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot administration initially facilitated and encouraged an immigration of Turkish nationals from Turkey following the war” (2017, p. 16).

ethnic proportions can determine the balance of political power, the discourse of ‘demographic danger’ in North Cyprus is a political issue as well as a social problem as perceived by the population of the island<sup>18</sup>. For instance, respondents argued that intense cooperation with Turkey is not only a political problem, but it can become a serious threat against preserving the ‘essence’ of their cultural and ethnic identity<sup>19</sup>. Their concerns about assimilation are mostly based on the idea that “the increasing presence of immigrants from mainland Turkey augmented the sense, outside of the north, that Turkey was colonializing northern Cyprus” (Jensehaugen, 2014, p. 61). As Jensehaugen (2014) argues by referring to Morvaridi (1993),

There was, and remains to be, a sense among Turkish Cypriots that they themselves are ‘Turks, but they have developed a culture with its own norms, values and belief systems’, which has increasingly become threatened by the influx of immigrants from the more traditional and religious areas of Turkey. (p. 62)

During my fieldwork, my respondents argued that Turkish Cypriots should collaborate to increase the size of the native population to preserve their ethnic/national identity and their distinctive culture. Under the influence of the political and social atmosphere in the island, the native population in North Cyprus began to develop an antipathy towards interethnic marriages since it was perceived as a threat against the preservation of the pure Turkish Cypriot identity and culture.

Migration is perceived as an important social problem in North Cyprus. Especially when the ethnic character of marriages is considered, it becomes more of an issue. It is a crucial factor in the decision-making process, and it influences the attitudes of families towards interethnic marriages. This same issue was addressed in the context

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<sup>18</sup> Psaltis and Cakal (2016) argue that “among the Turkish Cypriots, Turkish immigrants/settlers are regarded as a source of threat to the social and economic resources that the Turkish Cypriot in-group controls” (p. 239).

<sup>19</sup> According to Kizilyurek, “The open interference of Turkey into the Turkish Cypriot affairs, the threat of becoming a minority as a result of population transfer from Turkey, the fact that the Turkish army exercise control in all spheres of the life, the economic and political isolation are some of the factors which threaten the very existence of the Turkish Cypriot community” (2003, p. 203).

of ‘physical distance’ in exogamous marriages as discussed in Section 3.2. As perceived by the interviewees, migration is not only a physical movement to a new location, it is also a threat first to the unity of the family and then, to the unity of the community. As it was discussed by the interviewees, Turkish Cypriots who have migrated to different countries across the world constitute a larger population than the current population of the island<sup>20</sup>. Notably, international youth migration in search for better living conditions is perceived as a serious threat to the presence and population size of Turkish Cypriots in North Cyprus. During my fieldwork, endogamy was perceived as a disincentive to migrate. One of my respondents (Şermin, 57) has experienced two exogamous marriages in her family. Her son is married to a Scottish woman, and her daughter is married to a Palestinian man. Both of her children settled into their spouses’ countries. When asked about the influence of endogamous marriages on the integrity and unity of the Turkish Cypriot community, she explained the importance of ‘migration’ as follows:

I think marriages within Turkish Cypriots strengthen the integrity of the community. At least, marrying within the community reduces migration. It also favors the continuity of the Turkish Cypriot culture and population. The main reason why Turkish Cypriots disfavor marrying foreigners is that they don’t want the young ones to emigrate from the island. Migration always poses problems for the families and the married couples as well. It’s not a good thing to be distant from your own culture and country. Also, it’s not good for the continuity of the Turkish Cypriot population.

During my field study, the majority of the respondents argued that Turkish Cypriots will become the ‘minority’ in North Cyprus in the near future. Both middle-aged women (between the ages of 40 and 65) and the young women (between the ages of 25 and 40) argued that Turkish Cypriots have already become a minority group in

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<sup>20</sup> In Hatay’s words, “One claim, often repeated in both the Turkish Cypriot and the international media, is that this mass migration has resulted in a decline in the Turkish Cypriot population in Cyprus from 118,000 in 1974 to around 80,000-90,000 today” (2017, p. 39).

<sup>21</sup> Even though most of the Turkish Cypriots believe in this statement, Hatay (2017) argues that there is a total of approximately 62,000 persons of Cyprus origin resident in the UK, Australia and Turkey (p. 49).



terms of population size. Statements of the respondents indicated that population growth is favored since Turkish Cypriot people have concerns over the decreasing numbers of the native population. Their concerns derive from the belief that social and financial ties between North Cyprus and Turkey are growing. Besides the problem of migration, they also expressed their concerns about the assimilation of Turkish Cypriot identity into Turkish identity which I will discuss below.

The role of the state in the sustenance of group continuity and integrity was another strong theme emphasized by my respondents. In North Cyprus, the state is organized along ethnic ties since it was formed right after the period of inter-communal conflicts. Moreover, after the formation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the idea of being a 'nation' has gained a political-legal ground. Whether Turkish Cypriots constitute a nation still is a source of dispute amongst the islanders. Whereas some argue that the idea of 'Turkish Cypriot nation' is an end product of the nation-building process carried out by the elites and political power holders, some perceive Turkish Cypriot national identity as innate and permanent. Under these circumstances, it is expected that the ethnic identity of Turkish Cypriots will be subsumed into Turkish Cypriot nationalism. Following Barth, I argue that new forms of political organization do not necessarily signal a move away from ethnicity, rather it can be indicative of the processes and changes regarding ethnicity (1969, p. 52). In the following pages, I will approach the relationship between state and ethnicity from this perspective.

Women from two different generations emphasized different points about the relationship between decreasing population size and endogamy. For instance, the younger generation of women highlighted 'assimilation' whereas women from older generations emphasized 'loss of culture'. A possible explanation concerning this difference might be that older generations put more emphasis on the traditional culture when their ethnic presence is under question. On the other hand, younger generations highlighted their political concerns such as assimilation while discussing the issue of ethnic presence. During the interviews, the younger generation of women expressed their political ideas more comfortably. Their statements were more radical and critical

than the older generations, and they also presented more complex viewpoints. It is important to note that these women were working women with high educational backgrounds, mostly from urban areas. First, the younger generation does not equate their ethnic identity directly with a political-territorial border. They mostly define their ethnic identity on the basis of 'self-identification' rather than physical borders. Secondly, young women disfavor the current state policies towards the population issues. They seemed to be critical of TRNC since it is an unrecognized state<sup>22</sup>. The current problematic status of TRNC, both politically and legally, prevents the young generation of women from developing belongingness to the state. Therefore, they highlighted the importance of resisting assimilation on an individual basis without demanding any form of state intervention. Due to their distrust of the state, young women are inclined to form mental and social boundaries towards outsiders rather than promoting legal procedures for the integrity of their community. Thus, their expectations from the state are lower when compared to the older generations. On the other hand, the older generations (relatively lower educated) who were from both rural and urban areas, emphasized the necessity of state-sanctioned population policies for achieving the desired population size of Turkish Cypriots in North Cyprus. For the older women, the state represents Turkish Cypriot identity and stands for Turkish Cypriots. Together with producing mental and social boundaries towards outsiders, older women expect the state to build and reinforce 'legal' boundaries for the sustenance of group continuity. They stated that the state should take all appropriate measures to ensure the presence of the native Turkish Cypriot population in the island. These measures include control of migration from other countries and the necessary precautions while granting citizenship to foreigners. Furthermore, a few of my elderly respondents said that the state should provide the required fertility policies for the growth of native Turkish Cypriot population. State-sanctioned population policies were referred to as the legal precautions for sustaining the presence of the Turkish Cypriot community in the future. Though, since the main focus of this study is to

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<sup>22</sup> As Papadakis notes, "in 1983, the Turkish Cypriot authorities unilaterally declared the establishment of their own state in northern Cyprus, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which has since remained internationally unrecognized except by Turkey" (2008, p. 3).

understand and analyze social relationships with respect to marriage practices, it is necessary to discuss endogamy as a social mechanism developed by Turkish Cypriots to ensure the presence of the community.

Barth's approach on ethnicity can help us to understand the dynamics of the continuity of community and the perception of threat against the preservation of Turkish Cypriot culture and identity. As I discussed in the theory chapter, Barth argues that continuity of an ethnic unit depends on the maintenance of a boundary while emphasizing that ethnic boundary defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses (1969, pp. 14-15). Thus, "ethnic boundary is a social boundary formed through interaction with 'Others'" (Hummell, 2014, p. 49). Barth challenged the established anthropological conceptions of ethnicity arguing that ethnicity is not defined by culture but by social organization and that the root of this social organization is dichotomization. The maintenance of group identity and continuity of an ethnic unit depend on the continuing dichotomization between the members and outsiders rather than the cultural differences between ethnic units. Besides, dichotomization of others as strangers implies "a restriction of interaction to sectors of assumed common understanding and mutual interest" (Barth, 1969, p. 15). I argue that marriage is one of these sectors and it is also the most sensitive sphere of interaction with the outsiders. Moreover, restrictions on mate selection can be taken both as a cause and an effect of the dichotomization between the members of an ethnic group and the outsiders. Since the outsiders are seen as 'others' or 'strangers' (mostly based on the exclusion of others) at the beginning of a marriage process, intermarriage practice is labeled as a non-conformist behavior within the community, and this generates tensions during the marriage process. If unpleasant experiences follow these tensions, it leads to the emergence of a recurrent pattern which recreates and reinforces the existing norms on endogamy.

Social interaction between groups is vital for understanding how ethnicity and ethnic identity are experienced, lived and negotiated in North Cyprus. As Barth argues, "If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria

for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion” (1969, p. 15). This indicates that the continuity of the group or maintenance of group identity can be best understood by analyzing how members interact with others. Purkis and Kurtuluş (2013) pointed to a crucial point when discussing the nature of the social interaction between Turkish immigrants and the native population in North Cyprus. As they wrote:

Increasing contact in the public sphere (hospitals, schools, census bureaus, water works etc) over time revealed economic, social and cultural capital disparities between the first wave migrants settled in the villages and Northern Cypriots. At the beginning this situation was perceived as a contradiction of modern and traditional but in time it became the origin of increasingly deepening exclusion. (p. 10)

Besides the importance of culture, language, food or marriage practices, the primary factor that influences the perception of threat is the social interaction with outsiders. First of all, social interaction with outsiders, especially with the Turks, signals the boundaries of the Turkish Cypriot community and reinforces the self-segregation of the group by reiterating the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The increasing levels of the self-segregation strengthen the level of threat in the eyes of the community members. Secondly, women as bearers of cultural values are assigned new roles by the community in reply to the perceived threat from ‘strangers’. Both political developments (concerns on political and social assimilation) and the unpleasant personal memories between Turkish Cypriot women and Turkish men (unaccepted behavior of Turkish men in a marriage, i.e., forcing women to cover their heads or the distrust in Turkish men in general) play a key role in shaping their perception of threat. Although there is a linguistic and religious similarity between the two countries, cultural values in both societies do not always overlap. Moreover, these values sometimes become a source of tension. We see this in some of the stories told about the mixed marriages between Cypriot women and Turkish men. This strengthens the existing prejudices and stereotyping towards outsiders and reinforces the social isolation of the group. Thus, it is not the cultural difference, but the problems that emerge in the personal and social interactions between the Cypriots and Turks.

Thirdly, increasing numbers of immigrants on the island add to the fear of assimilation or extinction of their culture, as discussed above.

Referring to Barth (1969), Hummell argues that “ethnicity is the product of specific kinds of inter-group relations” (2014, p. 51). Therefore, the problem of demographic change is not only an issue of population size, but it is also about increasing contacts with outsiders that forces the Turkish Cypriot community to redefine their ethnic identity. This points to the ‘socially determined’ character of ethnicity as well. For this reason, moral rules (principles of right or wrong behavior), gender norms and role of religion in the everyday lives of the community were reconsidered on the basis of social interaction with outside groups, mainly with reference to immigrants from Turkey since they constitute the most crowded foreign residents in North Cyprus. Owing to the increase in the level of social interaction with the immigrants, Turkish Cypriots developed a new discourse by which they define the uniqueness and distinctiveness of their community. For instance, the claim that Turkish Cypriots are ‘modern’ and ‘secular’ was juxtaposed against the conservatism and traditionalism in Turkey and other Muslim majority countries. The dichotomy of modern versus traditional has always shaped the nature of social interactions between Turkish Cypriots and Turkish immigrants. It is clear that while distinguishing themselves from Turkish immigrants, Turkish Cypriots prioritize their ‘modern’ and ‘secular’ way of living since most of the time they interact with Turkish immigrants from more traditional and religious backgrounds. As it can be understood from the statements of older respondents, before the arrival of Turkish immigrants, Turkish Cypriots used to define their ethnic identity on the basis of nationality, language and religion. However, since Turkish Cypriots were living together with Greek Cypriots before the division of the island, the role of religion in the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ was quite different from the present situation. For instance, rather than claiming the ‘secular’ character of their religiosity, Turkish Cypriots used to emphasize ‘Islam’ as the main factor which differentiates them from Greek Cypriots who were mostly Orthodox Christians. Since both Turkish immigrants and Turkish Cypriots define themselves as Muslims, increasing contacts with Turkish immigrants forced Turkish Cypriots to

designate the 'secular' way of living Islam as one of the main characteristics of their ethnic identity. On the other hand, when Turkish Cypriots define the unique attributes of their community and cultural identity vis-à-vis the individuals from European backgrounds, language and religion become the primary sources of their ethnic identity. In this regard, this can be taken as an example of what Barth suggests when arguing that rather than social and geographical isolation, interaction with 'others' determines the formation and continuation of ethnicity (1969, p. 9).

Socio-economic differences should also be considered in the analysis concerning the perception of threat. For instance, lower-middle-class women with lower levels of education or those who have a rural background feel more threatened whereas working women with higher levels of education feel less threatened. First of all, since most of the immigrants in the northern side of the island are uneducated people from lower or lower-middle classes, women with higher levels of education do not perceive these immigrants as a potential threat in the distribution of economic resources. Secondly, this group of women interacts with a heterogeneous group of outsiders who have different socio-economic backgrounds. This may reduce the prejudices of educated women towards outsiders. For instance, some of the young and middle-aged women noted that they do not disfavor all of the 'foreigners' since every group/nation/country has good and bad people. However, most of the time, they interact with those from similar educational and cultural backgrounds who are mostly from their own social environments. Owing to similar educational and cultural backgrounds, members of both parties do not rigidly label the other side as a 'stranger'; thus, they display a more inclusive perspective towards each other. This means that both groups find it more comfortable to accept differences in others since they already share similar values deriving from their similar cultural and educational backgrounds. This process positively influences the quality of the interaction between different groups. Despite these, a specific type of dichotomization is still employed by both groups. Considering that ethnic boundaries can persist in a fluid form, the distinction that a group makes between insiders and outsiders exists by degrees; it does not necessarily indicate a total opposition and conflict between groups

(Hummell, 2014, p. 51). Instead, despite the dichotomized statuses, a group can develop tolerance towards others as well. Moreover, this same group of women does not possess a strong sense of belonging to their community because they hold universal human values. Therefore, a decrease in the self-identification with the group renders the perception of threat less significant. Lower-middle class women have less economic resources to live comfortably. Therefore, for these women, the presence of immigrants with scarce economic and educational resources means increased competition in the labor market. Since most of the women from this group were unemployed, higher competition in the labor market poses a threat against family income. Additionally, they are involved in social interaction with outsiders less often when compared to the young, educated women from urban areas. They mostly interact with outsiders (mostly Turkish immigrants who are from more traditional and religious areas of Turkey) who settle in rural areas. In these areas, Turkish Cypriot women do not have anything in common with those immigrants except living in the same village. Therefore, in the process of interaction between the two groups, differences (such as cultural values, clothing, family relationships, and religiosity) become quite visible and conflicting, which can be a source of tension. This sharpens the process of dichotomization and leads to a higher identification with the group. Consequently, this process renders the presence of immigrants more threatening for this group of women.

Hybridization of ethnic identity was another strong theme which was frequently highlighted by the interviewees during the field study. Most of my respondents said that in exogamous marriages children are expected to internalize the cultural values of both parents. In this context, children who have parents from different ethnic backgrounds cannot adopt the 'pure' Turkish Cypriot identity. Even when the young couple decides to settle in North Cyprus, Turkish Cypriot identity becomes the 'dominant' identity rather than being the 'main' ethnic identity of their children. Moreover, in line with the statements of the respondents, a Turkish Cypriot who is married to a foreigner is also expected to lose some of the cultural characteristics peculiar to Turkish Cypriots since s/he will have to arrange his/her daily life according

to the cultural background of his/her spouse as well. This perspective was adopted mostly by the middle-aged and elderly respondents. Besides, as stated during the interviews, exogamous unions are expected to diminish the solidarity of the group. When asked about the influence of exogamous marriages on the integrity of the Turkish Cypriot community, one of my respondents (aged 57) who had an exogamous marriage noted that her children cannot be part of the *tek yumruk*<sup>23</sup>. This is because her children's father is from Turkey; they have hybrid identities, and consequently, they cannot be 'proper' Turkish Cypriots. This indicates that children from exogamous marriages are expected to develop a feeling of 'in-between-ness' which hampers the process of identification with the group. This issue will be further discussed whenever relevant in the following pages.

