

CULTURAL IDENTITY FORMATION PROCESS OF MINORITY INDIVIDUALS: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS⁺**Dr. Canan Büyükaşık Çolak^{*}, cananbuyuka@gmail.com****Prof. Dr. Faruk Gençöz^{**}, fgencoz@metu.edu.tr****DOI: ulasbid.829167****Abstract**

This article analyzes the experiences associated with ethnic/cultural identity formation process through the question of ‘How do members of minority groups form their ethnic identity?’ For this aim, qualitative methodology was applied and data analyses were done based on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis guidance and steps. Nine participants from Arab Alevi community were interviewed twice via semi-structured interview, almost with one week interval and each interview lasted almosted 50 minutes. The participants age range changes between 18 and 70. The analyses ended up with one superordinate theme; ‘The process of ethnic identity formation’ and three subthemes namely, ‘*The assumption that everybody is the same*’, ‘*Realization of one’s own differences*’, and ‘*(Ways of) Gathering Information*’. Most of the participants reported that at the beginning of the ethnic identity formation process, they thought that everybody was the same and there were not any differences between people in terms of ethnicity and religious. Later on, they realized the differences through some experiences and to make it understandable they gathered information from different sources like, family, religious leader or books. The emerged themes are discussed in the light of the ethnic identity literature.

Keywords: Ethnic/Cultural Identity, Identity Formation, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

AZINLIK KIMLIĞE SAHIP BİREYLERİN KÜLTÜREL KİMLİK OLUŞUM SÜREÇLERİ: YORUMLAYICI FENOMENOLOJİK ANALİZ**Öz**

Bu makalede ‘Azınlık gruplarının üyeleri etnik kimliklerini nasıl oluştururlar?’ sorusu üzerinden etnik / kültürel kimlik oluşum süreciyle ilişkili deneyimler analiz edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu amaçla çalışmada niteliksel metodoloji kullanılmış ve veri analizleri Yorumlayıcı Fenomenolojik Analiz kılavuzu ve adımlarına göre yapılmıştır. Arap Alevi toplumundan dokuz katılımcıyla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yoluyla, neredeyse bir hafta arayla iki kez görüşülmüş ve her görüşme neredeyse 50 dakika sürmüştür. Katılımcıların yaşları 18 ile 70 arasında değişmektedir. Analiz sonucunda ‘kimliğin oluşma süreci’ ana teması ile bununla ilişkili üç alt tema ortaya çıkmıştır; ‘Herkesin aynı olduğu varsayımı’, ‘Kişinin kendi farklılıklarının farkına varması’ ve ‘Bilgi Toplama(Yolları)’. Katılımcıların çoğu kimlik oluşum sürecinin başında herkesin aynı olduğunu ve insanlar arasında etnisite ve dini açıdan herhangi bir farklılık olmadığını düşündüklerini rapor etmişlerdir. Daha sonra bazı deneyimlerle farklı olduklarını fark ettiklerini ve bu durumu anlamak için aile, din lideri veya kitaplar gibi farklı kaynaklardan bilgi topladıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Ortaya çıkan temalar etnik kimlik literatürü ışığında tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Etnik/Kültürel Kimlik, Kimlik Oluşum Süreci, Yorumlayıcı Fenomenolojik Analiz.

⁺ *Footnote: This article is produced from the dissertation.*

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Introduction

Ethnic, religious, cultural, and minority identity has been studied by different disciplines varying from sociology, psychology, history to political science around the world. In Turkey, the issue of ethnic, minority identity is mostly studied in sociology, history, and political science. When we consider psychology, there are studies about minorities and ethnic identity conducted in social psychology in Turkey; however, there are not many studies in clinical psychology. Regarding the reality of Turkey consisting of multiple ethnic and religious communities, a clinical psychologist working in Turkey has a high possibility to work with clients from different ethnic, religious, or cultural identities. Therefore, this issue becomes significant to be focused on by clinical psychologists to understand experiences related with ethnic, religious, and cultural identities.

In accordance with the information given above, in one of the authors's dissertation study, it is focused on one of minority groups' identity formation process and the effect of this process on individuals. The aim of the current article is trying to report the answer of one of the questions which is 'How do members of minority groups form their ethnic identity?' It will be helpful to understand the ethnic identity formation process for us to clarify the experiences and emotions related with this process. That is, the theme emerged from the question above, will be reported in the current article because we realized that first of all, the ethnic identity formation process is needed to be understood. For this aim, members of one minority group living in Turkey, Arab Alevis, constituted the sample of the study. It is aimed to discuss the results of the study in the light of the literature about ethnic identity formation processes.

1. What are Ethnic, Cultural, Religious Minority Identities?

Theories and models of ethnic identity development are generally focused by social and developmental psychology. French, Seidman, Allen, and Aber (2006:1) stated that Erikson's (1968) work, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (in this work, Erikson mentioned that exploration and development of identity are crucial psychosocial task for adolescence), led to developmental psychology to be attracted by identity development. Additionally, Phinney (1989:37) also proposed that ethnic identity development is one of the aspects of adolescence. Thomas and Schwarzbaum (2006:5) claimed that when adolescents begin to ask the question of 'who am I?', they evaluate their role within the society, consisting of values and stereotypes. It is claimed that for individual's mental health, having a healthy, developed identity by means of the process of exploration and commitment is crucial (French et al., 2006:1).