The respondents who argued that endogamy enhances the integrity of the community believe that endogamous unions provide a solid ground for younger generations to develop the sense of 'motherland'. They argued that when children recognize Cyprus as their motherland, their identification with the group and their sense of community belonging increases. Furthermore, for the respondents, endogamy favors the sameness among the members of the community by enhancing cultural continuity. During the interviews the majority of my participants (twenty-six of thirty interviewees) agreed with the statement that endogamy enhances integrity; thus, reinforces the solidarity of the Turkish Cypriot community. When the respondents were divided into two main groups according to their age (those between the ages of 25 and 40, and those between the ages of 40 and 75), only one respondent from each group said that endogamy does not influence the integrity or the solidarity of the Turkish Cypriot community. In other words, only two women were neutral about the issue of endogamy. Unlike the majority who believed that endogamy positively influences the integrity of the group, one respondent from the older group and two from the younger group argued to the contrary and said that endogamous marriages may have negative influences on group integrity. For instance, one respondent from the older age group claimed that endogamy harms the integrity of the community in the face of a divorce situation since

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<sup>23</sup> Tur. "(be like) one fist", meaning unity or integrity



families can become hostile towards each other during or after the divorce which can harm the unity of the community. Besides, two of my respondents from the younger group argued that endogamous marriages can generate intense social pressure in case of a divorce. Since both of the families are from the same community, gossip mechanism can be even more harmful to the divorcing or divorced couples. When asked about the possible negative outcomes of endogamy, another respondent from the younger group commented that endogamy creates a culturally homogenous community which can harm the multicultural atmosphere in North Cyprus. Still, only a few of the interviewees touched upon the negative impacts of endogamy on the integrity of the community.

Young women presented two different states of mentality during the interviews. There are two possible explanations for this. First, young women in the study were mostly highly-educated, secular women from urban areas. Owing to their higher levels of education, these women adopted universalistic perspectives which contrast their ascribed status (i.e., being a member of an ethnic group which is determined by 'birth'). These same women also argued that they prefer endogamous marriages for the continuity of the group. However, at the same time, they said that they are comfortable with exogamous marriages since they value individual preferences and respect the choices of others. However, the older generation's identification with the group has never been challenged by universalistic values; therefore, they were able to present more consistent views on endogamy. Second, the discourse of population extinction is mostly produced and imposed upon the young members of the community mainly by the older generations. The young generation reidentifies with the group by internalizing the narratives on population extinction and assimilation. Therefore, they feel that they are responsible for protecting the group even though they lack a strong feeling of belonging to the group.

Cultural continuity was another significant theme discussed during the interviews. It was referred to as one of the ways of sustaining and strengthening the unity of the community. Most of the respondents agreed that to strengthen the integrity of the

community cultural continuity is essential since it guarantees the existence of an ethnic group. In other words, the integrity of the community increases the possibility of building strong bonds with one's own cultural and ethnic background among the next generation of co-ethnics. Even though nearly all of the respondents agreed that cultural continuity positively influences the integrity of the community, there were a variety of different responses about the 'ways' of achieving cultural transmission. For instance, not all of my respondents agreed that endogamy is the primary source for transferring cultural identity to the young ones. More than half of the interviewees claimed that endogamy functions as an instrument for sustaining cultural continuity. Differences in opinions varied according to age. Young and middle-aged women between the ages of 25 and 40 will be referred to as the 'younger group', whereas those between the ages of 40 and 75 form the 'older group'. Older women believe that in exogamous marriages children are raised in a multicultural environment which prevents them from internalizing the 'pure' Turkish Cypriot culture. Besides, they argue that if a Turkish Cypriot has an exogamous marriage, the 'foreign' party can impose his/her own culture on family members which will hamper the process of cultural reproduction among the Turkish Cypriot community. Only four of the fifteen women from the older group argued that endogamous marriage is not a must for sustaining cultural continuity. The rest said that endogamy is crucial and necessary for the transfer of cultural assets to the next generations. Besides, few of these women (who also favored endogamous unions) referred to the unity of religion, language and nation in endogamous marriages. They argued that unity guarantees the transfer of traditional culture to the following generations. Moreover, nearly more than half (eight of fifteen) of the women from the younger group believe that it is not possible to sustain cultural continuity only through marriage. In other words, they claimed that endogamy is not a must for cultural transmission. Young and middle-aged women attach more importance to the initiatives of parents concerning cultural transmission. They said that cultural transmission depends on the ambitions of mothers or fathers. Children can appropriate the cultures of both parents in exogamous marriages. Moreover, in this type of marriage, children are expected to adopt a multicultural identity which contains Turkish Cypriot identity as well.

A further issue that emerged from the interviews was the role of culture in the self-identification of group members which also influences the process of cultural transmission. For instance, two respondents from the younger group argued that ‘traditional culture’ is not all-important in their daily lives. In this context, in exogamous unions, transferring traditional culture to children does not have any importance for them. A possible explanation for this might be that the younger generation of women in the study do not believe in the necessity of adopting all of the central characteristics of the Turkish Cypriot culture to identify themselves as ‘Turkish Cypriots’. The ways an ethnic group defines the cultural basis of its ethnic identity influences the transfer of cultural history to the next generations since the ‘assets’ that are transferred to the younger co-ethnics are determined during the process of defining what makes the group different from others. If the members of an ethnic group do not define their ethnic identity on the basis of ‘culture’, loss of cultural characteristics may not result in a loss or weakening of their ethnic identity in the perception of group members. Aydingün and Aydingün (2007) argue that “... if an ethnic group loses some of its cultural characteristics, or selectively takes and internalizes certain elements from other cultures, this does not necessarily entail a change in its ethnic identity” (p. 127). Thus, ethnic and national consciousness can be adopted even if certain cultural characteristics are lost. The above-mentioned group of young women mostly defined their ethnic identity on the basis of self-identification. Even though they attached considerable importance to the role of language and other assets of their traditional culture, they commented that being a Turkish Cypriot was mostly determined by the feeling of belongingness to the Turkish Cypriot community. Most of these young women were particularly critical about the current population number of the native Turkish Cypriots in North Cyprus. Their concerns about the population size (the discourse of demographic dangers) might be a factor that triggers their will to preserve their ethnic consciousness as discussed above. On the other hand, for the older generation of respondents who were over age 40, loss of culture was perceived as a step towards the disappearance of group identity. This perspective was shared by only a small number of participants from the younger group. A possible explanation for this might be that middle-aged and younger women in Northern Cyprus lives in an

environment which is multicultural when compared to older generations. Due to their higher levels of education, this group of women adopted flexible perspectives about the boundaries of Turkish Cypriot identity rather than prioritizing rigid cultural assets and rules as it is the case for the older generations. These discussions about the loss of traditional culture provide clues not only about the dynamics of cultural transmission but also about the ways through which Turkish Cypriots define their ethnic identity with respect to generational differences.

Location of post-marital residence was another strong theme that emerged while discussing cultural transmission. Most of the respondents who disfavored exogamous marriages argued that if the couple (those who married exogamously) lives in North Cyprus, transferring their traditional culture to their children becomes easier. As they argued, people who live in other countries after they marry have to adapt themselves to a new social environment which will gradually lead to loss of cultural characteristics weakening their ethnic identification. Since children born out of this type of marriages have to adapt themselves to their social environments, they internalize the culture of the country which they are settled in. Loss of culture in the face of migration was mostly a concern for the older generations who argued that endogamy is necessary for protecting their culture. This is because the older generations equate their ethnic identity and culture directly with a physical location. A move away from this physical location, from North Cyprus, was seen as a step away from their cultural characteristics and ethnic identity. This is mostly because the older generations had experienced the bloody inter-communal conflicts which resulted in the division of the island into two geographical parts. After the division, while the Northern side of the island was perceived as the homeland of Turkish Cypriots, the Southern side was claimed to be the land of Greek Cypriots. Therefore, geographical borders in time became the national borders dividing the two communities. Under these circumstances, older generations developed a strong relationship between their physical location and their ethnic identity.

The younger group had more flexible ideas about the post-marital residence. Since most argued that cultural transmission is mostly based on the ambition or initiative of the parents themselves, place of residence appeared to be of secondary importance for this group of women. They perceive their ethnic identity beyond frontiers and borders and believe that ethnic identity can be sustained in different locations. Thus, in their perception we see that “ethnicity ‘spills over’ the frontiers and borders that contain a territory or nation-state” (Hummell, 2014, p. 50).

Even though the statements from different generations of women showed variations, they all agreed that transmission of society’s culture to the younger generations is necessary for sustaining cultural continuity. However, different perspectives were presented about how to transmit the cultural values of their society. This challenges Saleem et al. (2015) who claim that endogamous marriage is the *only way* through which new generations can internalize the traditional culture and values of their ancestors. Thus, ‘cultural continuity’ and ‘endogamous marriage’ are related, yet, it is a complicated relationship. As some of my respondents said, transfer of culture to the next generations can be provided by other mechanisms as well. Cultural festivals can be a good example of these alternative mechanisms. For instance, during my visit to a festival in a village of Kyrenia, right after a children’s folk dance show ended, I heard the announcer saying that folk dancing is one of the best ways to instill the traditional culture to children. Her announcement received an overwhelming ovation from the participants who were from both rural and urban areas. Increase in the state-supported cultural activities, regulation of formal education in line with cultural contextuality and the initiative or ambition of the parents to transfer their cultural background to their children were referred to as the alternative mechanisms for transferring the Turkish Cypriot culture to the young ones.

Language was described by Smith (1991, p. 23) as one of the objective cultural markers of an ethnic group. Being an important indicator of ethnic identity, language functions as a barrier between the members of an ethnic group and the outsiders. In other words, the distinctive language of an ethnic group is one of the ways the group

distinguishes itself from others. Moreover, having a good command of community language is associated with the strong identification with the group itself. When the importance of language is considered with respect to the integrity of the community, the transmission of community language to the next generations is a crucial factor in sustaining the presence of an ethnic group in the future. The unique Turkish dialect spoken in Northern Cyprus, known as Cypriot Turkish, is considered as a powerful marker of cultural and ethnic identity. Most of my respondents said that knowing and speaking the unique Cypriot dialect is quite significant for identifying themselves as a 'Turkish Cypriot'. For this reason, in the following pages, I will discuss the transformation of the Turkish Cypriot dialect in interethnic marriages with respect to the integrity of the community.

Language is a critical cultural feature of an ethnic group, but this does not necessarily imply that "language alone is sufficient to establish ethnic membership" (Hummell, 2014, p. 49). Hummell supports this argument by suggesting that the same linguistic category can be appropriated by multiple ethnic groups (2014, p. 49). In this regard, the importance of Turkish Cypriot dialect for the members of the community can be considered based on two critical points. First, the Turkish Cypriot dialect is spoken only by Turkish Cypriots and among its diaspora. This factor renders the Turkish Cypriot context unique and reinforces the role of language in the establishment of ethnic membership. For instance, a small group of people argues that the official language of the state should be Cypriot Turkish rather than the Turkish language. Second, sustaining the presence and continuity of the 'Turkish Cypriot dialect' is not only important in terms of cultural continuity but informs us also about the social relationships occurring in North Cyprus. Especially political and social relations with Turkey rendered the Turkish Cypriot dialect a critical feature of Turkish Cypriot identity since it is the means by which group members resist assimilation policies on the individual level. Transferring, sustaining and guaranteeing the presence of the dialect serve as a defense mechanism against the degeneration of ethnic identity. Thus, it is conceivable to argue that a strong bond is established between ethnic membership

and language in the Turkish Cypriot context deriving from the perceived demographic danger and the fear of cultural and social assimilation.

During my fieldwork, most of the respondents claimed that through formal education and communication networks, the Turkish Cypriot dialect transformed into a more hybrid form. Younger generations started to use different words and pronunciations than the older generations in their daily conversations. In other words, young Turkish Cypriots developed a tendency to speak in a more formal manner while turning away from using some of the words that are peculiar only to Turkish Cypriot dialect. Moreover, many of the respondents said that loss of this specific dialect means the weakening of Turkish Cypriot culture. The majority of the respondents agreed that endogamy provides a smooth ground for the transmission of language since children are expected to learn and internalize the language of their parents. Marrying within the group was seen as an effective way of keeping the group together. Moreover, interethnic marriages are seen as a threat against the preservation of cultural history and the integrity of the community. A considerable number of respondents argued that children born to mixed marriages cannot learn and speak the proper Turkish Cypriot dialect. Even though they internalize the dialect of the community, the transformation of the community language inevitably leads to the *hybridization* of the dialect as well. Even though middle-aged and younger generation of women noted that being multilingual is advantageous for the self-improvement of children, they admitted that the transformation of the language will harm the unity of the community and consequently, children will lose their cultural characteristics in the long run. Not all of the respondents agreed that endogamy is the only effective way for language transmission. Apart from the ethnic background of the parents, respondents referred to multiple factors that influence the language acquisition of children.

When I asked my respondents how exogamous marriages influence the distinctive language of the community, two main themes emerged. Whilst some prioritized environmental factors, others emphasized the importance of the family in the process of learning the language. Concerning the influence of the social environment on

language acquisition, most of my respondents claimed that post-marital residence is a quite significant factor. They said that if a couple (who are married exogamously) settles in North Cyprus, then the community language does not degenerate since children continue to speak the Turkish Cypriot dialect. Children born in North Cyprus are expected to internalize the Turkish Cypriot culture as well. Consequently, they are expected to have a good command of the Cypriot dialect owing to their social and cultural environment. Another group of respondents (mostly younger women) referred to the initiative/ambition of the parents to teach their community's language to their children, as is the case for the transmission of cultural values. The women in this group were mostly between the ages of 25 and 40. They were more flexible and tolerant and also had an individualistic attitude toward interethnic marriages. For instance, they said that they respect people's choices about mixed marriages and that they do not favor to conform to societal expectations. Furthermore, one-third of the total respondents claimed that the mother's nationality is more important than the father's nationality regarding the acquisition of community language. In this context, the child is expected to learn and speak the dialect properly if his/her mother is the native speaker of the Turkish Cypriot dialect. A possible explanation for this might be the way interfamily relationships function. For my respondents, the mother is the primary caregiver in the family. When compared to fathers, mothers spend more time with their children. In this way, children will naturally internalize their mother's language. Besides, the respondents who prioritized the influence of mother tongue on language acquisition suggested that children cannot learn and speak the Turkish Cypriot dialect properly if the mother is a foreigner, including those who live in North Cyprus. This means that if the mother is a Turkish Cypriot in an exogamous marriage, linguistic transmission becomes easier notwithstanding the place of residence. This also points to the fact that women, as bearers of cultural values, are primarily responsible for transferring the traditional language and culture to the young ones. This can be considered one of the reasons why women still appear as important actors in maintaining endogamy. Even though only ten of the thirty respondents referred to the importance of mother tongue, it was a significant argument since it pointed to the



gendered dimension of language acquisition and cultural transmission. More details about the gendered dimension of endogamy will be presented in the following chapter.

Throughout this section, I discussed the influence of endogamy on the integrity of the community. It could conceivably be suggested that the integrity of the Turkish Cypriot community depends on the harmony and coherence of three main themes which are; a distinctive language, traditional culture and group continuity. In the following chapter, I will discuss how endogamy can inform us about the social boundaries constructed by the Turkish Cypriot community. I will address the selective nature of endogamy with respect to gender, education, occupation, and religious differences.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DIGGING UP FURTHER: WHAT IS PECULIAR TO TURKISH CYPRIOT CASE?**

#### **4.1 THE *NORM* OF ENDOGAMY**

In this section, I will provide a discussion on social boundaries created by the Turkish Cypriot community. I will assess whether the Turkish Cypriot community is a closed or an open community through the statements of the respondents on marriage practices. Considering the fact that intermarriage practices inform us about the dynamics of interaction between different groups, the first part of this section deals with social boundaries (i.e., expanding or narrowing boundaries of group membership) of Turkish Cypriot community with a particular focus on generational differences. I will first discuss interethnic marriages with respect to two central themes: social boundary and social distance. Secondly, I will discuss the role of personal autonomy in marriage practices. The second part of this section aims to assess the significance of individual preferences in marriage practices with respect to endogamy. Personal autonomy will be further discussed considering the generational differences and personal resources for withstanding communal pressure. By analyzing the attitudes of my respondents towards interethnic marriages, this section aims to understand and interpret the changing patterns of interaction occurring between different ethnic groups in North Cyprus.

There are several communities which make up the population living in North Cyprus; these are the Turkish Cypriots living together with other groups such as the Turks, Kurds, and Maronite Christians. Even though these groups have been able to live together in peace for many years, social interaction that occurs between these groups is at lower levels than expected. This indicates that social barriers between these groups have not broken down in terms of intimacy. Presence and power of endogamy

is an indicator of the lower levels of social interaction between these groups as well. When 'social distance' and 'social boundaries' are under consideration, the level of social interaction that occurs between Turkish and Greek Cypriots is of great importance. It should be noted that these two communities are the 'divided communities' of Cyprus. Not to mention the physical separation of the two communities through a Green Line in 1970s, these communities were socially distant to each other due to their physical and political separation until the opening of crossing points (checkpoints for crossing the green line) in 2003, nearly three decades after Cyprus was divided. Therefore, it is important to discuss intercommunity marriages between Turkish and Greek Cypriots within the context of 'social distance' to have a better understanding of the practices of endogamy. Furthermore, I believe that examining intercommunity marriages can help us to understand further the social boundaries of the Turkish Cypriot community.

When the concept of 'boundary' is under consideration, it is necessary to refer to Barth (1969), who is an important figure in the constructivist approach in ethnicity studies. He is most known for his argument that ethnic identity is fluid and ready to emerge unpredictably. Rather than employing the concept of 'border', he prefers to use 'boundaries' when approaching ethnic groups. Barth argues that ethnic boundary defines the ethnic group since mental boundaries are more significant than 'cultural stuff'. He discusses that the very process of boundary construction functions to create cultural differences between groups. Besides, Barth argues that boundaries are maintained between ethnic units and in each case by a limited set of *cultural* features. Following Barth, I will approach interethnic marriages with respect to social interaction, boundary formation and boundary maintenance.

Group boundaries are implicit and explicit standards which determine the aspects of the group. For instance, group boundaries determine who can join the group or the expected duties of group members. Group members are allowed to perform particular types of social actions depending on the rigidity or flexibility of group boundaries.

Marriage is one of these actions. Gitelman (2012) underlines the importance of marriage practices for the maintenance of group boundaries as follows:

To maintain boundaries, the ethnic group creates a set of rules on interethnic interaction, which govern such matters as friendship, hostility, or indifference; socializing (especially eating) with members of other groups; allowing others to acquire membership (e.g. through religious conversion) or not; and, most important of all, marrying into other groups or not. (p. 21)

Group membership, as well, emerges as a significant theme with respect to the social boundary. Social, political, cultural, and economic factors can influence the boundaries of group membership, and any discussion of these concepts should be contextualized in the first place. These factors are important in the sense that:

Ethnic identities are relative, situational and dependent on different spheres of interaction. Both context and interconnections remain crucial for the development and maintenance of groups and their boundaries. (Hummell, 2014, p. 51)

Kalmijn (1998) also argues that what makes intermarriage sociologically relevant is that it reflects the boundaries that currently separate groups in society. As Hoşgör and Smits (2002) argue, “the degree of intermarriage between the members of different groups in a society is an important indicator of the strength of the social boundaries between those groups” (p. 417). Moreover, transnational/international marriages inform us about the interaction that occurs between groups from different countries as well. For instance, increase in interethnic marriages may indicate a weakening in the group boundaries and a decline in the level of social distance between the given groups. Therefore, a higher degree of intermarriage may suggest that the group is relatively more tolerant and open when compared to the groups which practice strict endogamy. In other words, groups which are open to outsiders are expected to perceive interethnic marital unions more warmly than the closed groups. Communities with flexible and changing social boundaries may be more open to maintaining social relationships with external communities and community members. Rigid social boundaries limit interaction with outsiders and outside communities. Endogamy points out to the

‘closed’ nature of a given group since it functions as a norm that prevents group members from marrying an outsider. Kalmijn (1998) criticizes this by arguing that endogamy does not necessarily indicate that the given ethnic group has rigid social boundaries. He argues that endogamy can still take place if one group is open and the other closed. In this respect, endogamy does not always reflect that the group has a high level of social distance towards a certain group (p. 397). He continues by stating that endogamy can inform us about which groups interact with whom, yet, marriage practices cannot tell us about ‘why’ they interact (p. 397). This argument is true for the studies based on quantitative research methods. It is critical to note that my study was based on the qualitative research strategy aiming to understand the motivations behind the practice of endogamy. While formulating the research question, particular importance was attached to the questions ‘why’ and ‘how’. During my fieldwork, qualitative methodology granted me the privilege of obtaining detailed inside information about the subtleties of the data. As was clarified in the methodology chapter, I took cognizance of the reasons of why individuals from certain groups are perceived as marriageable while marrying others are disfavored by the community members in the case of interethnic marriages. Therefore, I was able to obtain further information about the dynamics of social interaction with other groups. In this regard, I will provide a discussion on the social boundaries of Turkish Cypriot community while considering the *reasons* of why Turkish Cypriots have higher levels of social interaction with certain groups while avoiding intimacy with others.

To gain deeper insight into the influence of endogamy on the ethnic and cultural identity of Turkish Cypriots, I will focus on the dynamics of group membership on the basis of interethnic marriages in this section. Therefore, I will analyze how attitudes towards interethnic marriages change depending on the acceptance of foreigners from different ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds. At this point, it should be noted the process of ‘acceptance’ can change depending on how the Turkish Cypriot community perceives the outsider. For instance, in interethnic marriages, Turkish people are selective in accepting the outsiders. This influences the marriage process in the way that if Turkish Cypriots are open to social interaction with the outsider’s community,

the process of marrying a foreigner becomes easier. This process is related to the level of social distance between the given groups as well. Therefore, in the following parts of this section, boundaries of the Turkish Cypriot community will be discussed in relation to the concept of social distance.

My research has shown that, in the case of a mixed marriage, social boundaries of Turkish Cypriot community waxes and wanes depending on multiple factors. During the interviews, there were a variety of different responses to the issue under investigation. The openness of the Turkish Cypriot community towards outside groups depends on different factors such as religious, national and cultural differences between Turkish Cypriots and the outsiders. As mentioned previously in Chapter Three, the older generation of respondents (between the ages of 40 and 75) presented more exclusionary views towards the outsiders which influenced their perspectives towards intermarriages as well. For instance, most of the respondents from older generations agreed that endogamy helps Turkish Cypriots to survive *separately* from other groups. This points at the unwillingness of older generations to merge and interact with surrounding populations. Exclusion of outsiders indicates that older generation is not open to social interaction with other communities, especially in the sphere of marriage which is seen as sacred and intimate. A possible explanation for this might be that older generations are more reluctant in overcoming the differences in interethnic unions. They stated that they favor endogamous unions since cultural and religious differences cannot be overcome in mixed marriages, and these differences pose serious problems both for the spouses and for the larger society. Besides the problem of overcoming differences in mixed marriages, 'membership' to the group was another important theme emerged among my respondents from older generations. For the respondents from this age group, group membership is determined by birth. Therefore, being born into a native Turkish Cypriot family is the main criterion for being a member of the community. For this generation of women, it is not possible for an outsider to integrate into the community without being born into it. Herein, social boundaries function as a barrier in the process of integration and serve as a form of self-segregation which prevents the Turkish Cypriot community from

merging with surrounding populations. Thus, social boundaries of the Turkish Cypriot community are more rigid and permanent for the older generation of group members. However, boundaries of the Turkish Cypriot community seemed to become more flexible over time. For instance, younger generation of women (between the ages of 25 and 40) approached on the integration and participation of outsiders into the community more warmly than the previous generation. Most of them said that they welcome cultural differences and that these differences can be 'enjoyable' at certain times. During the interviews, they presented an optimistic perspective towards learning about different cultures. They were more willing to be acquainted with different lifestyles. In other words, younger generation of Turkish Cypriots approached cultural differences with enthusiasm rather than being conservative as the previous generations. In brief, it can be assumed that the Turkish Cypriot community had become more 'inclusive' and 'open' regarding group membership and social interaction with outsiders. However, together with this 'inclusiveness', they still argued that they prefer endogamous marriages. As discussed above, two different states of mentality were presented by the younger generation. During the fieldwork, the younger generation did not mention cultural differences as a disincentive to intermarriage as in the case of the older generation. They referred to the 'demographic danger' and 'loss of culture' when discussing the disadvantages of intermarriages. Besides, the social interaction between the native population and the immigrants influenced the process of boundary formation as well. For instance, older generation's interaction with outsiders was mostly based on the conflicts that arise out of different cultural and social values. In other terms, cultural conflicts were at the center of the social interactions with outside groups. Therefore, for the older generation, the source of mental and social boundaries of the Turkish Cypriot community was mostly cultural differences. As a result of this, the process of boundary maintenance was sustained through the dichotomized statuses of 'us' and 'them', 'traditional' and 'modern', 'native' or 'foreign'. Even though the young generation of respondents commented that they are open to 'outsiders' more than the older age group, the discourses on demographic danger, fear of assimilation and loss of culture seemed to hamper the openness of the young generation to outsiders. This shows that there is a

transformation of the mental boundaries of Turkish Cypriot women. New mental and social boundaries were formed as a result of the changing sociopolitical atmosphere in the island (i.e., decrease in the population size of native Turkish Cypriots, socio-political ties with Turkey, growing population of immigrants from different countries).

During the fieldwork, to gain insight into the intergroup relationships and the social distance between different groups, respondents were asked about the group/community they would disfavor most for interethnic marriages. When respondents were divided into two main groups based on their ages, ten of the fifteen women from the older age group (aged 40 and older) stated that they disfavor marriages with Greek Cypriots most. Only two of these fifteen women argued that they do not welcome individuals from Eastern Turkey for a marriage. Another two of the women from the older group argued that they disfavor Maronite Christians and Armenians. They stated that they find these communities distant from Turkish Cypriots deriving from cultural and religious differences. Only one respondent (Fatma, 75) from this group argued that she disfavors all marriages between Turkish Cypriots and non-Turkish Cypriots without naming any group as the 'most' unfavorable one.

The younger generation (between the ages of 25 and 40) adopted more flexible and warm attitudes about the marriages between spouses who belong to different ethnic or racial groups. For instance, four of the fifteen women from this age group did not name any group/community and argued that they do not disfavor any community in the case of interethnic marriage. Two of the women from this age group argued that, in their perceptions, the most disapproved type of marriage is the one between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Unexpectedly, nine of these fifteen women stated that intermarriage between Turks and Turkish Cypriots is the most unfavorable option. In this regard, there is a meaningful difference in the statements of the two generations. The most significant difference was that whereas the majority of the women from the older generation stated that they disfavor intermarriages between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, only two respondents from the younger generation agreed with this



statement. This gives us clues about the change in the level of social distance between the two communities in the perceptions of Turkish Cypriots.

To capture the complexities of the phenomenon under consideration, now I will discuss this issue further by examining the ‘reasons’ behind the arguments of my respondents. The most significant difference between the two generations was in their views towards marriages with Greek Cypriots. When the respondents from the older generation of women were asked why they disfavor marrying a Greek Cypriot the most, seven of them said that the clashes occurred between two communities in the past is the main reason that they perceive Greek Cypriots as the most unfavorable group for a marriage. As they noted:

I strongly disfavor marriages with Greek Cypriots, of course. My father is a martyr who died during the war between two communities. We grew up in a stressful environment. Throughout my whole life, I've had the fear that a war could outbreak in the island again. I am a 47-year-old woman, and I still had this fear in mind. (Aysel, 47)

I think the most inappropriate option is to marry a Greek Cypriot. I have witnessed the war. I was fourteen years old when the clashes occurred on the island. I'm not a nationalist woman, but I developed an antipathy towards Greek Cypriots due to the history of war. I can't say that I bear hostility towards them, but I don't trust the Greek Cypriot community. I couldn't forget the things (bombings, rapes...) that happened during the war. (Suna, 57)

I do condemn marriage between a Turkish Cypriot and a Greek Cypriot. I've not witnessed a marriage like this before. I'm not sure if this is because of the clashes between two communities in the past or the hostility towards Greek Cypriots. In any case, marrying a Greek Cypriot is not widespread among Turkish Cypriots. Maybe this is why I do not approve marriages of this type. (Seval, 65)

In line with the aforementioned excerpts, the older generation of women who have experienced the bloody clashes between the two communities developed an antipathy towards Greek Cypriots due to their traumatic experiences. Smith (1991) argues that warfare is a mobilizer of ethnic sentiments and national consciousness which is also a

centralizing force in the life of the community and a provider of myths for future generations (p. 27). Theoretically speaking, the excerpts above show that history of warfare between the two communities not only shaped the ethnic identity of members of both communities, it also led Turkish Cypriots to feel quite distant from Greek Cypriots. Consequently, warfare had dramatically influenced the perspectives of Turkish Cypriots about the intermarriages between two communities. Despite these, when the younger generations' views on marital unions with Greek Cypriots are considered, it is possible to argue that they are more tolerant towards Greek Cypriots when compared to the elderly members of the community. When their opinions were asked, young women commented that they would welcome this kind of marriage since they find Greek Cypriots more tolerable than other groups. The young generation of Turkish Cypriots did not experience the wartime in Cyprus. Besides, they had the chance to visit the southern part of the island owing to the opening of crossing points in 2003. This increased the chance for active social interaction between two communities, especially between the young generations of Cypriots from both sides. On the one hand, most of them said that they feel close to Greek Cypriots due to shared cultural characteristics with the Greek Cypriot community. Whereas nationalist sentiments and history of war distanced the older generations from Greek Cypriots, the claim of 'common Cypriot culture' seemed to function as a unifying factor for the younger generations. Even one of the respondents (Ayça, 27) stated that she does not believe that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots are two separate communities. For her, these two communities were separated through nationalist claims. She continued by suggesting that both communities belong to one nation (and named this one nation as 'Cypriots') since they share common traditions. Regarding interethnic marriages, she said that marrying a Greek Cypriot is not different than marrying a Turkish Cypriot. On the other hand, young women in the study stated that the most intolerable group for intermarriage is the Turks, mainly from Eastern Turkey. While the importance of a common culture in mixed marriages led to a more warm perspective towards Greek Cypriot community for the young generation of respondents, the importance they attached to 'culture' on the contrary led to the disapproval of intermarriages with Turks. Most of them stated that there exists a considerable cultural

difference between the Turks and Turkish Cypriots. As it was discussed in the earlier chapters, the cultural difference between Turks and Turkish Cypriots derives from the fact that most of the respondents believe that Turks are mostly conservative; thus, not modern. However, older respondents stated that they prefer Turks over Greek Cypriots in the case of a mixed marriage. It is difficult to explain this, but it might be related to the belief among the older generation that Turks and Turkish Cypriots are citizens of the same nation. Nevertheless, these arguments do not necessarily indicate that the older generation approves marriages between Turkish Cypriots and Turks. Although they feel closer to Turks than Greek Cypriots, they emphasized that 'endogamy' is always the preferred option for marriage.

The information mentioned above indicates that culture is not always a source for the higher levels of social distance between groups. Rather than cultural difference, the social interaction between groups seemed to determine the level of social distance between them. The older generation's unpleasant memories from inter-communal conflicts created new mental and social boundaries towards Greek Cypriots even though both communities used to share a common culture before and during the conflict period. Thus, the existence of a common culture (or lack of cultural differences between groups) did not prevent Turkish Cypriots from distancing themselves from Greek Cypriots. However, in the case of the younger generation, the new social interaction patterns with Greek Cypriots paved the way for the re-appropriation of the 'common island culture'. However, as was mentioned in Section 3.3, the discourse of population danger and assimilation led this generation of women to distance themselves from Turkish immigrants.

Thus far, I presented a discussion on the social boundaries of Turkish Cypriot community and social distance between different groups in North Cyprus. Both concepts are related to the societal expectations and norms that Turkish Cypriot people are expected to follow. On the contrary to these, personal autonomy emerged as a prominent theme during the interviews. Personal autonomy is related to individual preferences in the mate selection. Despite the existence of social norms towards

interethnic marriages, personal autonomy plays a significant role in deciding whom to marry. In other words, personal preferences (in the case of an interethnic marriage) may challenge the group norms about the image of an 'ideal marriage' in the eyes of the community. Leeuwen and Maas (2005) suggest that personal autonomy can be defined as an individual's initiative to resist social pressure. It is related to one's ability to use personal resources to withstand communal pressure (p. 5). I agree that social pressure makes it difficult to marry outside one's ethnic group or social class. However, marrying an outsider is rarely impossible if the partners accept paying the price for their decisions. As Leeuwen and Maas (2005) argue:

Rather than imprisoning, starving, or killing non-conformists, they were forced to pay a price in the form of gossip, vile looks, nasty remarks, lost friendships, the denial of assistance, and being disinherited; those determined enough might decide that this was a price worth paying. Whether they paid was not entirely a decision of the heart; it also depended on their personal resources to withstand such communal pressure. (p. 15)

By considering the significance of personal autonomy with respect to endogamy, firstly, I will elaborate on the importance of personal choices in mate selection. Following this, personal autonomy will be discussed in the frame of respondent's ability to persuade her family about whom to marry when her preferences and actions are challenged by others. Then I will discuss the connotations of the term personal autonomy with respect to interethnic marital unions. I will also elaborate on personal autonomy with reference to 'personal resources' in withstanding communal pressure.

Besides the fact that most people tend to select a marriage partner who shares similar tastes, future earning capacity and character with them, romantic love is also a quite important factor influencing mate selection which gained ground after the eighteenth century in the Western world. This perspective suggests that people prioritize personal compatibility, romantic love and affection in mate selection (Leeuwen and Maas, 2015, p. 18). As mentioned previously in Section 3.1, most of the marriages in North Cyprus were in the category of 'forced marriages' from the 1950s until 1970s. Since arranged marriages were the common type of marriage, individual preferences had no

importance. Therefore, arranged marriages prevented individuals from asserting personal autonomy and prioritizing personal choices in mate selection. In the 1980s and 1990s, individual preferences became more important in mate selection. For instance, both in the rural and the urban settlements, women met their future husbands before their families were engaged in the process. Even though marriages were not 'arranged' or 'forced', families used to engage in the mate selection process actively. Most of the time, when the couple wanted to spend time together, it was arranged or controlled by a family member. Women who married in the 1980s and 1990s had personal autonomy to a certain extent while selecting their partners. The following generation of Turkish Cypriot women who married between the years 2000 and 2015 met their spouses via their peer groups or social environment. They valued romantic love and affection. Most of them argued that romantic love should be at the center of conjugal unions. At the same time, they rejected most of the other limiting rules of the larger society arguing that marriages should be based on compatibility and affection between romantic partners. In other words, both the decision of marriage and mate selection was personal. In the light of these ideas, personal autonomy became even more critical for the younger generation of women.

The role of personal resources in resisting social pressure in the case of mixed marriages is another important theme. There is again a generational difference caused by the changes in the field of personal autonomy. When the respondents were asked about withstanding community pressure in the case of a mixed marriage, the vast majority (eleven of fifteen) from the older generation (between the ages of 40 and 75) suggested that they would withstand such pressure. An interesting finding is that only four of fifteen women from this age group stated that they cannot challenge their families if their families oppose their decision to marry a foreigner. This indicates that majority of the respondents from the older generation believe that they would be able to challenge those who want to control them. Even though endogamy was the normative way of marrying someone in those times (1980s-1990s), it was still possible for women to develop personal autonomy and challenge others. During the interviews, 'persuasion' (convincing their families to accept a mixed marriage) was referred to as

the most conventional way of challenging their family and group norms. Whereas most of the respondents from this group stated that they would try to persuade their families, two of the respondents (Fatma 75, Hatice 68) said that trying to persuade their families would be meaningless. Considering the period (the 1960s and 1970s) these women got married, it can be assumed that developing personal autonomy was very difficult due to the lack of personal resources to withstand community pressure. These women were uneducated, non-working women who were dependent on their families for financial support.