In the current study, the sample of the study consists of Arab Alevi members. Arab Alevi identity comprises both an ethnic (due to being Arab) and a religious (due to being Alevi) identity,

both of which may end up with a cultural identity. In the rest of the current article, the term of 'cultural identity' will be used to refer this point with the reality of their being minority. Because of that, it is necessary to define culture, cultural identity, ethnic identity, and religious identity.

Thomas and Schwarzbaum (2006:3) stated that how one perceives him/herself and who s/he is as an individual is affected by where, when, and how s/he was grown up. All are connected with culture, which is defined by Veroff and Goldberger (1995:10) as:

... referring to a collectivity of people who share a common history, often live in a specific geographic region, speak the same or a closely related language, observe common rituals, beliefs, values, rules, and laws, and which can be distinctively identified according to culturally normative practices such as child-rearing, kinship arrangements, power arrangements, ascribed roles that make up the fabric of how a society functions.

Culture is important because it has a huge effect on people's lives (Thomas & Schwarzbaum, 2006:3). When we consider the development of children, we can see that cultural factors have an important role in the developmental process (Thomas & Schwarzbaum, 2006:4). It was stated that children could understand sociopolitical and sociocultural factors related with their identity. In the light of this, cultural identity is defined as:

...in its most basic form, is a sense of belonging. This includes a shared sense of companionship, beliefs, interests and basic principles of living. When a person identifies with their culture, they often embrace traditions that have been passed down through the years. The cultural identity links a person to their heritage can help them to identify with others who have the same traditions and basic belief systems. ("What is a cultural identity?", 2016)

Besides this, Phinney (1990:500) reviewed a number of research conducted on ethnic identity, and concluded that there is no common definition of ethnic identity. According to Rotheram and Phinney (1987, p.13) ethnic identity refers to "one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership" (as cited in Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990:298). Both ethnicity and religions are indicators of group identity and ethnic and religious groups have some functions for individuals like providing positive identity, meaningfulness, cultural worldview, and making one feel certainty and belongingness (Verkuyten & Yıldız, 2007:1449).

2. Models of Ethnic, Racial, Cultural Identity Development

There are many models to explain the development of racial/cultural or ethnic identity for minority groups around the world. Sue and Sue (2013) summed up those models, which mostly

focus on American society, in four categories. Three of them are as follows: Black identity development models (e.g. Cross's Nigrescence Model developed in 1971 (Cross and Vandiver, 2001:371-393)), Asian American identity development models (e.g. S. Sue and D. W. Sue developed in 1971 (Sue & Sue, 2013)), Latino/Hispanic American identity development models. After discussing the advantages and shortcomings of those models, Sue and Sue, in 1990, redefined the Minority Identity Development model proposed by Atkinson, Morten, and Sue as Racial/Cultural Identity Development model, which is forth one, to make it cover a wide-ranging population (Sue & Sue, 2013). The model contains five stages of development: conformity, dissonance, resistance and immersion, introspection, and integrative awareness (Sue & Sue, 2013). Each level of identity is discussed with regard to four beliefs and attitudes which may be helpful for therapists working with minority clients in terms of providing better understanding (Sue & Sue, 2013). These beliefs and attitudes comprise the minority identity and show themselves in how s/he perceives a) the self, b) others of the same minority, c) others of another minority, d) majority individuals.

In addition to Sue and Sue's model, Phinney (1989:42-47) also proposed a three stage model for ethnic identity development. She stated that both early adolescents and adults who have not been subjected to ethnic identity issues are considered to be in the unexamined ethnic identity stage, which is the first stage. Phinney (1989:42-47) reported that the minority individuals in this stage have not thought on this issue and have had little concerns about it yet. She said that instead of showing a preference for the dominant culture, which is not a necessary feature of this stage, adolescents may even have positive ethnic attitudes gathered from their parents. The second stage proposed by Phinney is ethnic identity search (moratorium) in which one begins to search and explore his/her own ethnic identity. One may move into this stage as a result of an encounter (Cross, 1978, as cited in Phinney, 1990:502). In this stage, one may experience an intense process of immersion in his/her culture by reading, communicating with people, visiting museums, and taking part in cultural activities. Sometimes, rejecting the values of majority culture may be involved. In the third and last stage, which is ethnic identity achievement or internalization, people develop a confident sense of sense, have a better understanding of their ethnicity and appreciate their ethnicity. Phinney (1990:503) suggested that based on groups' and individuals' historical background and personal experiences, ethnic identity achievement has different meanings for different groups. On the other hand, achievement does not necessarily result in high degree of ethnic involvement. The person may be clear about and appreciate his/her ethnicity although s/he does not prefer to pursue his/her language and traditions (Phinney, 1990:505). Phinney (1990:505)

identified language, religion, cultural practices, social activities, and relationships with friends as the most used indicators of ethnic involvement.

Arab Alevis in Turkey

There are different ethnic and religious groups in Turkey. Alevi community is the second largest religious community (Poyraz, 2005:503) and largest minority group in Turkey and consists of members of different ethnicities like Kurdish and Turkish (Şirin, 2013:74). Alevi refers to a person who is a supporter of Ali and has faith in Ahl al-Bayt (Güneş, 2013:193). Arab Alevis are also one of the minority communities living in the south of Turkey. Mertcan (2013:306) states that “Nusayri”, “Alevi”, and “Arab Alevi” terms refer to this community; however, they generally define themselves as “Arab Alevi” or “Alevi”. Güneş (2013:193) stated that “Nusayri”, as a term, is not much known and used among people (even among Arab Alevis). In this paper, the sample will be called “Arab Alevi” to emphasize both ethnic and religious features of this identity (Mertcan, 2013).