For the younger generation of women (between the ages of 25 and 40), developing personal autonomy seemed to be easier compared to the older generation. The young women in the study also agreed that challenging others was quite difficult for the older women. Only one of the respondents from the younger generation said that she cannot challenge her parents if they do not accept her decision to marry an outsider. Almost all of the women (fourteen of the fifteen) from this group stated that they would resist family or/and community pressure if they were challenged during the mate selection process. For these young women, mate selection should be based on personal preferences and should be centered on romance. This shows that personal preferences play a larger role than any other factor for young women. This group of women also argued that neither the family nor the larger society should interfere in mate selection. Regarding this, they said that if their families oppose their decision to marry someone whom they love, they will challenge their families *by all means*. That is to say that, the notion of ‘romantic love’ has a significant influence on the development of personal autonomy for this age group since they can freely select their marriage partners.

Another critical argument of my analysis is that women’s ability to develop personal autonomy has considerably increased in time. Although women’s ability to claim personal autonomy was not at a low level for the older generation, the younger generation was more courageous about resisting community pressure. Four main factors led to the increase in the personal autonomy of Turkish Cypriot women. First, most of the native Turkish Cypriot women are highly educated. Women who have

higher levels of education are more critical of societal expectations. Most of them believe that the norms and values of the society are outdated and traditional. Second, women's participation in the labor force is higher when compared to other Muslim majority countries. Nearly all of the young women participate in the labor force. Thus, they have more personal resources to withstand community pressure when compared to the older generation of women. Women who now claim their financial powers feel more comfortable when challenging the expectations of others since they are financially independent. Moreover, women who are economically independent of their families are seen as adults who are capable of making their own choices and take over the responsibility for their actions. Therefore, economic independence can ease the process of persuading families in the case of interethnic marriages. Thirdly, younger respondents adopted individualistic values which led them to prioritize their individual decisions and desires rather than meeting the expectations of the larger society. Prioritizing individual decisions in mate selection granted them with higher levels of personal autonomy. Fourthly, the transformations in the sphere of marriage seemed to influence the young generation's thoughts on personal autonomy. As one of the respondents admitted, marrying outside one's ethnic group became less 'abnormal' for the larger society. In this regard, the price that young women have to pay for their decisions becomes less challenging as well. Most of the time, young members of the community are only exposed to gossip and vile looks rather than facing destructive punishment mechanisms. For the older generation, the price of challenging societal norms may result in losing their families' financial and emotional support.

The themes discussed in this section, namely social distance, social boundaries and personal autonomy, are related to the selective nature of endogamy in North Cyprus. Below, I will discuss the selective nature of endogamy with respect to gender, education, occupation, and religion.

## **4.2 SELECTIVE ENDOGAMY**

This section focuses on the selective nature of endogamy in North Cyprus. The research has shown that Turkish Cypriot people tend to be selective in accepting certain types of interethnic marital unions while strongly disapproving of other types. This informs us about the waxing and waning nature of endogamy. In this section, I will adopt a multidimensional perspective to discuss further the dynamics of interethnic and intraethnic marriage practices. There are multiple factors which render endogamy selective in North Cyprus. These are gender, education, occupation, and religion. Firstly, I will consider the role of gender in mixed marriages. I will elaborate on the ‘double standard’ applied to women in the sphere of marriage. Secondly, I argue that the attitudes of Turkish Cypriots towards interethnic marriages show variations depending on the educational, occupational and religious backgrounds of the spouses. In this context, I will discuss the role of education and occupation with respect to interethnic marital unions. Thirdly, I will consider the role of religious differences in relation to social status. Furthermore, I will link selectivity of endogamy to boundary formation and boundary maintenance.

Despite the fact that Turkish Cypriots define themselves as ‘modern’, gender inequality persists in different spheres of social life. In general, gender is one of the most defining factors influencing mixed marriages because there is a clear double standard. Even though endogamy is imposed upon both men and women, whether it is the men or women who fit in with society’s expectations makes a difference in terms of the way it influences the attitude of group members. In general, more parental pressure is exerted on daughters than sons. For instance, a mixed marriage has a higher chance of being accepted by the community if a coethnic man marries a foreign woman. This means that women are judged more harshly when they marry exogamously. Perhaps, an expression of one of my young respondents explains the issue under investigation: “If you are a man, then the road is smooth, but a woman always has to persuade others for her decisions”.



This gender-based double-standard is one of the reasons why I chose women as my interviewees. I chose to conduct interviews only with women for different reasons. Firstly, deriving from my own experiences as a young female community member, I was very aware of the fact that women are exposed to double standard when it comes to marriage as it is the case in many aspects of social life. I was also exposed to a similar kind of social pressure and share similar feelings with the young women in this study as my respondents. In other words, endogamy is being imposed upon women more intensely and implicitly than the male members of the community. Secondly, women had much to say about endogamy since they were the ones who experienced social pressure; they were more willing to share their experiences with me. Thus, women's thoughts and ideas were more fruitful for addressing the needs of the research question of my study. This is also related to my gender sensitivity both during my fieldwork and during the analysis of my data. Thus far, one can easily conclude that the homogeneity of my sample tells only half of the story. However, I asked my respondents about the thoughts and attitudes of their fathers, grandfathers and husbands about mixed marriages as well. Furthermore, I asked them how they reacted or would react if their brothers and sisters married exogamously. Through the narratives of women from different age groups, I probed into the attitudes of both women and men from different generations.

When the respondents were asked about the gender bias in marriages, the majority (twenty-five of thirty women) said that women are exposed to social pressure more than men. Twelve of fifteen women from the older generation (aged between 40 and above) and thirteen of fifteen women from the younger generation (aged between 25 and 40) agreed with this statement. Only three women from the older generation argued that they disfavor a Turkish Cypriot woman to marry a foreigner although they were not against a coethnic man marrying a foreigner. Only two women from the younger generation agreed with this statement. Women from both generations argued that they personally do not think that there should be a gender bias or discrimination when choosing a life partner, emphasizing that it is the larger society that disapproves marriages between native women and outsiders. The respondents further noted that

they do not approach differently to their sons and daughters. Besides, they do not perceive any difference between their brothers and sisters with reference to exogamous marriages. However, they frequently mentioned the importance of gender and claimed that it is more difficult for families to accept their daughter's marriage to a foreigner. This raises the following question: If women from all age groups do not personally exert pressure on their daughters, sisters or other female members of the community, who is then responsible for the gender discrimination in mixed marriages? This dilemma may suggest that individuals are exposed to social pressure only because of their gender, but they can also exert pressure on others *through* their gender. In other words, this shows that the issue is not only about who is being exposed to such pressure; what is equally important is the necessity to consider various other sources of social pressure on women. In line with the statements of the respondents, I argue that social pressure is mostly exerted on women by the male members of the community. Concordantly, when family pressure on women was being discussed during the interviews, some of the respondents pointed to their fathers and other male relatives as the source of pressure on them rather than their female relatives or friends. During the interviews, four critical themes were mentioned while discussing gender bias or discrimination. These were the dominance and independence of men, post-marital residence, descent (group membership), and socioeconomic differences. I will discuss this issue further with a particular focus on these four factors.

Most of the respondents claimed that patriarchy is the source of gender inequality in mixed marriages. Women from both age groups argued that social inequality between men and women in social life leads to the unfair treatment of women especially when the topic is exogamous marriages. A young respondent (26) who has an urban background commented that this is not only about marriage but every behavior of women encounters more reaction and criticism from the larger society. Moreover, the young respondents in the study further noted that gender discrimination in mixed marriages is basically about the gender roles assigned to women by the larger society. Few of the respondents pointed to Islam whereas others to patriarchy as sources of gender discrimination. Both were defined as backward and old-fashioned mentalities

mostly by the young respondents. The ones who pointed to Islam also claimed that the gender bias in mixed marriages derives from the unequal status of men and women in Islam. However, only a few of the respondents mentioned the role of religion in interfaith marriages. This stems from the fact that Turkish Cypriot people do not strictly follow the rules of Islam in their daily lives.

The majority of women emphasized that in the eyes of the community, ‘men’ are always independent; their decisions in general (marriage decision in particular) are not questioned and challenged either by their families or by the community. Most of my respondents claimed that this is because families raise their sons more independent than their daughters. As one of my young respondents noted:

Men are always seen as independent. For example, they aren’t responsible for child-care in the eyes of others. This is the reason why making the marriage decision is always harder for women. Also, families in North Cyprus are too committed to their daughters. They have concerns over the well-being of their daughters. This is always the case. The fear that they can’t protect or control their daughter's life adds to their worries towards mixed marriages. (Eliz, 27)

Women who had exogamous marriages said that they experienced their marriage process tougher than men who are in the same position just because of their gender. For instance, one of my respondents (35), who married exogamously, commented that her brother also had an exogamous marriage and his marriage experience was not as challenging as her marriage. Moreover, her mother also mentioned that her daughter’s marriage to a foreigner received more social pressure when compared to her son’s. This difference in the family’s attitude can partly be explained by the families’ wish to control and protect their daughters. Women are accepted as ‘in need of the protection of others’. This care-support mechanism can be taken as a reflection of the patriarchal ideology as well. This urge to protect women does not only function as emotional support. It leads to lifelong surveillance over their lives. In the name of protection, families find it natural to interfere in the private lives of young women and continuously question their decisions. Families feel uncomfortable when their daughters marry foreigners since this type of marriage separates young girls from their

families and they lose surveillance over their daughters. Not to mention the distrust of foreigners, this physical separation worries the families. Since they perceive men as the head of the household, they feel that they need to protect their daughters from her spouse and her spouse's family. In other words, they want to guarantee the well-being of their daughters after marriage. As was discussed previously in Section 3.2, the post-marital residence is of vital importance for families. When gender is considered regarding physical distance, it is conceivable to argue that the 'protective family' in North Cyprus generates pressure mostly on the female members of the community. There is a feeling among Turkish Cypriots that due to the assumed male dominance in marriage, the young couple is expected to settle into the country of the male spouse after marriage which is called patrilocal<sup>24</sup>. The following excerpt clearly explains the importance of post-marital residence regarding gender:

I think that it's normal for a man to marry a foreigner and bring her to our country. But it's abnormal the other way around. Sometimes I think that it's okay for a man to marry a foreigner but women shouldn't do the same thing. I know a few women who married foreign men, and I criticize them. They are good women who are doing well in their careers. I don't know why I feel strange about this, I don't know why I think in this way. (Seval, 65)

As summarized in the above quote, if a man marries a foreign woman, it is reasonable and expected that the young couple lives and stays in North Cyprus. Besides, most of the time, daughters provide more elderly care for their parents. This can be another reason which is feeding the families' fear to be geographically distant from their daughters. For instance, one of my young respondents (who married exogamously) noted that her marriage experience was tough because she was the 'only girl' in her family, and her parents did not want to lose her emotional and domestic support.

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<sup>24</sup> The couple who settles in the husband's home, community or tribe. In the context of this study, patrilocal<sup>24</sup> refers to the residence of the couple (and the children) in the husband's community which is in line with neolocal residence. In general, patrilocal<sup>24</sup> is associated with patrilineal descent.

Gender discrimination in mixed marriages reflects the more rooted fears held by the community members. Due to the small size of the native population, group membership is more important and appreciated by the Turkish Cypriot community when compared to other groups with larger population size. For instance, in interethnic unions, male spouse's ethnic and cultural background raises more concerns among the community members. From a theoretical perspective, 'patrilineage' can partly explain this situation<sup>25</sup>. In patrilineal descent systems, individual's family membership derives from his or her father's lineage; thus, generations are connected through the father's line. Therefore, children are considered to be the father's descendants. In this regard, males pass on their family identity to their children. Even though in North Cyprus both patrilineal and matrilineal descent systems coexist together (bilateral descent<sup>26</sup>), the statements of my respondents pointed to the dominance of patrilineage. The principle that descent is transferred through the male line represents itself as the dominance of the ethnic identity of the male spouse in interethnic unions. We can see this in the hybridization of ethnic identity. As was discussed in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, in exogamous marriages children adopt a multicultural identity which leads to the loss of pure Turkish Cypriot identity; gender plays a vital role in this process. There is a belief among the respondents that the father's ethnic identity is the dominant one during this process of cultural transmission and that it renders women's cultural identity open to assimilation. In other words, if a woman marries a man from a different ethnic background, she is expected to converge to her spouses' religion or ethnic identity. In some cases, women are even expected to change their names in their spouse's language. For instance, as two of my respondents said, especially the older members of their families renamed foreign women who married the male members of their family. However, this never applies to foreign men who marry a native Cypriot woman. This renaming behavior reflects the motivation to assimilate foreign women

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<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that patrilineage does not always indicate that the society is patriarchal. However, most of the time patrilineage and patriarchy coexist simultaneously.

<sup>26</sup> Bilateral or cognatic descent system is a line of descent which reckon kinship through the father and the mother more or less equally. It is also referred to as 'cognatic descent'.

into the native culture, which shows the desire to transform an outsider to an insider (i.e., to transform ‘her’ into one of ‘us’). The community believes that it is harder (if not impossible) to transform men into an insider from an outsider position since men are seen and accepted as the dominant party. As the following excerpts illustrate:

I think women can easily adapt to a new culture, but it’s not the case for men. Men are always more dominant than women. This is why they can’t adjust to a new environment easily. In mixed marriages, men’s culture is also more dominant than women’s. (Ayşe, 54)

The adaptation of men to a new culture is always difficult than women. Women are more comfortable in adapting to a new culture. For example, if a man marries a foreign woman and if they live in North Cyprus, he imposes his local culture on his spouse, but women can’t do this. (Nergül, 35)

This means that if a woman marries a foreigner, the community loses one of its members. On the contrary, if a man marries a foreign woman, a new member joins the group. This reinforces the presence of the community in the future since every new member adds to the population number. In other words, the community approaches warmly to foreign brides since they pose a threat neither to the group nor its cultural continuity. However, if a Turkish Cypriot woman marries a foreigner, this does pose a threat to cultural continuity since Turkish Cypriot culture will be of secondary importance and since the population, in general, feels threatened by demographic danger and assimilation.<sup>27</sup>

An interesting situation emerges when women’s submissive status in the family is considered with respect to cultural continuity. The *paradox* is that even though women as bearers of culture are referred to as the primary agents of sustaining cultural continuity, it is men who appropriate culture and claim the right to transfer it to others through marriage or the family line. Women are primarily responsible for transferring culture to the young members of the family (in the ‘private’ sphere), whereas men are conferred the right to enlarge the group by assimilating foreign women into the local

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<sup>27</sup> This issue was discussed in detail in Chapter Three, Section Three.

culture through marriage. This may point to the fact that the boundaries of the group are mostly formed by men but mostly expected to be protected and sustained by women. Therefore, when women interact with an outsider or outside groups, this poses a threat to the community as in the case of mixed marriages. While having due regard to the fact that marriage is the most intimate sphere in social interaction, marriages between Turkish Cypriot women and outsiders still pose a challenge for the community members.

Socioeconomic differences also influence the gender bias. Women with higher levels of education (from urban areas) are less exposed to social pressure when compared to women with lower levels of education (from rural areas). Even though there is not a meaningful difference between rural and urban areas in terms of mixed marriages, mixed marriages are generally rare in rural areas. There are four reasons for this difference. Firstly, as the respondents claimed the frequency of mixed marriages influences the attitudes of the larger society. There is a belief among Turkish Cypriots that men have exogamous marriages more frequently than women. When their female coethnic marries a foreign man, this is perceived as an extraordinary situation, and the spread of negative gossips is more likely than the other way around. When interethnic unions are seen more frequently in urban areas, they more or less turn out to be 'ordinary' in the eyes of the community. In this regard, increasing levels of interethnic unions break down the prejudices against foreigners and also reduces the pressure on women in urban areas. This suggests that normalization of ethnically mixed marriages leads to a decrease in the level of gender discrimination although in an indirect fashion. Secondly, during the fieldwork, the respondents frequently mentioned that in the rural areas people are more conservative. This not only leads to being against mixed marriages but also shapes their perspectives about gender roles. In rural areas, women are assigned more traditional roles in the family when compared to urban women. Even though most of the young women with a rural background participate in the labor force (their workplaces are mostly in urban areas), one cannot ignore the power of parental influence or control. For instance, young women from rural areas conform to the beliefs, attitudes and behavior of the group more than their coevals from urban

areas. Both their conformism and their families' attitude towards mixed marriages lead to higher social pressure on these women. Thirdly, most of the respondents noted that since young women from urban areas have higher levels of education, the role of the family in the decision-making process becomes less critical, which renders marrying exogamously less challenging for them. The community respects these women's personal decisions and ambitions due to their higher levels of education. Fourthly, residential segregation or constraints on the exposure to socially different people decreases the chance to marry exogamously since residential segregation can foster endogamy by lowering opportunities (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 418). For instance, some respondents mentioned that since women from urban areas are more likely to study abroad, they are also more likely to meet someone with a different ethnic or religious background. For the women in rural areas, the chances of meeting a foreign man are quite low compared to their urban coevals, which means lower chances of exogamy in rural areas. If a woman with an urban background marries exogamously, it is more acceptable and predictable for the community members. Besides, due to their high educational backgrounds, these women are expected to marry someone with a similar educational background. As I will discuss below, the higher social status of a foreign spouse receives less negative reactions from the community members. This is also related to the homogeneous composition of the Cypriot population and the social isolation of the people living in rural areas. Due to these two factors, the set of norms and values are also homogenized which creates rigid norms about mate choice. Consequently, non-conformist members in rural areas are exposed to higher social pressure when compared to women in urban areas where different sets of norms coexist together. Thus far, I discussed how the socioeconomic status of women influences their experiences during the mate selection process. I will now discuss the influence of socioeconomic differences in more detail with respect to education, occupation, and religion.

In the literature on endogamy, different types of endogamous marriages based on racial, educational, religious, and ethnic prerequisites have been discussed widely. In general, the importance of education in the mate selection has been associated with



educational endogamy which is generally discussed with reference to modernization theory. As discussed in Chapter 2, achieved statuses will gradually replace ascribed statuses with modernization, which leads to an increase in marriages between individuals with similar educational and cultural backgrounds. Smits et al. (1998) argued that together with the rise of education levels or rationalization, all types of endogamy and homogamy will weaken as individuals become more independent. As was mentioned in Section 3.1, the statements of the young respondents challenged Smits et al. (1998) since all of the young respondents in the study were highly educated and still preferred intraethnic marriages over interethnic ones. My research has shown that Turkish Cypriots favor educational endogamy as well as homogamy. For instance, nearly all of the respondents argued that spouses should have similar educational and occupational backgrounds for establishing a healthy marriage relationship. The uniqueness of the North Cyprus context is that educational endogamy is expected to be supported by ethnic endogamy. Most of the respondents believed that an ideal marriage is the one which occurs between spouses who share common educational, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

Occupational status is generally associated with the social status of individuals. However, during my fieldwork, the educational background was directly associated with occupational status because my respondents believed that educational background directly influences occupational status. In this respect, I argue that these two factors should be analyzed in relation to each other. The statements of my respondents indicated that the social status of the partners determines the type of reactions that couples receive in case of mixed marriages. For instance, the compatibility of the spouses' occupational status determines the level and type of reactions that they receive from the larger society. These reactions can be moderate or intense depending on the social status of the parties. In mixed marriages, this process becomes even tougher since the social status of the partners has a higher importance in the eyes of ethnic group members when compared to endogamous marriages. If the spouse is from a different ethnic group with lower social status, s/he will be evaluated

on the basis of the pre-existing prejudices (like being unreliable or irresponsible) about foreign people.

Compared to other themes, social status was the only one that both generations agreed upon most, and it was the only theme where a meaningful difference could not be obtained between the two generations. For instance, well over a third of the total respondents specified that educational and occupational background influence their attitudes about mixed marriages. Only four of the older women (aged from forty to seventy-five) argued that the level of education or social status does not have any importance for them because they oppose all types of ethnically mixed marriages. However, the rest noted that higher levels of education can eliminate the negative attitudes in the eyes of Turkish Cypriots. Most of the respondents from this age group claimed that if the foreigner has high social status, the group members can readily accept him/her even though they oppose to exogamous unions, and this ensures a smooth process of marriage. Some of the respondents from the older generation argued that even ethnic background of the individuals becomes unimportant if the outsider is with higher socioeconomic status. One of my respondents (45) argued:

Education and occupation are both important when marrying. For example, if you tell your family that you are going to marry a foreigner who is a *worker*, they oppose your decision immediately. However, if you tell them that your spouse is a highly educated person, they automatically think that he is a well-mannered person as well.

Turning now to the statements of the younger respondents, the young generation of women in the study expressed similar ideas as the older generation. All of the women from the younger generation (aged between 25 and 40) agreed that social status is of high importance in shaping the attitudes of the larger society about marriage. Most of them stressed that prejudices towards mixed marriages can be eliminated depending on the social status of the foreign spouse. High social status is always an advantage and may even cause positive reactions from the community. Like the older generation, they also claimed that the high social status of a foreigner makes it easier for the families to accept him/her as a member of the family and community.

To capture the complexities of the phenomenon, I asked women who married exogamously to comment on their life-histories. As they worded:

I think that social status is really important. For example, people think that a university graduate is more open-minded. Despite this, the occupational status of your partner is more important for the people. They are more interested in the financial status of your partner rather than his educational background. My husband is a computer engineer who is doing well in his job, and this really helped me to convince those who opposed to our marriage. (35)

My husband and I are both primary school graduates. So, I hadn't experienced any problem with his social status. Despite this, I know that other people always prefer a 'doctor'<sup>28</sup> over an uneducated person. Even, if a foreigner is a doctor, his ethnic background becomes of secondary importance for the others. (57)

When I was getting married, of course, I received questions about my future spouse's occupation and education. I think that most of the people welcome individuals who have higher levels of education. I'm a pharmacist, and my spouse is an agricultural engineer. I think that people would be more moderate in their reactions if my husband was a pharmacist, too. Still, when they heard that my husband is highly educated, most of the people changed their minds. They had a positive attitude about our marriage. But his career didn't change a thing for those who were uneducated. (28)

It is critical to note that Turkish Cypriots tend to build a trust relationship more easily with people who have high social status. As was discussed in Section 3.1, distrust of foreigners among Turkish Cypriot community is one of the critical factors which reinforce the disapproval of exogamous marriages. When the outsider has high social status, this makes him or her trustworthy in the eyes of the community members and makes choosing a foreigner as a partner a less difficult decision to make. Furthermore, it renders the given mixed marriage non-objectionable for the larger society. For instance, families feel more comfortable about coming up with an explanation when they are criticized by the community since they have a valid ground for convincing

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<sup>28</sup> This statement shows that while being a medical doctor is actually an occupational status, a high level of education is embedded in the occupation itself. This is the reason why education and occupation are being discussed in relation to each other.

others that the person their children is going to marry is a trustworthy and acceptable candidate. Moreover, discussions on social status point to the fact that the group is open to outsiders who have high social status whereas boundaries of the group are rigid for the ones with lower social status.

Social status has a gender dimension as well. Families pay more attention to the status of the males as potential life partners of their daughters. During the fieldwork, this was referred to as one of the ‘unspoken rules’ of marriage in North Cyprus. This is basically related to the fact that transmission of family property or family status is based on the male line rather than the female line. This is quite a sensitive issue not only for endogamous marriages but especially for exogamous ones. For instance, when a male member of the community marries a woman with lower social status, the couple is less likely to receive negative reactions from the community. Community members believe that when a woman marries someone from a higher social class, she and her family will experience upward social mobility. On the contrary, if a Turkish Cypriot woman marries someone who has a lower socioeconomic status, it is expected that the couple will experience downward social mobility.

Religion is another crucial factor which influences the manners of Turkish Cypriot people towards mixed marriages. The significance of religion in interfaith marriages has been widely discussed in the literature<sup>29</sup>. In Section 3.2, religion was discussed with respect to the influence of the secular character of Turkish Cypriot culture on the perception of interethnic marriages. This discussion was mainly based on women’s social status in Turkish Cypriot society and culture. Now, I will elaborate on the role of religion in interfaith marriages. My primary objective is to discuss the connection between religious background and social status in the context of choosing a marriage partner. In general, Turkish Cypriot people again developed a selective perspective towards interfaith marriages as will be discussed below.

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<sup>29</sup> It is critical to note that ‘religion’ still is the most determining factor in interethnic marriages. Interfaith marriages have been banned by religious texts, religious authorities, and also by the governments of several countries.

In Section 3.2, I discussed that the secular character of daily life in North Cyprus is one of the distinctive elements of Turkish Cypriot society and culture. In this context, religion was referred to as a substantial factor influencing the attitudes of the community members towards mixed marriages. The emphasis of being ‘modern’ with reference to the secular way of life in North Cyprus, brings about the expectation that the foreign party should also be modern. Whether a foreigner is perceived as conservative or modern has a direct influence on shaping people’s ideas about his/her social status. As my respondents noted, while high social status positively influences attitudes towards mixed marriages, they still disfavor mixed marriage if the foreign spouse is conservative or traditional. For instance, one of my respondents (53) who married a Pakistani man called attention to the influence of religion on social status based on her experiences. In her words:

I don’t think that a conservative person can change his/her mind through education. For example, since it’s my husband’s country of origin, I’ve met many people from Pakistan. My spouse’s cousin is married to a Pakistani man. They live in America. Her husband is an IMF economist. Even though he is a highly educated person with a professional career, I know that he keeps his cultural traditions alive in America. For example, he disfavours the mixing of men and women in one place. He doesn’t allow his nine-year-old daughter to wear modern clothes. What I mean, I can’t change my mind just because a Turkish man<sup>30</sup> is a doctor or a lawyer. The place of origin is more important to me.

The excerpt above points to the fact that the high social status of a foreigner alone does not lead to positive reactions from the Turkish Cypriot community. Another respondent (65) noted that educational background is important only in endogamous marriages. She claimed that education cannot change the mentality of a conservative person; therefore, social status does not influence her attitude about mixed marriages. However, even though the young generation of women highlighted the importance of cultural identity over religious identity, they also noted that they disfavor marrying someone who is religious and conservative notwithstanding his/her (higher) social

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<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that she considered Turkish men as more conservative and traditional compared to Turkish Cypriot men.

status. It is critical to note that the high social status of an outsider receives positive reactions from the Turkish Cypriot community only if s/he is perceived as modern and secular by the community members. The uniqueness of the Turkish Cypriot case derives from the fact that although social status is important, the religious background is the primary factor most of the time which determines the acceptability of a mixed marriage. This is not related to religious differences but the degree of religiosity matters for the community. The way religion is lived and experienced is the determining factor. For instance, being a Muslim is not what they object to, but being traditional and conservative in association with being a Muslim is seen as a threat mainly to gender equality and women's rights. The same is true for Christians as well. However, since most of the community members perceive Europeans as modern people, their concerns about religious restrictions in daily life were mostly related to Muslim men. Moreover, considering the fact that Turkish Cypriot people perceive religiosity as a part of their cultural identity, the above-mentioned discussion also supports the argument that educational endogamy is expected to be supported with homogamy in North Cyprus.

From a broader perspective, without considering the influence of the factors mentioned above, understanding the nature and dynamics of endogamy in North Cyprus would be an unsuccessful endeavor. The selective nature of endogamous marriage practices in North Cyprus is based on the peculiar characteristics of the Island, which requires to acknowledge the complexity of the issue under investigation.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to explore, understand and interpret the social and cultural dimensions of marital ethnic endogamy practiced in North Cyprus on the basis of Turkish Cypriot women's lived experiences. Considering the fact that marriage practices have deeper social connotations which cannot be limited solely to personal choices such as mate selection, the thesis started with an explorative question: What lies behind endogamy in North Cyprus? While giving importance to the strength of endogamy for informing us about the dynamics of ethnic identity, I aimed at making connections between individual experiences and the larger societal scene through analyzing marriage practices, which is the most important principle of sociological imagination.<sup>31</sup> By benefitting from the basic principles of hermeneutics and phenomenology, I formulated a research question which prioritized the perceptions of Turkish Cypriot women on endogamy. This study addresses endogamy not as an apriori category; instead, the lived experiences of community members are prioritized considering the fluidity of ethnic identity.

The changing socio-cultural atmosphere in the North of the island such as the arrival of immigrants from different countries, concerns over the size of the native population or namely population danger, discourse of assimilation mainly with reference to the economic, political and social relations with Turkey, renders endogamy as an important issue which informs us not only about intra-group relations, but also about inter-group relations such as social interaction and social distance between different groups. Moreover, the significance of endogamy is not only limited to the island

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<sup>31</sup> As Mills (1959) notes, "the sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals." (p. 5).

context; it has become vital in the face of increasing levels of international migration and the refugee crisis around the globe. Therefore, the practice of endogamy is significant not only for sociology or social anthropology, but also for other disciplines such as international relations, intercultural studies, migration studies, and political science. In the context of this study, endogamy helped me to understand and analyze the patterns of interaction between different groups living in North Cyprus with a particular focus on the interaction of group members with Greek Cypriots and Turkish immigrants. Especially following the period of ethnic clashes between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, there emerged severe attempts from different social groups to reconnect the two communities through the discourse of a common island culture. Besides, growing social, political and economic relations with Turkey rendered the situation of Turkish immigrants in North Cyprus a vital problem. This study provided in-depth information about the social interaction between the native Turkish Cypriots and the above-mentioned groups which shed light on the dynamics of politics in contemporary Cyprus which also has become a serious regional problem that continues to dominate the daily lives of the peoples of the island.

The primary motivation of this study was to understand the ways ethnic marital endogamy contributes to the maintenance/persistence of the Turkish Cypriot community with a particular focus on socio-cultural heritage and distinctive Turkish Cypriot dialect (or Turkish Cypriot). Before this study, the influence of endogamy on everyday ethnicity was purely anecdotal due to the lack of academic concern on the topic. This is the first study which considers endogamy in North Cyprus as an important social phenomenon in the community life. Prior to conducting the research, I was aware of the fact that the discourse on endogamy was an essential component of daily life in North Cyprus, especially when social interaction with other groups was considered. The study revealed the social and cultural background behind the evolution of endogamy for understanding its implications on everyday ethnicity.

From a theoretical perspective, understanding the influence of endogamy on the perception and experience of ethnicity necessitates a multidimensional perspective. As



it is evident in the Turkish Cypriot context, approaching endogamy on the basis of modernization thesis provides a limited understanding about social relations since it simplifies the complicated relationship between endogamy and modernization, and also universalizes the route that all societies are bound to follow. My research has shown that although educational endogamy increased among the younger generations as it was suggested by modernization thesis, ethnic endogamy continues to persist. In other words, the phenomenon under investigation is complex and it requires a thorough examination of various factors influencing marriage patterns peculiar to North Cyprus.

Although endogamy has lost its intensity throughout generations in North Cyprus, it is still a crucial factor thought as related to ethnic identity. In the 1950s, arranged marriages within the community were the dominant form of matchmaking. From 1970s until 1990s, this pattern continued to be the normative way of marrying. In the 2000s, the discourse of endogamy changed due to the younger generations' individualistic values and the growing influence and dominance of romantic love in mate selection. The young and educated women challenged the pressure exerted by the community members to transform the traditional values about marriage, which they perceive as non-modern and old fashioned. However, endogamy continued to be preferred over mixed marriages. The influence of family, peer-group and social pressure were addressed as reasons for the persistence of traditional values. The sources and types of social pressure revealed further information about the cultural codes of marriage. In general, family continues to be the primary agent for all generations in the marriage process even though it has lost its strength for the younger generations. Social pressure is of secondary importance and peer-group pressure is the least important factor for all age groups.

Another focus of the research was to understand how Turkish Cypriot people define and perceive their ethnic identity. Turkish Cypriots mostly define and assert their ethnic identity firstly with reference to their culture (including family relations and women's status) and then by their belief system (living Islam in a secular way or lower levels of religiosity) which are followed by the distinctive dialect peculiar to Turkish

Cypriot people. Within this framework, being ‘modern’ is one of the most important attributes of Turkish Cypriot culture which differentiates the group from outside groups, especially from other Muslim groups.

Although culture is a means by which a group differentiates itself from others, this study argues that Turkish Cypriot community sustains and defines their ethnic identity through social interaction with outsiders. This is crystalized in the sphere of marriage through which community boundaries are formed and maintained. The boundary of being ‘modern’ is mostly drawn through the status of women (i.e., clothing of women and their participation in social life) and this has become the primary source of reference for Turkish Cypriot people when defining their ethnic identity in the face of increasing numbers of Turkish immigrants most of whom are from conservative and traditional regions of Turkey. Besides, the boundaries of the community are mostly drawn by men but expected to be sustained and protected by women. Social pressure regarding endogamy is mostly exerted on women by the male members of the community. As bearers of culture, women are assigned roles to keep cultural distinctiveness alive. This is the reason why women are the primary agents of endogamy in North Cyprus.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that endogamy contributes to the maintenance/persistence of Turkish Cypriot identity through utilizing group integrity. Endogamy perpetuates group cohesiveness by guaranteeing cultural continuity, group continuity (physical presence of the group/size of the population), and the transmission of community language. Therefore, it recreates and solidifies the bonds of ethnic group identification and affiliation. Endogamy serves as a defense mechanism against the degeneration of ethnic identity by providing the ground for the intergenerational transmission of traditional culture and language. For instance, mixed marriages are seen as a threat to the integrity of the community since the pure Cypriot culture is expected to be lost in a multicultural family atmosphere. In the long run, this leads to the hybridization of the Cypriot ethnic/cultural identity and the Turkish Cypriot dialect. Even though post-marital

residence and mother tongue are important factors influencing cultural transmission, endogamy continues to be the ideal option for the intergenerational transmission of culture. My research has shown that from the 1950s until mid-1990s, the group practiced endogamy very strictly due to the unity of culture and language. The nature of endogamy has changed when group members felt threatened by demographic danger starting from the 2000s. Fear of social and cultural assimilation threatened young Turkish Cypriots and they began to favor endogamy to preserve the community's traditional culture and distinctive language. This indicates that endogamy has become a social mechanism for rebuilding group integrity.

Endogamy informs us about the level of openness of the groups to outsiders. When analyzing different marriage practices, the level of openness of the group to the surrounding populations was addressed conscientiously. My research confirmed the statement that lower levels of endogamy point to higher levels of openness of the community. Together with the increase in the openness of the group towards outsiders (higher tolerance to differences), the norm of endogamy weakens. The information I obtained through the research pointed to a change in the maintenance of group boundaries as well. Throughout generations, Turkish Cypriot community had become more open and inclusive regarding group membership and interaction with outsiders. Group boundaries have become more flexible owing to younger generations' warm attitudes towards differences and their lower levels of belongingness to their ethnic identity which they perceive as more of a cognitive phenomenon rather than innate and permanent.

It is remarkable that women from different generations have different attitudes concerning marriages with the surrounding populations. The older generation disfavours the Greek Cypriots most for a mixed marriage due to the history of the clashes between the two communities. This points to the accuracy of Smith (1991), who addresses the importance of warfare in the mobilization of ethnic sentiments (p. 27). Even though before the period of clashes these two communities used to share a common Cypriot culture, the unpleasant memories of the clashes between the two

communities led Turkish Cypriots to form mental and social boundaries which ended up in distancing themselves from Greek Cypriots. This is not because they feel hostility toward Greek Cypriots, instead they believe that a mixed marriage of this type can increase the likelihood of conflicts especially when the families engage in the marriage process. Younger generations have optimistic views towards Greek Cypriots while most of them disfavor Turks from Eastern Turkey as a marriage partner. Young, modern, secular and educated Turkish Cypriots' exposure to Turkish immigrants who have more religious and traditional values created a state of tension between these two groups. Moreover, the rising social and political conservatism in Turkey perpetuates the idea that Turks are conservative and adds to the young generations' concerns about marrying Turkish men. On the other side, the discourse of a common island culture seemed to engage young Turkish Cypriots with Greek Cypriots. The increasing contacts between these two communities contribute to this process since the opening of the gates provided chance for dialogue and social interaction. Young Turkish Cypriots feel closer to Greek Cypriots because they have good memories with them unlike the older generations. On the one hand, they form new mental and social boundaries towards the groups which they consider as conservative and traditional (i.e., Turkish immigrants and men from Muslim-majority countries) although they have higher levels of interaction with these groups. Their openness to outsiders is limited to the ones with secular and modern backgrounds. Despite these, group boundaries are not fixed, permanent or rigid for these young women since they mostly hold universalistic values. On the other hand, they still feel belongingness to the group<sup>32</sup> and try to preserve group cohesiveness by forming boundaries towards outsiders whom they perceive as 'undesirable' even though this attitude conflicts with their universalistic values. It should be noted that their contradictory views on endogamy showed the two sides of the story and widened the scope of my research.