In this part, some information about Arab Alevis’ social and religious characteristics will be given to make both the result and extracts of participant more understandable. In the current study, the participants are Arab Alevi members who have grown up in Antakya which is located in the south of Turkey, in Mediterranean region and has a border to Syria. Antakya is defined as a multicultural city and the most cosmopolitan city in Turkey (Kaypak, 2010:383). Doğruel (2013:274) states that more than twelve ethnic/religious groups inhabit in Antakya, like Arab Alevis, Arab Christians, Arab Sunnis, Turk Sunnis, Kurds, Circassians, Armenians, Afghans, Roma Gypsies, and Jews (Kaypak, 2010:382). Both Turkish and Arabic is spoken in the city, but Turkish is the shared language for all groups (Doğruel, 2005).

Arabic is mother tongue for Arab Alevis, Arab Sunnis, and Arab Christians. However, Doğruel (2013:276) states that Turkish, as an official language, begins to take over the role of Arabic in the interaction between parents and children because Turkish is the language of formal education.

It is known that in Hatay, there are high numbers of students that pursue their studies at university level (Doğruel, 2013:283) and this situation allows Arab Alevis to take an active part in social and political life (Güneş, 2013:196).

3. Methodology

3.1. Why Qualitative Research?

Qualitative methods may appear new in psychology but both in psychology and other disciplines these methods have a rich and complicated history (Howitt, 2010). Qualitative methods

in psychology contain quite broad area and are fed with different intellectual traditions (Howitt, 2010). Besides like health sciences, education, regional planning, and community planning (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), qualitative research is increasingly having an important role for psychological research (Howitt, 2010). In qualitative research, researcher counts on text data and works on them without transforming them to numerical data (Schwandt, 2001) and tries to understand phenomena in its context by asking questions rather than testing hypotheses (Carter & Little, 2007:1316). Additionally, qualitative research, compared to quantitative research, provides an opportunity to catch and make the detail and construction of expressed experiences more sensible (Cromby, 2012:88). Considering the aim of the study, qualitative research will be applied because of 'its ability to engage with meaning and experiences' (Cromby, 2012:88). When we are talking about 'meaning', Cromby (2012) stated that "...in qualitative research the meaning of "meaning" is commonly taken to be self-evident or restrictively specified as linguistic and textual; in both cases, it is effectively assumed to reside almost exclusively in language" (p. 91). In the current study, we tried to understand the experiences of one of cultural group members during the coming to know identity process including emotions, coping ways etc. and participants' meaning of these experiences. However, emotions might not be recognized by whom experiencing them, thus they might be invisible in textual data (Cromby, 2012:93). So, qualitative research provides the opportunity of capturing them, giving deeper and contextualized understanding more than quantitative research (Cromby, 2012:88).

3.2. Why Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis?

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), one of the best known and mostly applied qualitative methodologies in psychology (Smith, 2011:9), will be used as methodology of the study. Being idiographic and hermeneutic are two important criterion for IPA (Larkin & Thompson, 2011:102). Like other qualitative methodologies, IPA is interested in meaning of experiences for individuals – their personal life and social world (Smith & Osborn, 2003:53), not directly with the events itself and their causes (Larkin & Thompson, 2011:102). It is idiographic because in IPA, the researchers firstly pay particular attention to the meaning of an experiences and do detailed analytic treatment (Smith, 2011:10) at the level of person-in-context, rather than general, and then the importance of the events for the participant is realized (Larkin & Thompson, 2011:102; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006:106). This part makes a connection between IPA and hermeneutic phenomenology (Smith, 2011:10). Phenomenology, which is defined as the philosophical study of 'being' (i.e., of existence and experience), is stated to possess two important historical phases: the transcendental and the hermeneutic or existential (Larkin & Thompson, 2011:102). Transcendental

phenomenology, coming from Husserl, deals with reaching the universal basis of a given phenomenon, as it presents itself to consciousness, by identifying and holding off our assumptions ('bracketing' off culture, context, history, etc.) (Larkin & Thompson, 2011:102). These ideas are constitute the 'descriptive' forms of phenomenological psychology (Reiners, 2012:3; Larkin & Thompson, 2011:102). On the other hand, IPA does not have such an aim. Heidegger argues that we cannot deny our experiences connected with studied phenomena (Reiners, 2012:2) and we always make our observation from somewhere (Larkin & Thompson, 2011:102). Because of that it is difficult to make Husserl's 'reduction' to the abstract (Larkin & Thompson, 2011:102). According to Heidegger persons are inevitably a part of the world and have relationships with other. Additionally, Merleau-Ponty stated that 'persons are always embodied too' (Larkin & Thompson, 2011:102). Those emphases on the 'worldly' and 'embodied' features of our existence propose that 'phenomenological inquiry is a situated enterprise' and named hermeneutic phenomenology (Larkin & Thompson, 2011:102), which is also called 'interpretative' side of phenomenology (Reiners, 2012:2). Based on these perspectives, Smith (2011:10) stated that we cannot pick directly the experiences from the participants' heads so it is needed, for researcher, to become a part of the process and to interpret. Thus, this connects IPA to a hermeneutic perspective (Smith, 2011:10). On the other hand, the researcher reach the experiences of participants which are subjected to the process of engagement in 'making sense of what is happening to them' by the participant him/herself (Smith, 2011:10). Because of that reason, Smith (2011:10) claimed that the process of IPA can be described as engaging in a double hermeneutic. By this way, the researcher is attempting 'to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them' (Smith, 2011:10; Smith & Osborn, 2003:53). Conrad's (1987, as cited in Smith & Osborn, 2003:53) came up with 'insider's perspective' word which makes the process of becoming close to the participants' world. In addition to idiographic and hermeneutic features of IPA, it is also 'inductive and interrogative' (Smith, 2004:41). It is defined as inductive because it has flexible techniques which allow the researchers to analyze even unexpected topics come from interview. Smith (2004:43) stated that although IPA is different from mainstream psychology, it is interrogative because its aim is to make contribution to psychology and set a dialogue by interrogating and giving insight to past studies. For the current study, considering Husserl's and Heidegger' philosophy, IPA is thought to be the most suitable method because; we are interested in meaning of experiences for individuals, not directly with the experiences itself. Congruent with IPA, there were no predetermined hypotheses (Smith & Osborn, 2003:55). In other words, the aim of the study is to get detailed explanations and descriptions of experiences related with the realization of cultural identity