Endogamy in North Cyprus has a selective nature. Gender, education, occupation and religion are vital factors influencing the perception of interethnic marriages. Within

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<sup>32</sup> The young generations' belongingness to the group was perpetuated through the discourses of political assimilation and population danger.

these factors, gender is the most important one since it influences others as well. Before conducting the research, as a young Turkish Cypriot woman with gender sensitivity, I already had an idea about gender bias in marriage practices. I was aware of the fact that women are judged more harshly than men if they married an outsider. Including gender in the analysis helped me to understand the peculiarities of the Turkish Cypriot context further. In general, patrilocality and patrilineal descent are the two central themes concerning the gender bias. Patrilocality is perceived as a threat to the unity of the family and implies poor parental surveillance. The unpleasant memories and the stories about women married to Arab or Turkish men add to the worries of the families about patrilocality as well. Because of patrilineal descent, a Turkish Cypriot woman who marries a foreigner is expected to lose her cultural/ethnic identity since males pass on the family status and family identity. This results in the loss of a group member in the eyes of the community and adds to the perception of threat concerning assimilation and population danger. Furthermore, this process also hinders cultural transmission which is of great importance for the continuity of the group. These two themes add to the social pressure on women if they marry exogamously. Social status is another critical theme regarding the selective nature of endogamy. Higher social status of a foreigner implies a smoother process in mixed marriages. However, the religious background of the foreign spouse is more significant than his professional and educational background. Religious differences strongly influence the perception of social status. The uniqueness of the Turkish Cypriot context derives from the fact that not different faiths, but the degree of religiosity is vital for community members. This is because being modern is associated with being secular, and the boundaries of the group are flexible for the ones with secular backgrounds.

This thesis is a modest contribution to the limited literature on ethnicity and ethnic identity in North Cyprus. I will propose future research suggestions by considering the strength and limitations of my research. First, I will consider the theoretical implications of my research which point to the insufficiencies in the literature on endogamy. Secondly, I will propose suggestions for the improvement of studies relevant to the topic and speculate on future directions.

Many studies are concerned with the dynamics of social interaction between different groups in North Cyprus. This study elaborates on the marriage practices which is the most intimate sphere of social interaction; thus, presents a more detailed picture of everyday ethnicity. My study appears to be the first study on North Cyprus which examines ethnicity in the light of phenomenology and hermeneutics by considering the interpretations of group members on the subject topic. Another strength of my research owes to its methodology, namely participant observation and in-depth interviews, since it added a cultural anthropological perspective on endogamy as well. Another strength of my research stems from my theoretical stance since it addresses the role of social boundaries in the maintenance and persistence of the Turkish Cypriot community through analyzing marriage practices. By highlighting the dynamics of social interaction, lived experiences of the group members were addressed in the analysis. This renders the relationship between theory and method well-established in my study.

Despite the voluminous literature on endogamy (i.e., educational endogamy or homogamy), the gender dimension of endogamy remains to be understudied in the literature. My research sheds light on the role of women in the continuity of ethnic groups, which has been neglected especially in the area relevant to the question of ethnicity in North Cyprus. Moreover, even though a considerable amount of studies are concerned with the relationship between gender and ethnicity, very few studies discuss gender, ethnicity and marriage together. Analyzing these three factors in relation to each other provides important clues about the everyday ethnicity. Moreover, the factors which influence marriage practices such as gender, occupation and status are studied in isolation from each other which simplifies the complexity of the issue under investigation.

Finally, a number of significant limitations need to be considered. First, this study has focused only on ethnic marriage patterns based on the perceptions of Turkish Cypriot women. When social interaction with other groups is considered, it is possible to argue that this is only half of the story. Further research which includes the perspectives of

the 'others' would contribute to the literature on ethnicity and marriage practices and also to the studies about Cyprus politics. Especially in countries where ethnic conflict is on the front burner of their political agenda, there should be more studies focusing on patterns of interaction between different groups. Secondly, the sample size may be considered as limited although it provided the chance for obtaining in-depth information. Even though a rich vein of information has been possessed during the research, a larger sample size which includes participants from various socioeconomic backgrounds could have enriched the data by extending the scope of the sample beyond the middle class. Furthermore, even though I asked women about the ideas and thoughts of their husbands, fathers and grandfathers, conducting interviews with both genders would enrich the data. Further research which includes the perspectives of men (in their own words) would provide more insights and dimensions on the subject matter. Thirdly, I was able to gain knowledge only through the interpretations of the participants. Since quantitative data enables the researchers to generalize the findings of a qualitative study, a mixed method research would be beneficial for the implementation of required social policies regarding population and immigration issues. Fourth and last point is about my positioning in the field as a researcher. I am a member of the Turkish Cypriot community which provided me with substantial advantages when compared to an outsider. Before conducting the research, I worked on constituting an explicit awareness of the possible effects of the insider bias. Even though I consciously considered my positioning in the field as a part of self-reflexivity discussion, being an insider researcher might have prevented me from seeing the bigger picture since sometimes "greater familiarity can lead to a loss of objectivity" (Unluer, 2012, p. 1)

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## APPENDICES

### A. THE ORIGINAL INTERVIEW GUIDE (IN TURKISH)

#### Yarı-Yapılandırılmış Görüşme Formu

##### Sosyo-Demografik Bilgiler

- 1) Yaş
- 2) Cinsiyet
- 3) Doğum yeri
- 4) Medeni durum (Kaç senedir evlisiniz?)
- 5) Kaç çocuğunuz var? Daha fazla çocuk istiyor musunuz?
- 6) Meslek
- 7) Anne ve baba eğitimi
- 8) Anne ve baba mesleği
- 9) Anne ve baba doğum yeri
- 10) Yaşadığı yer, kiminle yaşıyor/hanede yaşayanlar, kardeş (sayısı ve kardeşlerin cinsiyetleri)
- 11) Eğitim geçmişi

##### Evlilik Arka planı

- 1) Eşinizle nerede ve nasıl tanıştınız?
- 2) Evlenmeye ne zaman karar verdiniz?
- 3) Nasıl bir süreçti? Biraz anlatır mısınız?
- 4) Evlenme kararınızı aileniz ve çevreniz nasıl karşıladı?
- 5) Bu süreçte size eşinizin nereli olduğu (nerede doğduğu / ailesinin hangi millete mensup olduğu) ile ilgili sorular yöneltildi mi?
- 6) (Evet ise) Ne gibi sorular yöneltildi?
- 7) Bu sorulara karşı tutumunuz ne oldu?
- 8) Bu tarz sorulardan rahatsızlık duydunuz mu?
- 9) Evlilik sürecinde herhangi bir problem yaşadınız mı? Aile baskısı ya da çevre baskısı?

- 10) Eş seçimi sırasında uymanız gereken ve açıkça söylenmeyen kurallar var mı? Varsa, bu kuralların baskısını hissettiniz mi?

### **Grup içi ve Grup dışı evlilik**

- 1) Sadece başka bir millete mensup olduğu için biri ile evlenmeyi reddeder misiniz?
- 2) Sizce Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta evlilik kararı alınırken eşlerin doğum yerleri veya hangi millete mensup oldukları bir önem taşır mı?
- 3) Sizce Kuzey Kıbrıs halkı bir Kıbrıslı Türk'ün başka milletten biriyle evlenmesini nasıl karşılar?
- 4) Bir Kıbrıslı Türk'ün başka bir milletten, ya da halktan biri ile evlilik yapmasını siz nasıl karşılırsınız?
- 5) Aile büyükleriniz nasıl karşılar? Eskiden nasıl karşılanırdı ve sizce şimdi nasıl karşılanır?
- 6) Eğer bir sıraya koyacak olursak; bir Kıbrıslı Türk'ün hangisi ile evlenmesini hoş karşılamazsınız? (Kıbrıslı Rum, Kıbrıs'taki diğer etnik azınlık grupları (Maronitler, Ermeniler, Latinler...), Türkiyeli (il farklılıkları), Kıbrıs'ta ikamet eden Türkiyeli (ailesi Türkiyeli fakat kendisi Kıbrıs'ta doğmuş olanlar – KKTC vatandaşı olanlar), İngilizler, diğer milletler...)
- 7) Sıralamayı bu şekilde yapmanızın sebepleri nelerdir? Örneğin...
- 8) Sizce Kıbrıslı Türklerin kendi aralarında evlilik yapmaları Kıbrıs Türk toplumu içerisindeki birliği ya da dayanışmayı nasıl etkiler?
- 9) Peki bu birliğe ya da dayanışmaya olumsuz etkisi olur mu? (Uzun vadeli veya kısa vadeli olumlu ya da olumsuz etki)
- 10) Bir Kıbrıslı Türk'ün başka bir milletten biri ile evlenmesi ile kıyaslayınca, bir Kıbrıslı Türk'le evlenmesi sizce ne gibi avantajlar sağlar?
- 11) Bir Kıbrıslı Türk'ün yine bir Kıbrıslı Türk'le evlenmesinin (grup içi evlilik) sizce olumlu ve olumsuz yanları neler olur?

### **Sosyo-Ekonomik (Sınıfsal) Farklılıklar ve Cinsiyet Alanı**

- 1) Bu tarz bir evlilikte, Kıbrıslı Türk olmayan tarafın eğitim durumu ne kadar önemlidir? Neden?
- 2) Bu tarz bir evlilikte tarafların meslekleri sizce ne kadar önemlidir?
- 3) Sizce bu tarz bir evlilikte, Kıbrıslı Türk bir kadının başka milletten biriyle evlenmesi ile, Kıbrıslı Türk bir erkeğin evlenmesi arasında fark var mıdır?

### **Kültür ve Dil Alanı**

- 1) Sizce Kıbrıs ağzının 'Kıbrıslı Türk' olarak hissetmekteki önemi nedir?

- 2) Bir Kıbrıslı Türk'ün, başka bir milletten biri ile evlenmesi sizce dilimizin korunmasını ya da geliştirilmesine nasıl etki eder?
- 3) Kıbrıs Türk ağzının (dilimizin) korunması önemli mi? Neden?
- 4) Bu tarz bir evlilikte Kıbrıs ağzının çocuklara aktarımı sizce nasıl etkilenir?
- 5) Sizce kültürümüzün (dil, din anlayışı, gelenek, görenek, örf ve adetler) korunması için Kıbrıslı Türklerin kendi aralarında evlilik yapmaları gerekli midir?
- 6) Sizce sadece evlilik yoluyla kültürümüz korunabilir mi? Bu tarz bir evliliğin gelecek nesillere kültürümüzü aktarmakta ne gibi etkileri olur?
- 7) Peki bu tarz bir evlilik sonrasında eşlerin yaşamak için seçtikleri ülkenin sizce bir önemi var mı? Yaşamak için seçilen ülkenin çocuklara Kıbrıstürk kültürünün aktarımı açısından ne gibi bir önemi var?
- 8) Sizce bir Kıbrıslı Türk başka milletten biri ile evlilik yaptığında bu tarz bir evlilik, evlilik içerisinde kültürel çatışmaya yol açar mı? Çevrenizden örnek verebilir misiniz?
- 9) Bu tarz bir evlilikte, Kıbrıslı Türk olmayan kişinin hangi dine mensup olduğu sizce önemli midir? Evet ise, neden? Çocuğunuz başka milletten/halktan biri ile evlenmek istese nasıl karşılardınız?
- 10) Bu durum kız ve erkek çocukları için farklılık gösterir mi?
- 11) Sizce bu tarz bir evliliğin çocuklar için ne gibi avantajları ya da dezavantajları olur?

### **Görüşmecinin Ailesinin ve Sosyal Çevresinin Tutumu**

- 1) Sizce evlenme sürecinde eşlerin nereli oldukları ile ilgili ailelerin tutumu ne kadar önem taşır?
- 2) Peki arkadaş çevresinin tutumu ne kadar önem taşır?
- 3) Sosyal çevrenizde farklı ülkelerden evlilik hikayeleri, ya da örnekleri var mı?
- 4) Ailenizde bu tarz evlilik hikayeleri var mı? Eğer varsa paylaşmak ister misiniz?
- 5) Sizce bu tarz bir evliliği sizin anne ve babanız nasıl karşıladı?
- 6) Sizce annenizin annesi ve babası bu tarz bir evliliği nasıl karşıladı?
- 7) Örneğin, kız kardeşiniz böyle bir evlilik yapmak istese nasıl karşıladınız? Aynı bakış açısı erkek kardeşiniz böyle bir evlilik yapmak istese yine geçerli olur mu?
- 8) Kendi çocuklarınız farklı bir ülkeden birisiyle evlilik yapmak istese siz nasıl karşıladınız?
- 9) Bu tarz bir evliliğe aileniz karşı çıksa ne yapardınız?
- 10) Bu tarz bir evliliğe arkadaş çevreniz karşı çıksa ne yapardınız?
- 11) Sizce bu tarz bir evlilik eşlerin aileleri arasındaki sosyal ilişkileri nasıl etkiler?

### **Kapanış**

- Genel olarak konuya ve sorulara dair eklemek istediğiniz bir şey var mı?

## **B. THE INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)**

### **Semi-structured Interview Guide**

#### **Socio-demographic Information of the Participants**

- 1) Age (or birth date)
- 2) Gender
- 3) Place of birth
- 4) Marital status
- 5) Number of children (Do you want to have more children? If yes, why?)
- 6) Professional / Employment status
- 7) Education level of the participant
- 8) Education level of the parents
- 9) Employment status of the parents
- 10) Which country was your mother/father born in?
- 11) Place of residence, Composition of the household (number of people living in the household, number of siblings and gender of siblings)

#### **Marital Background**

- 1) Where and how did you meet your spouse?
- 2) When did you decide to marry?
- 3) Can you tell me how you experienced the process of marriage?
- 4) How did your family and social environment approach on your marriage decision?
- 5) Before marrying, did people ask you about the ethnic origin of your partner or his family's?
- 6) If yes, what kind of questions did they ask?
- 7) If yes, how did you feel about these questions? / Did you feel uncomfortable with these questions?
- 8) Did you face any problems during the marriage process?
- 9) Do you think that there are hidden rules about choosing a spouse that people do not openly talk about? Did you feel the pressure of these hidden rules?

#### **Endogamy and Exogamy**

- 1) Would you refuse to marry someone just because they belong to another nation?

- 2) Do you think ethnic origin of the spouses influence the marriage decisions in North Cyprus?
- 3) How do you think the people of Northern Cyprus approach a marriage between a Turkish Cypriot and a foreigner?
- 4) How would you approach to this kind of a marriage?
- 5) How would the elders in your family approach to this kind of a marriage? Is there any difference between the past and the present?
- 6) Which group do you disfavor most for marrying? (Turkish immigrants living in North Cyprus, Turks from Turkey, Greek Cypriots, or other minority groups living in Cyprus etc.)
- 7) Can you explain the reasons for backing up your preference?
- 8) How does it affect the solidarity within the Turkish Cypriot community if Turkish Cypriots marry among themselves?
- 9) Do you think this kind of marriages have negative outcomes for the community? (In the long run or in the near future)
- 10) When compared to a marriage between a native and a foreigner, what kind of advantages does the marriage of a Turkish Cypriot with a native provide?
- 11) What do you think is positive and negative about a Turkish Cypriot marrying a Turkish Cypriot (in-group marriage)?

### **Socio-Economic Differences and Gender Dimension**

- 1) How important is the education level of the non-Turkish Cypriot person in a mixed marriage? Why?
- 2) How important do you think the occupations of the parties are in this kind of marriage? Why?
- 3) Does it make any difference to you that the Turkish Cypriot who marries a foreigner is a woman or a man?

### **Culture and Language**

- 1) What is the significance of Cypriot Turkish in feeling as a Turkish Cypriot?
- 2) How does it affect the preservation or development of our language if a Turkish Cypriot marries a foreigner?
- 3) Is it important to protect/preserve our community's language? Why?
- 4) How do you think the transfer of the Cypriot language to children is affected in this kind of marriage?
- 5) Do you think that it is necessary for Turkish Cypriots to marry among themselves in order to preserve our culture (language, religion, traditions and customs)?
- 6) Do you think our culture can only be preserved through marriage? What effect does this kind of marriage have in transferring our culture to future generations?

- 7) How important is the country the couple chose to live in after marriage? What is the importance of the country they choose in terms of transferring Turkish Cypriot culture to the children?
- 8) Do you think that when a Turkish Cypriot marries a non-Turkish Cypriot person, it leads to cultural conflict within the marriage? Can you give an example from your own social circle?
- 9) How important is the religion of the non-Turkish Cypriot party in a mixed marriage? If yes, why?
- 10) How would you feel if your children decided to marry a person with a different ethnic origin?
- 11) Do you think this situation differs for girls and boys?
- 12) What are the advantages or disadvantages of this kind of marriage for children?

### **The Attitudes of the Family and Social Environment of the Interviewee**

- 1) How important are the families ' attitudes about the ethnic origin of the spouses in the process of marriage in North Cyprus?
- 2) How important is the attitude of the friends/peers about the same issue?
- 3) Do you have marriage stories, or examples from different countries in your social environment?
- 4) Do you have this kind of marriage stories in your family? Would you like to share if you have?
- 5) How do you think your parents would approach such a marriage?
- 6) How do you think your grandparents would approach such a marriage?
- 7) For example, if your sister wanted to have a marriage like this, how would you approach it? If your brother wanted to have a marriage like this, would you approach it the same way?
- 8) How would you approach if your own children wanted to marry someone from a different country?
- 9) What would you do if your family opposed your decision to marry a non-Turkish Cypriot person?
- 10) What would you do if your friends opposed your decision to marry a non-Turkish Cypriot person?
- 11) How do you think this kind of marriage affects the social relations between the spouses ' families?

### **Final Comments on the Subject**

- Finally, is there anything else you'd like to share about the topic and the interview?

## **C. THE ORIGINAL VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION FORM (IN TURKISH)**

### **Araştırmaya Gönüllü Katılım Formu**

Bu çalışma ODTÜ Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Sosyoloji Bölümü yüksek lisans öğrencisi Hale Çağansoy tarafından yürütülen bir çalışmadır. Bu form sizi araştırma koşulları hakkında bilgilendirmek için hazırlanmıştır.

#### **Çalışmanın Amacı Nedir?**

Bu çalışmanın amacı Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki evliliklerin etnik temellerini göz önünde bulundurarak grup içi evliliklerin Kıbrıslı Türkler tarafından nasıl algılandığını incelemektir. Bu çalışmada grup içi evliliklerin incelenmesi ile Kıbrıslı Türklerin etnik kimlik, grupla özdeşleşme ve grup içi dayanışma pratiklerine dair bilgiye ulaşmak amaçlanmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın bir diğer amacı da, Kıbrıslı Türklerin sadece evliliğe dair olan algısı değil, kültür ve dil çerçevesinde grubun devamlılığını sağlamak için geliştirdikleri stratejileri incelemektir. Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz sizden beklenen görüşme formundaki sorulara sözlü cevap vermenizdir. Bu çalışmaya katılım ortalama olarak kırk beş dakika sürmektedir.

#### **Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz?**

Size yöneltilen soruları yanıtlamanızı ve deneyimlerinizi paylaşmanızı rica edeceğiz.

#### **Sizden Topladığımız Bilgileri Nasıl Kullanacağız?**

Araştırma tamamen gönüllülük temelinde olmalıdır. Cevaplarınız tamamen gizli tutulacak ve sadece araştırmacı tarafından incelenecektir. Bu araştırmada edinilen bilgi bilimsel amaçla kullanılacak ve bilgiler toplu halde değerlendirilecektir. Gönüllü katılım formunda toplanan kimlik bilgileriniz görüşme sırasında sağladığınız bilgilerle eşleştirilmeyecektir.

**Katılımınızla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler:**

Bu çalışma günlük hayatta karşılaşılması muhtemel bir risk içermemektedir. Katılım sırasında sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz cevaplama işini yarıda bırakıp çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda çalışmayı uygulayan kişiye, çalışmadan çıkmak istediğinizi söylemek yeterli olacaktır. Çalışma sonunda, bu araştırmayla ilgili sorularınız cevaplanacaktır. Bu çalışmaya katılımınız Kıbrıslı Türklere dair literatürün geliştirilmesine katkıda bulunacak ve Kuzey Kıbrıs ile ilgili çalışmaların ilerletilmesine fayda sağlayacaktır.

**Araştırmayla ilgili daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz:** Bu çalışmaya katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederiz. Araştırma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için araştırmacı Hale Çağansoy ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz. ([halecagansoy@gmail.com](mailto:halecagansoy@gmail.com))

***Yukarıdaki bilgileri okudum ve bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum.***

(Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad

Tarih

İmza

----/----/----



## **D. THE VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION FORM (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)**

### **Voluntary Participation Form**

This research is conducted by Hale Çağansoy, a graduate student in METU Sociology Department. This form informs you about the research and the interview conditions.

#### **What is the purpose of the research?**

The purpose of the research is to understand and analyze the perceptions of Turkish Cypriot women about the ethnic roots of marriages in Northern Cyprus. This research aims to obtain information about the ethnic identity, group integrity and group identification of Turkish Cypriots through analyzing in-group marriage practices. Another focus of the research is to understand how Turkish Cypriot people develop strategies for sustaining the group continuity with a special emphasis on their traditional culture and distinctive language. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be requested to answer the questions in the interview guide. This research will take an average of forty-five minutes.

#### **What will we request from you?**

We will ask you to answer the questions and share your experiences.

#### **How do we use the information collected from you?**

This research is based on voluntary participation. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and examined only by the researcher. The information acquired in this study will be used for scientific purposes and will be evaluated collectively. The credentials collected through the voluntary participation form will not be matched to the information you provide during the interview.

**What you need to know about your participation is as follows:**

This work does not cause any risk to you in your daily life. If you feel uncomfortable with questions or for any other reason during the interview, you are free to leave the interview. In such a case, you can simply say that you want to leave. At the end of the study, your questions about the research will be answered. Your participation in this study will contribute to the improvement of the literature on Turkish Cypriots and will also benefit to the advancement of social studies in Northern Cyprus.

**If you would like to learn more about the research:** Thank you in advance for participating in this study. To learn more about the research, you can contact **Hale Çağansoy** ([halecagansoy@gmail.com](mailto:halecagansoy@gmail.com)).

***I have read the above information and I am voluntarily participating in this research.***

(Please fill out the form and return it to the researcher after signing it).

Name Surname

Date

Signature

----/----/----

## E. HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ  
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



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04 TEMMUZ 2017

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlişi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu


Sayın Prof. Dr. Ceylan TOKLUOĞLU ;


Danışmanlığını yaptığınız yüksek lisans öğrencisi Hale ÇAĞANSOY' un "*Kıbrıs Türk Kimliği, Grup Bütünlüğü ve Grupla Özdeşleşme pratikleri: Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta Grup içi Evlilikleri*" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay 2017-SOS-119 protokol numarası ile 01.08.2017 – 31.12.2017 tarihleri arasında geçerli olmak üzere verilmiştir.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.


  
Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN


Başkan V


  
Prof. Dr. Ayhan SOL  
Üye

  
Prof. Dr. Ayhan Şükrü DEMİR  
Üye

  
Doç. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKCI  
Üye

  
Doç. Dr. Zana ÇITAK  
Üye

  
Yrd. Doç. Dr. Pınar KAYGAN  
Üye

  
Yrd. Doç. Dr. Emre SELÇUK  
Üye

## F. TÜRKÇE ÖZET/ TURKISH SUMMARY

Bu çalışma, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta içten evlenme olgusunu anlamayı ve araştırmayı hedeflemiştir. Bu doğrultuda, Kıbrıslı Türk kadınların evliliklerin etnik temellerine dair tutumları ve fikirleri incelenerek, içten evlenmenin grubun sürekliliği üzerindeki etkisi araştırılmıştır. Grup içi ya da grup dışı evliliklere dair yaklaşımlar üzerinden, grubun kültürel kimlik algısı ve dayanışma pratiklerine dair bilgiye ulaşmak hedeflenmiştir. Evlenme kararı ve sürecinin sadece kişisel olmadığı ve daha derin sosyal anlamlar taşıdığı göz önünde bulundurularak, kişisel olan ile sosyal olan arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamaya önem verilmiştir. Hermenotik (yorumbilim) ve fenomenoloji (görüngübilim) ışığında, katılımcıların gündelik yaşam tecrübelerine odaklanan bir araştırma sorusu hazırlanmıştır. Bununla bağlantılı olarak, etnisite kavramı önsel bir kategori olarak ele alınmaktan ziyade, etnik kimliğin akışkan ve değişken yönleri vurgulanmıştır.

Bu araştırmanın temel amacı grup içi evliliklerin grubun devamlılığına ve sürekliliğine nasıl ve hangi yönlerden katkıda bulunduğunu anlamaktır. Bunu yaparken Kıbrıslı Türklerin sosyal/kültürel mirası ve Kıbrıs Türkçesinin grubun kültürel kimliğindeki önemi vurgulanmıştır. Bu çalışmadan önce bu konuya dair herhangi bir çalışma yapılmamıştır. Fakat grubun bir üyesi olarak Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta yaşadığım yıllar boyunca, bu tarz evliliklerin Kıbrıslı Türkler için önem arz ettiğine dair sözlü bir anlatının varlığına şahit oldum. Özellikle, adanın kuzeyinde yaşayan farklı gruplar söz konusu olduğunda iç evliliklerin desteklenmesi gerektiğine dair söylemin arttığını gözlemledim. Fakat bu bilginin kaynağı sadece gündelik hayatta satır aralarından okunabilecek sözlü anlatılardı. Bunun nedeni, genellikle Kuzey Kıbrıs'a dair veya Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta yürütülen sosyal bilimler temelli çalışmaların, adanın politik ve ekonomik durumu veyahut 'Kıbrıs Sorunu' ekseninde olması ve bundan dolayı araştırma konusunun akademik ilgiden yoksun bırakılmasıdır. Bu çalışma, grup içi evliliklerin desteklenmesi gerektiğine dair söylemin zaman içerisinde azalma göstermesine rağmen hâlâ Kıbrıslı Türk kimliği kapsamında önemli olduğunu

göstermiştir. Bu tarz evliliklerin Kıbrıs'ın kuzeyinde etnik kimliğin yaşanması ve tecrübe edilmesi üzerindeki etkilerini anlamak üzere bu değişimin ardındaki sosyal ve kültürel arka plan araştırılmıştır.

Bu çalışma evlilik kavramını konu alsa da, grup içi veya grup dışı evliliklerin artış ya da azalma göstermesine değil, gruba mensup kişilerin bu tarz evliliklere dair fikirlerine ve tutumlarına odaklanmıştır. 'Neden' ve 'nasıl' soruları etrafında şekillenen çalışma, tutumların ve düşüncelerin niteliğine odaklanırken nicel bir veri sunma amacı gütmemiştir. Bu amaca yönelik, niteliksel araştırma yöntemine sadık kalınarak yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar tasarlanmıştır. 2017 yazında, Kıbrıs'ın kuzeyinde Kıbrıslı Türk kadınlarla yapılan otuz yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakattan elde edilen bilgi, katılımcı gözlem metoduyla harmanlanmış ve araştırmanın temel veri kaynağını oluşturmuştur. Bu iki yönetime eşit derecede önem verilmesi araştırmanın geçerliliğini artırmıştır. Örneklem, temelde 25 ve 40 yaş aralığı ile 40 ve 75 yaş aralığındaki kadınlar olarak iki gruba ayrılmıştır. Çalışma boyunca atıfta bulunulan '(daha) genç kuşak' ilk grubu temsil ederken, '(daha) yaşlı kuşak' ikinci grubu temsil etmektedir. Araştırmaya katılan tüm kadınların ebeveynleri ve kendileri Kıbrıs doğumludur. Katılımcılardan 11 tanesi dıştan evlilik yapmış veyahut yakın ailesinde bu tarz bir evliliği deneyimlemiş kadınlardan oluşmaktadır. Bu 11 kişi arasından beş kişi dıştan evlenmiştir. Bu kadınların eşleri Filistin, Pakistan ve Türkiye (Tunceli, Hatay, Giresun) kökenlidir. Katılımcılardan yalnızca üçü kırsal alanda ikamet etmektedir. Buna rağmen, büyük/yaşlı kuşaktan olan kadınların çoğu kırsal alanda büyümüş ve daha sonrasında kente göç etmiştir. Tüm görüşmeler gönüllü katılım çerçevesinde yürütülmüştür. Araştırmadan elde edilen veri, görüşme esnasında tutulan detaylı notlar ve ses kayıtlarından oluşmaktadır.

Kıbrıs'ın kuzeyinde değişen sosyal ve kültürel atmosfer (farklı ülkelerden adaya gelen nüfus, yerleşik Türkiyeli nüfusun varlığı, asimilasyon ve yerli nüfusun azalmasına yönelik söylem vb.) grup içi evlilikleri önemli bir sosyal olgu niteliğine taşımıştır. Bu tür evliliklerin desteklenmesine yol açan faktörler grubun sadece kendi iç dinamiklerine dair değil, farklı grupların birbirleriyle olan etkileşimlerine ve gruplar

arasındaki sosyal mesafeye dair de bilgi sunmakta ve sosyal analiz için zengin bir altyapı oluşturmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, grup içi evlilik (içten evlenme) kavramının önemi sadece Kıbrıs bağlamıyla sınırlandırılmaz. Dünya genelinde önemli bir sosyal sorun olarak ele alınan mülteci krizi ve artmakta olan uluslararası göç göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, bu kavram sadece sosyoloji ve sosyal antropoloji için değil, uluslararası ilişkiler, kültürel çalışmalar ve siyaset bilimi başta olmak üzere diğer disiplinler için de önem arz etmektedir. Grup içi evlilik kavramı, Kıbrıs'ın kuzeyinde yaşamakta olan farklı gruplar arasındaki etkileşimi (özellikle Kıbrıslı Türklerin Kıbrıslı Rumlar ve Türkiyeli göçmenlerle olan ilişkilerini) anlamak ve analiz etmek için çeşitli kolaylıklar sağlamıştır. Özellikle, Kıbrıs'ta yaşanan etnik çatışmaların ardından adanın iki kesime bölünmesiyle, ortak ada kültürü vurgusu ile ada genelinde bazı sosyal gruplar tarafından Kıbrıslı Türkleri ve Kıbrıslı Rumları yakınlaştırmak amacıyla çalışmalarda bulunulmuştur. Öte yandan, Türkiye ile büyüyen sosyal, politik ve ekonomik ilişkiler, adada yaşayan Türkiyeli göçmenlerin varlığını önemli bir sosyal sorun haline getirmiştir. Bu çalışma, Kıbrıslı Türkler ile yukarıda bahsedilen iki grup arasındaki ilişkilere dair derinlemesine bilgi sunmakta ve adada yaşayan halkların gündelik yaşamına yön veren 'Kıbrıs Sorununa' dair çalışmalara mütevazı bir katkı sağlamaktadır.

Kuramsal çerçeveden bakıldığında, grup içi evliliklerin etnik kimlik deneyimini nasıl etkilediğini anlamak çok boyutlu bir bakış açısı gerektirmektedir. Kuzey Kıbrıs bağlamında da belirgin olduğu gibi, modernleşme tezinin grup içi evlilikler ile modernleşme süreci arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi basitleştirdiği görülmektedir. Araştırmam, modernleşme tezinin de önerdiği gibi, genç grup üyelerinin evlilik kararı verirken etnik köken yerine eşlerinin onlarla benzer eğitim düzeyinde olmasına daha çok önem verdiğini göstermiştir. Buna rağmen, eğitim düzeyine verilen bu önem genç kuşağın içten evlenmeyi desteklemesine engel olmamıştır. Modernleşme teziyle uyuşmayan bu gelişmeler, evlilik kararı ve sürecini etkileyen çeşitli faktörlerin kapsamlı bir şekilde incelenmesi gerektiğini göstermiştir.

Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta içten evlenmeye dair toplumsal baskı zaman içerisinde hafiflese de, bu tarz evlilikler grubun kimliği ve etnik köken algısı üzerinde hâlâ etkilidir. 1950'li yıllarda baskın olan evlilik türü görücü usulü evliliklerdi. 1970'lerden 1990'lı yıllara değin bu evlilik türü eş seçiminde hakim olan model olmaya devam etti. Bu alandaki değişimler, 2000'li yılların başında eğitim seviyesi yüksek, kentli ve çalışan genç kadınların eş seçiminde kişisel kararları öne çıkarması ve romantik 'aşk' – 'sevgi' kavramına önem vermesi ile birlikte gerçekleşti. Bu genç kadınlar, grup üyeleri tarafından belli bir tür evlilik modelinin dayatılmasına meydan okumaya ve böylelikle evlilikle ilgili geleneksel değerleri dönüştürmeye başladı. Daha önce de belirtildiği gibi, bu değişimlere rağmen grup içi evlilik tercih edilen seçenek olmaya devam etti. Evlilik alanında geleneksel değerlerin varlığını sürdürmesi, aile ve sosyal çevreden gelen baskıdan kaynaklanmaktaydı. Ayrıca araştırma kapsamında sosyal baskının kaynağı ve biçimlerini incelemek, evliliğe dair kültürel kodlar hakkında daha fazla bilgi ortaya koymuştur. Buna göre, aile evlilik kararında genç kuşaklar için eskisi kadar güçlü ve belirleyici değildir fakat tüm kuşaklar için bu süreçte en belirleyici etmen olmaya devam etmektedir. Sosyal baskı ikincil öneme sahip olmakla birlikte, arkadaş/akran baskısı tüm yaş grupları için evlenme sürecinde en az etkisi olan faktör olarak belirtilmiştir.

Kıbrıslı Türklerin etnik kimliklerini nasıl tanımladıklarını anlamak araştırmanın bir diğer odak noktasıdır. Kıbrıslı Türkler etnik kimliklerini tanımlarken öncelikle gruba özgü kültüre (aile ilişkileri ve kadının statüsü) ve gruba özgü inanç sistemine (temel olarak seküler yaşam biçimi) atıfta bulunmuşlardır. Bu iki önemli faktörü grubun özgün dili olan "Kıbrıs Türkçesi" takip etmiştir.