of participants and to develop interpretative analyses to make the initial analyses more meaningful in social and cultural context (Larkin et al., 2006:104). That is, we focused on how individuals define themselves in Turkish society, how they noticed that they are Arab Alevi (or minority) and their processes of making sense of those experiences.

3.3. Sampling Method and Participants

According to IPA, small sample sizes are required because not the quantity but the quality give the opportunity to develop analyses (Smith, 2011:10; Larkin & Thompson, 2011:104). Consistent with this assumption, nine Arab Alevi participants were interviewed. The age range is between 18 and 70 (see Table 1). Five of participants were living in Antakya (the ones who still live in their community) and 3 of them are living in Ankara (the ones who move to Ankara for education or job) and one of in İzmir. A purposive sampling process and snowball technique were used as sampling procedures to find homogeneous samples (Smith & Osborn, 2003:56). For this purpose, we asked one of researchers' friends, who are from Antakya, to help us contact Arab Alevi individuals. Through their suggestions, we contacted some possible participants and first asked them whether they would be willing to take part in the research through phone or social media.

3.4. Procedure

When individuals were accepted to be participants, we arranged a meeting for the first interview. Firstly, participants were asked for volunteering and given written informed consent. After a short warming up session, parallel with IPA's method of data collection (Smith, 2011:10), semi-structured interview were applied to participants. Two interviews were conducted with each participant approximately with one week intervals. Each interview took approximately 50 minutes. After the participants were asked to provide some basic demographic information, the interviews started with the first question.

Each interview was audio-taped. After the first interview, the researcher transcribed the interview verbatim. During the transcription process, the researcher took notes regarding certain vague points to make them clearer in the following interview. After the transcription, the initial analyses were made to see the emerging general themes and make them richer if needed. The researcher took notes concerning my feelings and thoughts related with the interviews and processes. This procedure was applied for each participant. The ethical approval of the study was taken from Middle East Technical University ethical committee.

3.5. Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed. Transcripts were analyzed based on IPA guidance and steps (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). After transcription of the first case, the analysis process started.

The first case was read over and the main themes were identified which is parallel with idiographic characteristics of IPA (Smith, 2004:41). The same process was applied for the second case. Later on cross-case comparison process was operated to find shared themes and form superordinate and subordinate themes. At the end of this process, seven superordinate themes were identified.

3.6. About Participants

General demographic information of participants is presented in Table 1. Selim lived in Antakya until the age of 18 and has then lived in different cities in Turkey. He has been living in İzmir for 27 years. He said that he spent most of his life out of Antakya. He stated that his father's belief was discordant with Alevi belief experiences. Although he described his family as being different from the rest of the Arab Alevi community, he stated that he did not feel as 'the other' in his village and people were respectful. Selim said that he firstly learned Arabic and encountered with Turkish in primary school. He stated that after going out of the village for secondary school, he was shocked because of his realization of the differences. One of the reasons for being shocked was the difference between being a villager and being urban. The second reason was the inability to speak Turkish like people living in the city.

Demet is living with her family in Antakya. She spent all of his life in Antakya with her family. She reported that she did not have many Sunni friends and when she realized and encountered the presence of other ethnic/religious identities for the first time, she was in the university.

Derya is living in a town near Antakya with her family. She defined herself as Alevi, from Antakya, and as a person feeling distant to the religion side of Arab Alevism. She said that the first time she realized her ethnic identity was in the second year of high school, while they were watching a film about Hz. Ali. She reported that she was ashamed of not knowing anything about her culture and identity.

Salih is working and living in a town close to Antakya. He studied university in an Anatolian city. When he was asked to define himself, firstly he stated that although his native tongue is Arabic, he generally enjoys listening to songs belonging to Anatolian culture, like Aşık Veysel. Additionally, he stated that he felt distant to the Arab side of his identity, and closer to Anatolian culture, like Bektaşilik, and added that he felt stuck in an intermediary world in terms of identity. Salih reported that he mostly decided based on his liking while he was forming his culture. In other words, he might accept different part of different cultures by acting autonomously.

Ahmet is living and working in a town close to Antakya. He studied university in Antakya. He stated that because his father is a sheikh, he has high religious beliefs. He stated that his first

awareness of his identity was when he went to the center of Antakya to study high school. He stated that being aware of the existence of other identities (Christian, Sunnis, etc) and having close encounters with them had a crucial contribution to this process. He reported that he met stigmas and prejudices for the first time when he was in university.

Filiz lived in Antakya with her family until the age of 18, but now she is living with her friends in Ankara. She defined herself as minority, not just because of ethnic identity, but also because of issues like gender and political view.

Fulya is married and has a child and living in Antakya. She studied university in Antakya. In terms of ethnic identity, she stated that a description in the form of 'I am from here' had already fallen to Alevism. She also introduced herself as a daughter of a sheikh. She mentioned that she studied primary and secondary school in the village. She had her first confrontation with differences when she went to Antakya for high school education. She explained that for the first time in high school she met with Christians and Armenians and that she started to see the differences. She stated that when she went to Antakya for high school education, she noticed the difference between Turkish spoken in Antakya and their pronunciation and socio-economic status differences.

Mahir is studying university in Ankara. Until the university, he was living in Antakya with his family. He explained that he firstly learned Arabic and when he went to an after school support center during secondary school; he recognized the differences between people's pronunciations in Turkish. He explained that he tried to learn something about the language, for Turkish, to improve his speaking. Additionally, when he went to Antakya from village for high school, he stated that he met people of different identities, like Armenian, Turk, and Christian. He mentioned that when he faced with the idea of nationalism, he learnt the differences between these.

Selin is living in Ankara. She firstly went out of Antakya for university education. She is married. She stated that the first encounter with ethnic identity was in secondary school when her cousin told her that 'we are called as Fellah'. However, realization of Arab is another 'race' occurred when she came to university. While she was in high school, she stated that she sometimes invited her friends for lunch and she felt stressful because of concerns for spoken Arabic or whether they would like or not her neighborhood.

4. Findings

In this section, as mentioned before, one of the seven themes emerged from the IPA analysis is reported. The superordinate theme and its subordinate themes emerged from our analysis of participants' narratives within the framework of the question are reported: 1) How do Arab Alevi members experience ethnic/religious/cultural identity formation process? The result of

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the question above consists of one superordinate theme, 'The process of ethnic identity formation', and its subthemes: '1. *The assumption that everybody is the same*', '2. *Realization of one's own differences*', and 3. '*(Ways of) Gathering Information*'. In this theme, the process which is looking as having chronological order is emerged to understand how participants form their ethnic/cultural identity. Emergent superordinate and subordinate themes and participants who mentioned them are presented in Table 2.

Theme 1: The assumption that everybody is the same. Thinking everybody is the same is one of subordinate themes of 'The process of ethnic identity formation'. Except Filiz and Salih, all other participants mentioned that at the beginning of ethnic identity formation process, they thought that everybody were the same. They were not aware of their being Arab, Alevi or 'the other' (Selim). They mentioned that they thought everybody was like them and were not aware of other ethnic or religious identities or the differences between people. Selim stated that although his father rejected the Alevi belief, he did not feel different in the village where they were living.

I try to speak properly but you do not feel that alienation in that village. You're not the other in the village. Although my father looks like someone who has given up on Alevism, they have respect for us, I am not different from others here.

Before confronting with the idea of being 'different', Derya thought that "I thought everyone was the same as us, from the same place and origin. I learned later that there were different religions, almost about a year later."

Additionally, Ahmet, Demet, Fulya, Mahir, and Selin stated that until going out of the village for education, they thought everybody was the same and 'Arab'. Ahmet reported that:

We did not need to talk about; we did not need to think on these issues, because all of us were always the same already. The environment we grew up in was full of people belonging to the same ethnic group, the same sect, and sharing the same social thoughts. It was the same, so there was no atmosphere to discuss or think about such issues.

Theme 2: Realization of one's own differences. All participants described a process of becoming aware of the ethnic or language differences between people. The participants reported that this process was experienced during the formal education, when encountering with other people or when they were talking with their friends. For example, Selin stated that she was not aware of the differences until primary school. The first confrontation occurred while talking with her cousin:

I guess it was in primary school, as I said before, I studied with my cousins, and then I talked to my cousin first. My cousin said, 'There are Alevis and there are Sunnis. We are Alevis'. It's something I talked about at a very simple plane in primary school.

'Someone, I mean person X, is Sunni, and some others are Alevis. At first it was 'aaa', here were my friends - my girlfriends - and they are 'Alevis'. 'Oh, how do you know?' 'We know'. They are because they were more imm, I do not understand why I am so broken. They also knew. But after you talk to them, you realize something. You go to his/her [Alevi's] house, you come. Because coming and going to the other's house is not welcomed at those ages, at a young age. I had a friend close to our neighborhood. For example, I remember the feeling that her mother spoke in Arabic and that when I realized that she was 'very familiar', I feel a happiness or a feeling of confidence in myself. Yes, now I think this corresponds to primary school.

The below extract reveals Derya's first experience related with awareness of cultural identity. She stated that, in high school in Religious Culture and Knowledge of Ethics class, while watching a video about Hz. Ali, she laughed and then her friend told her not to laugh:

I was in second year of high school. We were in Religious Culture and Knowledge of Ethics class. The teacher showed us a video, with a depiction of Hz. Ali in it. I laughed. My friend, a male friend, warned me, told me not to laugh. "Why not?" I asked and he responded by saying that he was our prophet. I did not believe him. Then I came home and asked my mother.