Her ne kadar bir etnik grubun kendini diğerlerinden ayırt etmek için kullandığı temel araç kültür olsa da, Kıbrıs Türk toplumunda grubun devamlılığı ve etnik kimlik algısı yabancılarla/ötekilerle olan etkileşimler tarafından belirlenmektedir. Gruplar arası etkileşimin önemi, grubun sınırlarının oluşturulduğu ve korunduğu evlilik alanında daha da belirgin hale gelmektedir. Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta, modern olmanın sınırlarının kadının statüsü temel alınarak belirlenmektedir (kadının 'modern' giyimi ve sosyal

yaşama aktif katılımı); ve bu sınırlandırma görece daha muhafazakâr arka plana sahip Türkiyeli göçmenlerin adanın kuzeyindeki varlığıyla birlikte Kıbrıslı Türkler için kültürel kimlik tanımında daha önemli hale gelmiştir. Bununla birlikte, grubun sınırları çoğunlukla gruba mensup erkekler tarafından oluşturulurken, kadınlar tarafından sürdürülmesi ve korunması beklenmektedir. İçten evlenmeye dair sosyal baskı genellikle erkekler tarafından uygulanmaktadır. Grubun özgün kültürünü korumak için ‘kültürün taşıyıcıları’ olarak görülen kadınlara roller atanmıştır. Tüm bunlar, Kıbrıslı Türk kadınların grup içi evliliklerin birincil öznelere olmasına yol açmıştır.

Grup içi evlilikler, grup bütünlüğünü pekiştirerek Kıbrıs Türk kimliğinin sürekliliğine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bu tarz evlilikler, kültürel aktarımı, grubun devamlılığını (nüfusun artması ya da korunması) ve özgün dilin yeni kuşaklara aktarımını güvence altına alarak grup birliğini güçlendirmektedir. Bundan dolayı grupla özdeşleşmeyi sağlamlaştırmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, grup içi evlilikler geleneksel kültürün ve özgün dilin genç kuşaklara aktarımı açısından uygun bir zemin hazırladığı için etnik kimliğin özünden sapmasına karşı bir savunma mekanizması olarak algılanmaktadır. Örneğin, karma evlilikler çocukların çok kültürlü bir ortamda büyümelerine yol açtığı için bu evliliklerden doğan çocuklar kültürlenme sürecinde sadece öz Kıbrıs kültürüne maruz kalmayacaklardır. Bundan dolayı, karma evliliklerin, ‘öz’ Kıbrıs kültürünün aktarımına ket vurduğuna ve grubun birliğine karşı tehdit oluşturduğuna dair bir algı vardır. Uzun vadede bu evliliklerin Kıbrıs Türk kimliğinde ve Kıbrıs Türkçesinde melezleşmeye yol açacağına dair bir inanç hâkimdir. Kültür aktarımı açısından, karma evlilik yapan çiftlerin evlilik sonrası ikamet adresi ve anne dili önemli faktörler olarak belirtilse de, grup içi evlilikler kuşaklar arası kültür aktarımı için ideal bir seçenek olmayı sürdürmektedir. Araştırmam göstermiştir ki, 1950’li yıllardan başlayarak 1990’ların ortalarına kadar, Kıbrıslı Türkler grup içi evliliği kültür ve dil birliği üzerinden yaşamaktaydı. 2000’li yıllara girildiğinde, grup üyelerinin grubun nüfusunun tehlike altında olduğunu düşünmesiyle birlikte grup içi evlilik geleneğinin doğasında da değişimler olmuştur. Genç kuşaklar kültürel ve sosyal asimilasyon tehdidi ile karşı karşıya kalınca, grubun özgün kültürünü ve dilini korumak amacıyla grup içi evlilikleri desteklemeye başlamışlardır. Tüm bunlar, içten evlenme pratiğinin



grup bütünlüğünü tekrar inşa etmeye yönelik geliştirilen bir savunma mekanizması olarak algılandığını göstermektedir. Bir başka deyişle, önceleri kültür ve dil birlikteliği üzerinden yaşanan ve desteklenen grup içi evlilikler, genç kuşaklar tarafından özgün kültürü ve dili korumak üzere tekrardan benimsenmiştir.

Grup içi evlilikler, grubun çevre gruplara ve yabancılara karşı tutumu hakkında bilgi sunmaktadır. Araştırmam, iç evliliklerde görülen azalmanın dış gruplara yönelik açıklığa işaret ettiğini doğrulamıştır. Yabancılara ve farklılıklara olan toleransın artması ile birlikte grup içi evlilik normu da zayıflamaktadır. Kıbrıs Türk toplumu, zaman içerisinde dış gruplara karşı daha açık ve kapsayıcı bir tutum göstermeye başlamıştır. Genç kuşakların farklılıklara yönelik sıcak tutumları ve grupla daha zayıf özdeşleşme pratikleri göstermesi ile birlikte grubun sınırları esneklik göstermeye başlamıştır. Bunun temel sebeplerinden biri, genç kuşağın etnik kimliği doğuştan ve daimi bir özellik olarak algılamasından ziyade etnik kimliğin bilişsel düzeyinde yaşandığına inanmasıdır.

Araştırmanın sunduğu bir diğer dikkate değer bilgi de farklı kuşaklardan kadınların çevre gruplarla evliliklere karşı olan tutumlarıdır. Daha yaşlı kuşaktan olan kadınlar, karma evlilikler için en az tercih edilen grubun Kıbrıslı Rumlar olduğunu belirtmiştir. Her ne kadar iki etnik grup (Kıbrıslı Türkler ve Kıbrıslı Rumlar) çatışma döneminden önce ortak bir kültür paylaşmış olsa da, çatışma yıllarında iki grubun yaşadığı talihsiz tecrübeler Kıbrıslı Türklerin Kıbrıslı Rumlara yönelik zihinsel ve sosyal sınırlar inşa etmesine ve grubun Kıbrıslı Rumlardan uzaklaşmasına yol açmıştır. Bu uzaklaşma, düşmanlıktan ziyade böyle bir evliliğin evlilik içi çatışmaları artırabileceği yönündeki inançtan kaynaklanmaktadır. Özellikle çiftlerin ailelerinin evlilik sürecine dâhil olması ile birlikte evlilik sürecinde ve sonrasında çatışma çıkma ihtimalinin daha fazla olduğu belirtilmiştir. Öte yandan, genç kuşaklar Kıbrıslı Rumlarla evliliğe olumlu baktıklarını fakat eş olarak en çok Türkiye'nin Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu bölgelerinden olan bireyleri tercih etmediklerini belirttiler. Genç, modern ve eğitilmiş Kıbrıslı Türkler ile dini ve geleneksel değerlere sahip Türk göçmenlerin arasındaki kültürel uyumsuzluklar, bu iki grup arasında bir gerginlik durumu yaratmıştır. Şunu da eklemek gerekmektedir; Kıbrıs'ın kuzeyinde yaşayan Türkiyeli göçmenlerin varlığı

Kıbrıslı Türkler tarafından Türkiye'nin adanın kuzeyindeki siyasi, sosyal ve ekonomik hâkimiyetinin temsili olarak da algılanmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu iki grup arasındaki ilişki sadece sosyal etkileşim esnasında çatışan değerler ve tutumlar meselesi ile sınırlı değildir. Türkiyeli göçmenlerin adanın kuzeyindeki varlığı yerli nüfusun kimliğine ve kültürüne karşı bir tehdit olarak algılanmaktadır. Ayrıca, Türkiye'de sosyal ve politik alanda yükselmekte olan muhafazakârlık genç kuşakların Türk erkeklerle evlenmeye yönelik endişelerini artırmaktadır. Öte yandan, ortak ada kültürü söylemi ile birlikte genç kuşak, Kıbrıslı Rumlara karşı yakınlık geliştirmiştir. Adanın kuzeyi ve güneyi arasında geçişin mümkün kılınması ile, gruplar arasındaki etkileşim artmıştır. Geçiş kapılarının açılması, Kıbrıslı Türk gençlerin Kıbrıslı Rumlara yönelik olumlu tutumlar geliştirmesine katkıda bulunmuştur. Aynı kuşak, sosyal etkileşimlerinin diğer gruplara kıyasla yoğun olduğu muhafazakâr ve geleneksel buldukları gruplara (Türkiyeli göçmenler ve Müslümanların çoğunlukta olduğu ülkelerden gelen erkekler) yönelik sosyal ve zihinsel sınırlar çizmektedirler. Tüm bunlar göstermiştir ki, genç kuşakların yabancılara karşı geliştirdiği tolerans seküler ve modern yaşam biçimine sahip bireylerle sınırlıdır. Buna rağmen, evrensel değerleri benimseyen bu genç kadınlar için grubun sınırları katı, sabit ya da değişmez değildir. Diğer taraftan, genç kadınlar hâlâ gruba aidiyet hissetmekte ve her ne kadar benimsedikleri evrensel değerlerle örtüşmese de grubun bütünlüğünü korumak için 'istenmeyen ötekilere' karşı sınırlar çizmektedirler. Bu çelişkili tutum hikâyesinin her iki yüzünü de göstermiş ve araştırmamın kapsamını genişletmiştir.

Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta evliliklerin etnik temellerine olan yaklaşımın seçici bir doğası vardır. Cinsiyet, eğitim, meslek ve din gruplar arası evliliklere yönelik bakışı belirleyen önemli faktörlerdir. Cinsiyet, diğerlerini de etkilediği için bu faktörlerden en önemlisidir. Saha çalışmasını gerçekleştirmeden önce evlilik sürecindeki cinsiyet eşitsizliğine dair fikirlerim mevcuttu. Yabancı biri ile evlenme durumunda kadınların erkeklere kıyasla daha fazla sosyal baskıya ve eleştiriye maruz kaldığını biliyordum. Cinsiyeti önemli bir faktör olarak göz önünde bulundurmuş olmam Kuzey Kıbrıs'a özgü birçok noktayı da analizime katmama fayda sağlamıştır. Genel olarak, yabancılarla evlilik söz konusu olduğunda cinsiyet eşitsizliği iki temel kavram

etrafında tartışılabilir. Bunlar baba soyluluk ve baba yerli yerleşimdir. Yeni evlenen çiftin erkeğin ailesinin yaşadığı ülkeye yerleşmesi, Kıbrıslı Türk ailenin kızları üzerindeki kontrolünü ve gözetimini engellemektedir. Dolayısıyla, baba yerli yerleşim aile birliğine (özellikle Kuzey Kıbrıs'a özgü olduğu belirtilen 'koruyucu aile' yapısına) yönelik bir tehdit olarak algılanmaktadır. Bunun yanında, Müslüman (genellikle Arap ya da Türk) erkeklerle evli olan Kıbrıslı Türk kadınların yaşadıkları hoş olmayan deneyimler ve hikâyeler grup içerisinde sözlü olarak yayılmakta ve ailelerin baba yerli yerleşim ile ilgili kaygılarını artırmaktadır. Baba soyluluk kaynaklı olarak, aile statüsü ve kimliği erkeğin soyu üzerinden belirlenmekte ve bundan dolayı Kıbrıslı Türk bir kadının yabancı biri ile evlenmesi kadının kültürel/etnik kimliğini kaybetmesi anlamına gelmektedir. Kadının kültürel kimliğini yitirmesi ya da eşinin grubuna dâhil olması, grup üyeleri için gruptan bir üyenin eksilmesi anlamına gelmektedir. Görece nüfusu az olan Kıbrıslı Türkler için böyle bir kayıp asimilasyon ve nüfus tehdidine dair endişeleri artırmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu sürecin grup için yüksek öneme sahip olan kültürel aktarımı da engellediği düşünülmektedir. Bu iki önemli kavram, karma evlilik yapmak isteyen kadınların üzerindeki baskıyı artırmaktadır. Kıbrıslı Türklerin evlilik konusundaki seçici tutumlarına dair bir diğer kritik faktör de sosyal statüdür. Örneğin, karma evliliklerde, yabancı eşin yüksek sosyal statüye sahip olması süreci kolaylaştırmaktadır. Fakat yabancı eşin dini yaşama biçimi (inançlılık veya gündelik hayatında dinin önemi ve yeri) eğitim ya da meslek gibi faktörlerden daha büyük öneme sahiptir. Bir başka deyişle, dini yaşama biçimindeki farklılıklar sosyal statünün nasıl algılandığını etkilemektedir. Bu durum Kıbrıslı Türklere özgü bir başka dinamiği de yansıtmaktadır. Evlilik söz konusu olduğunda, Kıbrıslı Türkler için din farklılıklarından ziyade, inançlılık ya da dine bağlılık önem arz etmektedir. Bunun sebebi, Kıbrıslı Türklerin seküler bir yaşam sürmeyi modern olmakla özdeşleştirmesi ve grubun sınırlarının sadece seküler arka plana sahip bireyler için esnetilmesine tolerans göstermesidir.

Bu çalışma, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta etnik köken ve etnik kimliğe dair olan sınırlı literatüre mütevazı bir katkı sunmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, araştırmanın güçlü ve zayıf yanlarını göz önünde bulundurarak ileride yapılacak olan çalışmalar için araştırma önerilerinde

bulunmak gerekmektedir. İlk olarak, alışmanın kuramsal ıkarımlarının etnisite literatüründeki eksik noktalara hangi yönlerden katkı sağlayabileceğine değineceğim. Bunu müteakip, bu alandaki alışmaların iyileştirilmesi için birtakım önerilerde bulunacağım.

Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta yaşayan farklı gruplar arasındaki etkileşim birçok alışmanın konusu olagelmıştır. Bu alışmanın ayırt edici özelliği, bu etkileşimlerin en hassas ve mahrem olarak görülen 'evliliğin' konu edinilmesidir. Bundan dolayı, gündelik hayatta deneyimlenen etnik kimlik algısına dair detaylı bir bakış açısı sunulmuştur. Bu alışma, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta etnisite olgusunu fenomenoloji ve yorumbilim ışığında, gruba mensup kişilerin konuya dair yorumlarını temel alarak inceleyen ilk alışma olarak ele alınabilir. alışmanın bir başka güçlü yanı da, katılımcı gözlem ve yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatların harmanlanmasından oluşan araştırma yönteminden kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu şekilde bir bilgi edinim yolu seçilmesi, konuya kültürel antropolojik bir bakış katmaktadır; böylelikle araştırmanın içeriğini zenginleştirmektedir. Ayrıca, alışmanın kuramsal çerçevesi, evlilik uygulamaları üzerinden, grubun devamlılığının sağlanmasında sosyal sınırların rolünü gözeterek analiz yapma imkânı vermiştir. Analiz sürecinde gruplar arası sosyal etkileşim dinamiklerine verilen önem, gruba mensup bireylerin gündelik hayat tecrübelerinin daha iyi incelenmesini sağlamıştır. Bu sebeptendir ki araştırmanın kuramsal çerçevesi ve yöntemi arasında tutarlı bir ilişki kurulmuştur.

Grup içi ve gruplar arası evlilik pratiklerini içeren geniş kapsamlı bir literatürün varlığına rağmen, genellikle bu alanda cinsiyet faktörüne yeterince önem verilmemiştir. Bu eksiklik, özellikle Kuzey Kıbrıs bağlamında etnisite olgusunu ele alan alışmalarda daha belirgin hale gelmektedir. Araştırmam, etnik grupların sürekliliğinin sağlanmasında kadınların rolüne dikkat çekmektedir. Buna ek olarak, etnisite ve cinsiyet arasındaki ilişkiyi gözetken azımsanamayacak sayıda araştırmanın varlığına rağmen, çok az alışma cinsiyet, etnisite ve evlilik olgularını birlikte ele almıştır. Bu üç olgunun birlikte ve ilişki olarak incelenmesi, grup üyelerinin etnik kimliklerini deneyimleme ve algılama biçimlerine dair önemli ipuçları sunmaktadır.

Cinsiyet, meslek ve sosyal statü gibi evlilik sürecini etkileyen faktörlerin birbirinden bağımsız olarak çalışılması karmaşık sosyal ilişkileri basitleştirmektedir.

Son olarak, araştırmanın birtakım zayıf yanları göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır. İlk olarak, bu araştırma evliliklerin etnik temellerini sadece Kıbrıslı Türk kadınların bakış açısı üzerinden incelemiştir. Farklı gruplarla etkileşimler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, hikâyenin sadece yarısının anlatılmış olduğu söylenebilir. Bu konuya dair ‘ötekilerin’ bakış açısının da göz önünde bulundurulacağı çalışmalar etnisite olgusu, evlilik uygulamaları ve Kıbrıs siyasetine dair olan literatüre ilave katkılarda bulunabilir. Özellikle, etnik çatışmaların siyasi gündemin odağında bulunduğu ülkelerde, gruplar arası etkileşimlere odaklanan çalışmaların artırılması elzemdir. İkinci olarak, örneklemin kapsamının sınırlı olması derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılabilmesi için imkân sağlamış olsa da, araştırma kapsamı sadece orta sınıfa mensup bireylerin deneyimleri ile kısıtlanmıştır. Daha büyük bir örneklem ile farklı sosyo-ekonomik düzeydeki kişilerin araştırmaya katılması farklı bakış açıları sunacaktır. Bunun ötesinde, görüşme esnasında kadınlara eşlerinin, babalarının ve büyükbabalarının konuya dair fikirleri hakkında sorular sorulmuş olsa da, iki cinsiyetin de katılım gösterdiği bir araştırma, konuya dair farklı görüşler ve dinamikler sağlayabilir. Üçüncü olarak, araştırmada sadece katılımcıların konuya dair yorumları üzerinden bilgi edinilmiştir. Bu tarz nitel araştırmalardan edinilen verinin genellenebilir olması için nicel araştırmalara ihtiyaç vardır. İki metodun birlikte kullanıldığı bir araştırma, özellikle nüfus ve göç meselelerine dair sosyal politikaların uygulanabilmesi için gereklidir. Son olarak, saha çalışması boyunca araştırmacı olarak pozisyonum özdeşünümsellik çerçevesinde değerlendirilmelidir. Gruba mensup bir araştırmacı olmam grup dışından olan birine kıyasla saha çalışmam süresince bana birçok önemli avantaj sağlamıştır. Her ne kadar saha çalışmasından önce kendi pozisyonumun yaratabileceği olası önyargıları engellemek adına bir bilinç geliştirmeye çalışmış olsam da, içeriden bir bakış ‘büyük resmi’ görmeyi engelleyebilmektedir.

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