Another sample extract is from Selim. He stated that for the secondary school education he left the village to go to Antakya and he was shocked: "Now, when I first started secondary school in Antakya, I was shocked". ... "I clearly realized how otherized and alienated my identity was when I went to Antakya, the city center, during my secondary and high school period."

Additionally, Demet came across one of her classmates on the bus while she was at university and he asked Demet about one of their *bayrams*. She expressed that this was the first time she realized that this *bayram* is not for everybody. She reported that:

I realized it back at university for the first time. While travelling on the bus, one of my friends, I mean not a real friend, but a guy from class told me "I heard there is this bayram in your culture, the *Ghadir Ghumm bayram*." Before that, I would think that it is everyone's bayram. When he said this, I was hit by this realization and I started to question these.

In addition to this point, Mahir and Salih stated that they noticed the difference in identities because of the differences in languages. Mahir said that when encountering with other people he recognized that there were two languages, Turkish and Arabic.

You meet a lot of people all of a sudden. Let's mention their way of talking... Now we first heard the Arabic language and naturally started speaking Arabic first. We learned Turkish

later on. In elementary school. So we sometimes swap and mix the words of both languages.

So, first there was a change regarding language.

Theme 3: Getting information about cultural identity. The third subordinate theme is about gathering information about identity after becoming aware of the ‘being different’. Participants differentiated in terms of ways of getting information. Asking the family about ethnic/religious identity, talking with a religious leader, and doing search (from book) are emerged ways of getting information. Selin stated that she asked her mother questions to learn who they are etc:

After experiencing this, I talked to my mom about this situation. What are we exactly? for example was one very basic question I asked. Where did we come from? The answers I got in high school were probably very simple because I came to the realization [of who we are] at university. But back in high school, it was at a more “we are Alevis, this is how we do things” level. Or they would say “We have sacrificed an animal”.

Filiz stated that she talked to her father after listening to her teacher’s remarks about Kurdish people to ask him why they do that. Through these questions she learned that they are not Turk:

In primary school, my main class teacher was from Batman. It was funny, in an anecdote, when he mentioned the problems in eastern Turkey, the Kurdish problem and the perceptions of identity, I asked dad “Why do we, as Turks, torture the Kurds?”. Up until that time, my dad would always emphasize that we are citizen of Turkey, not Arabs. But this time my dad responded saying “We are not Turks in fact, we are citizen of Turkey”.

In addition to asking family, Derya and Filiz stated that they visited one of religious leaders, sheik, to get detailed information about their religious beliefs. For example, Filiz said:

Then I did some reading in high school, there are sheikhs from whom you can go and get information. I asked the close ones about what it is and what it is not to get information. I tried to read things on the history of Nusayris.

Both of them also mentioned that they searched for written information and read some book about the identity.

4. Discussion

The aim of the current article was to find answers to the following question. How do members of cultural groups form their cultural identity? For the study, qualitative method was applied. Specifically, steps of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) proposed by Smith (2011) were employed as the methodology of the current study. Thus, nine members of Arab Alevi community, a minority group inhabiting in Turkey, were interviewed via semi-structured interviews. Two interviews were conducted with each participant approximately with one week

intervals and each interview took approximately 50 minutes. Data analyses were done based on IPA guidance and steps (Smith et al., 1999). Of the analyses, one superordinate theme, ‘the process of ethnic identity formation’, emerged for the question of ‘How do members of minority groups form their ethnic identity?’ and includes three subordinate themes, which are *the assumption that everybody is the same*, *realization of one’s differences*, and *ways of gathering information*. Most of the participants reported that before their encounters with people from different cultures, they were thinking that everybody was same, everybody was speaking Arabic, and there was no difference among people. It is because individuals live in their community where all same and speak Arabic. This point is parallel with Phinney’s (1989:42) first stage of ethnic identity development model: the unexamined ethnic identity stage. Phinney (1989:42) states that in this stage, a minority individual is not concerned with issues regarding ethnic identity yet. Some of the participants stated that they had not thought about this issue until confronting with people from other ethnicities or sects by going out of their community or village for formal education etc. For some of them, this confrontation took place without going out of the city. For example, Selin confronted with the issue of minority identity while talking to her cousin and Filiz confronted with it via her primary school teacher who was Kurdish. After this confrontation, participants realized that there are differences between people and they are also different in terms of ethnicity and language. During this process they experienced different emotions, like being shocked etc. After that, participants were in quest of gathering information about their minority/ethnic identity. They consulted to different sources while trying to understand and form their ethnic identity. Participants reported that they asked their families, consulted a religious leader, or did research about their ethnic identity, sect, and stigmas. This process is parallel with the second stage proposed by Phinney (1989:46); *ethnic identity search* (moratorium) in which one begins to search and explore his/her own ethnic identity. Cross (1978; as cited in Phinney, 1990:502) stated that the person may move into this stage as a result of an encounter. This finding is congruent with Tummala-Narral and Sathasivam-Rueckert’s (2016:323) findings. They stated that talking with family, with adults, and with peers are identified as help seeking strategies during the ethnic identity processes for immigrant-origin adolescents. Furthermore, in the literature, it is mentioned that ethnic identity development is one of the critical aspect of the adolescents (Phinney, 1989) and having a healthy developed identity is crucial for the individuals mental’s health (French et al., 2006:1). In the current study, most of the participants’ questioning and exploration process correspond to adolescence period.

Taking into account how the ethnic identity develops is crucial because at each stage and process, we can monitor change in self-esteem and resilience factors which help the individual

while coping with adverse situations that result from the discrimination experiences (Romero, Edwards, Fryberg, & Orduña, 2014:2). Romero and his colleagues (2014:8) showed ethnic affirmation functions as a protective factor against depressive symptoms and enhances the self-esteem. While considering ethnic identity stage, self-esteem stayed stable in the achieved ethnic identity stage at the high discrimination level for the minority youth (Romero et al., 2014:6). That is, Romero and his colleagues (2014:6) stated that both ethnic affirmation and achieved ethnic identity stages are perceived as resilience factors, which facilitate minority youths' positive reactions to negative situations resulting from discrimination stress. Because of that reason, clinical psychologists working with individuals from ethnic/minority groups should consider how the ethnic identity formation process is experienced. Negative experiences and emotions, if any, should be focused.

We observed that older participants gave more detailed information about their ethnic identity and were more willing to talk about their processes. It was seen that they had spent more time thinking about this topic than the younger ones. Romero and his friends (2014:9) also revealed that older youth were at the achieved stage and had an effort for exploring their identity and had feelings of resolution.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Studies

This study is conducted with qualitative method, namely with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This analysis requires a small sample size so the generalizability issue arises.

Questions, like what participants expect from the therapies, if needed, and how they perceive therapeutic processes was not included in the current study. These kinds of questions could be taken into consideration in future studies.

Arab Alevi members constituted the sample of the study. For a broader view, other minorities living in Turkey could also be interviewed. Although they are intertwined, the effects of sects and ethnicities could be investigated separately. Moreover, in order to understand transgenerational factors and effects, parents of participants also could be interviewed, as well as participants.

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Table 1**Demographic Information of Subjects**

Participant	Nick name	Age	Education	Job	City
P1	Selim	70	University	Teacher	İzmir
P2	Demet	29	University	Bank employee	Antakya
P3	Derya	18	High School	Student	Antakya
P4	Salih	53	University	Druggist	Antakya

P5	Ahmet	36	University	Teacher	Antakya
P6	Filiz	25	University	Teacher	Ankara
P7	Fulya	39	University	Teacher	Antakya
P8	Mahir	20	Student	Student	Ankara
P9	Selin	29	University	Unemployed	Ankara

Table 2***Emergent Themes for the Process of Ethnic Identity Formation***

Superordinate theme and Subordinate themes	Participants
THE PROCESS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY FORMATION	
1. <i>The assumption that everybody is the same</i>	P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9
2. <i>Realization of one's own differences</i>	
During the process of formal education	All participants
When encountering people from other ethnic identities or going out of the village/Antakya for education purposes	P1, P2, P4, P6, P8, P9
While talking with friends	P8, P9
Differences of languages (Turkish-Arabic)	P4, P8
3. <i>(Ways of) Gathering Information</i>	
Asking the family	P3, P6, P8, P9
Consulting a religious leader	P2, P6
Researching	P2, P6

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ TÜRKÇE ÖZET**AZINLIK KİMLİĞE SAHİP BİREYLERİN KÜLTÜREL KİMLİK OLUŞUM SÜREÇLERİ: YORUMLAYICI FENOMENOLOJİK ANALİZ****Özet**

Dünya genelinde azınlık kimliği, kültürel kimlik gibi konular çokça çalışılmış olsa da Türkiye’de bu konulara çoğunlukla sosyoloji, tarih gibi bölümlerin eğildiğini görmekteyiz. Psikoloji alanına bakıldığında ise klinik psikolojinin bu alana henüz pek de yönelmediği görülmektedir. Ancak, Türkiye’nin çok kültürlü bir yapıya sahip olduğu düşünülürse alanda çalışan bir klinik psikoloğun farklı kültürel kimliklerden bireylerle çalışma ihtimalinin yüksek olduğu düşünülebilir. Kimlik edinme süreçlerinde bireylerin deneyimlerinin gelişimleri açısından önemli olduğu göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, bu tür süreçleri anlamak önem kazanmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, kültürel kimliğin oluşma sürecini ve bu süreçle ilişkili deneyimleri anlamaktır. Dolayısıyla ‘Azınlık gruplara ait bireyler etnik kimliklerini nasıl oluşturmaktadır?’ sorusuna cevap aranmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu amaçla, Türkiye’deki kültürel gruplardan biri olan Arap Alevi bireyler çalışmanın katılımcılarını oluşturmaktadır. Arap Alevi kimliği hem etnik (Arap olmaktan dolayı) bir boyut, hem de dini (Alevi olmaktan dolayı) bir boyut içermektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmada Arap Alevi kimliğinden ‘kültürel kimlik’ olarak bahsedilecektir. Bu bağlamda, kültürel kimlik aşağıdaki şekilde tanımlanmıştır:

...en basit haliyle aidiyet duygusudur. Bu, ortak bir dostluk, inanç, çıkar ve temel yaşam prensiplerini içerir. Birey kendi kültürünü tanımladığında, genellikle yıllar içinde aktarılan gelenekleri benimser. Bir insanı kültürel mirasa bağlayan kültürel kimlik, aynı geleneklere ve temel inanç sistemlerine sahip olan diğer insanlarla özdeşleşmelerine yardımcı olabilir.

(“What is a cultural identity?”, 2016)

Dünyada etnik, kültürel kimlik gelişimine dair ortaya atılmış birçok model bulunmaktadır. Bunlardan biri olan Irksal/Kültürel Kimlik Gelişimi Modeli Sue ve Sue tarafından 1990 yılında önerilmiştir (Sue ve Sue, 2013). Sue ve Sue’nun önerdikleri modelin yanı sıra Phinney (1989) de etnik kimlik oluşumunu üç aşamalı bir modelle açıklamaktadır. Bu modele göre, ilk aşama olan *sorgulanmamış etnik kimlik* aşamasındaki azınlık bireylerin bu konuda düşünmedikleri ve bu konunun henüz gündemlerinde olmadığı görülmektedir. Bireyin kimliğini araştırmaya ve sorgulamaya başladığı aşama ise *etnik kimlik arayışı aşaması* olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Bu sürece geçişi mümkün kılan ise genellikle bir ‘karşılaşma’dır (Cross (1978)’tan aktaran Phinney, 1990). *Kazanılmış etnik kimlik* aşamasında kişi güven duygusuna sahiptir, etnik kökeni anlamaya ve onunla övünmeye başlamıştır.

Metodoloji

Bu çalışma niteliksel metodoloji ile çalışılmıştır. Niteliksel çalışmada araştırmacı, metin şeklindeki verileri dikkate alır ve onları sayısal verilere dönüştürmeden üzerinde çalışır (Schwandt, 2001). Olayları, hipotezleri test etmek yerine soru sorarak veriyi anlama çabası vardır (Carter & Little, 2007). Veriler Yorumlayıcı Fenomenolojik Analiz (YFA) çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir. YFA doğrudan olaylarla değil deneyimlerin bireyler için anlamıyla ilgilenir (Smith, 2004). Bu çalışmada da araştırmacı katılımcıların deneyimlerinin katılımcılar için anlamına odaklanmıştır.

YFA ile uyumlu olarak, bu çalışmada dokuz Arap Alevi katılımcı yer almıştır. Katılımcıların yaşları 18 ile 70 aralığında değişmektedir. Katılımcıların 5’i Antakya’da, 3’ü Ankara’da, biri ise İzmir’de yaşamaktadır. Katılımcılarla, yaklaşık bir hafta arayla olmak üzere iki görüşme yapılmıştır her görüşme ortalama olarak 50 dakika sürmüştür

Bulgular

Yorumlayıcı Fenomenolojik Analiz sonuçlarına göre, kimliğin oluşma süreci üst teması ve ona ait üç alt temaya ulaşılmıştır.

Başlarda herkesin aynı olduğunu düşünme. Katılımcıların çoğu etnik kimlik oluşum sürecinin başında herkesin aynı olduğunu düşündüklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Arap, Alevi ya da ‘öteki’ (Selim) olduklarından haberdar olmadıklarına değinmişlerdir. Herkesin onlar gibi olduğunu düşündüklerinden ve diğer etnik veya dini kimliklerin farkında olmadıklarından bahsetmişlerdir.

Farklı olduğunun farkına varma. Tüm katılımcılar, insanlar arasındaki etnik veya dil farklılıklarının farkına varma sürecinden bahsetmişlerdir. Katılımcılar, bu sürecin eğitimleri sırasında, başka kültürlerden insanlarla karşılaşmaları sonucunda veya arkadaşlarıyla konuşurken yaşandığını belirtmişlerdir.

Kültürel kimlik hakkında bilgi toplamak. Üçüncü alt tema, ‘farklı olmanın’ farkına vardktan sonra kimlik hakkında bilgi toplamakla ilgilidir. Aile ile etnik/dini kimlikle ilgili konuşmak, dini bir liderle konuşmak ve araştırma yapmak (kitaptan), bilgi alma yolları olarak ortaya çıkmıştır.

Tartışma

Katılımcıların çoğu farklı kültürlerden bireylerle karşılaşana dek bütün insanların aynı olduğunu, herkesin Arapça konuştuğunu vs. düşündüklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bu aşama Phinney’in (1989) modelinin ilk aşaması olan sorgulanmamış etnik kimlik aşamasıyla paralellik göstermektedir. Başka kültürlerle ‘karşılaşma’ sonrası insanlar arasında farklılıklar olduğu ve kendilerinin de farklı olduklarını fark ettiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Sonrasında azınlık/etnik kimlikle ilgili bilgi alma sürecini deneyimledikleri görülmektedir. Bu sürecin Phinney’in (1989) etnik kimlik arayış sürecine denk geldiği düşünülmektedir. Etnik kimlik gelişiminin her aşamada nasıl gerçekleştiği, özellikle ayrımcılığa maruz kalma gibi deneyimlerle baş etme sürecinde etkili olan öz değer ve dayanıklılık faktörleri açısından önemlidir (Romero, Edwards, Fryberg, & Orduña, 2014). Romero ve arkadaşları (2014) etnik kimlik olumlama sürecinin depresif semptomlar açısından koruyucu olduğunu ve öz değeri güçlendirdiğini belirtmişlerdir. Bu nedenle, etnik/azınlık gruplardan bireylerle çalışan terapistlerin bireylerin kimlik oluşum süreçlerine dair deneyimlerini ve bunlarla ilişkili duyguları göz önünde bulundurmaları gerekmektedir.