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LANGUAGES OF RESISTANCE: IAN HANCOCK'S CONTRIBUTION TO ROMANI STUDIES

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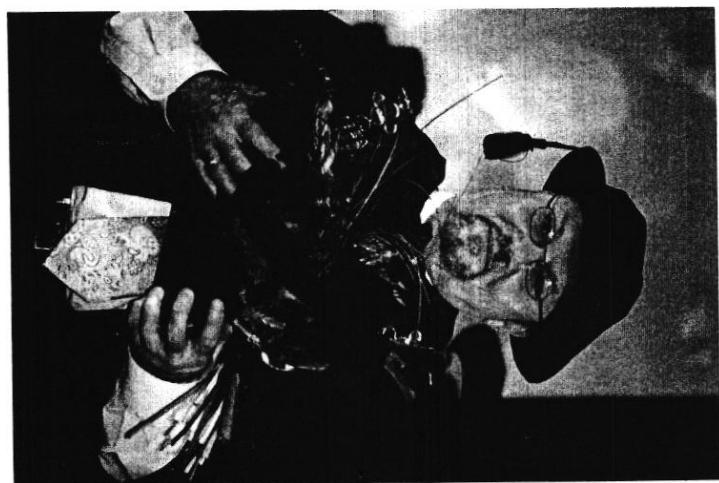
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Dedicated to the 75 Anniversary of Prof. Dr. Ian Hancock



Ian Hancock

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This book is dedicated to Prof. Dr. Ian Hancock – the Roma man who dedicated more than 45 years of his life to the science – Creole studies, Romani language and history, Romani Holocaust, Roma identity, modern forms of antigypsyism.

Ian Hancock served as a role model for generations of scientists from all over the world and his publications are known and used by Roma and non-Roma, by scientists and ordinary people. His publications, presentations at scientific and political events changed attitudes and policies towards Roma.

In the book dedicated to his 75th birthday contribute scholars from different fields: history, linguistics, education, social work, religious studies. The authors are from different generations and scientific schools. Among the authors there are Roma activists, young scholars, Ph.D. Students, established scholars and all of them are friends and colleagues of Ian, people who did learn from his studies and publication. Participating with their writings in the Festschrift dedicated to Ian they show respect and gratitude to his hard work to bringing Romani studies among highly respected and interesting studies in modern world. For many years his great work with scholars such as T. A. Acton, D. Kendrick, M. Hüschmannova, J.-P. Liégeois, M. Heinschink, and Roma activists such as N. Gheorghie and A. Mirga brought Romani studies and Roma activism to a new level.

Thanks, Ian!

Palikeras tuke kako Yanko!

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**THE FACT OF EARLY MARRIAGE AMONG ROMANIES AS A VIOLATION OF CHILD RIGHTS:
THE CASE OF MERSIN, TURKEY**

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Early marriage, as many international organizations are in agreement over the matter as well, is defined as marriage between people under the age of 18. This study aims to understand the dynamics of early marriage in Romani community. The fact of early marriage is an extremely important social issue because the vicious cycle of poverty across generations cannot be broken unless the fundamental abilities and skills of children are developed during childhood. Early marriage leads to results that will negatively affect the economic, social, psychological and mental development of the child throughout his/her life. In addition to this, it is such an important social issue that will cause a vicious circle by transferring this vulnerability and poverty to the next generations.

This study, which is based on field research, was conducted in the city of Mersin in Turkey. The process of data collection of this study was realized in two stages. First of all, data were collected through a semi-structured questionnaire form, which sampled 530 Romani households and contained subcategories such as the demographic qualities, employment areas, educational status, exposure to discrimination, daily life practices, etc. of the residents. Beside this quantitative data collecting technique, data were also collected through in-depth interviews on these subcategories and focus group techniques. The second part of the study focuses on the fact of early marriage. For this purpose, in-depth interviews with 104 women whose ages vary between 13-80 were conducted on subcategories such as the first marriage age of themselves and their spouses, spouse selection, deciding on marriage, relations during marriage, etc. The most important factors that trigger early marriages in the Romani community can be listed as follows: Romani to Romani marriages are almost 100%. They have to live an isolated life, opportunities for social mobility among the children are extremely limited, they are exposed to severe social exclusion and discrimination, their disadvantageous economic and cultural heritage leads to a vicious circle in poverty, etc.

In order to make it possible for the Romani community to be socially included and have access to social resources, the opportunity of equality in educational institutions is not to be deemed adequate, and policies towards conditions of equality must be developed, parental unemployment must be minimalized, programs directed at eliminating discriminatory attitudes towards Romanies in formal and non-formal educational institutions must be developed, and the teachers must receive in-service training programs that will support the academic development of the children in disadvantaged districts and training that will help them eliminate their discriminatory attitudes towards both poor district schools and the Romani identity. According to the findings of this study, early marriages, which are extremely common in the Romani community, may

be resolved not by individual reasons but by pointing out structural issues such as social justice, equality, discrimination, and social exclusion.

Key words: early marriage, Romani children, discrimination, social exclusion, child empowerment.

Introduction

Early marriage is defined as the individual's having been married as a minor that is being below the age of 18. Early marriages are, unfortunately, quite common in Turkey as well as in many other countries. Despite the fact that international conventions and the applicable laws in Turkey are against child marriage, the fact of early marriage is still alive. According to the Global Gender Gap Report of 2016, Turkey has the 130th place among 140 countries (World Economic Forum 2016), which means it has failed in terms of "gender". In addition to this, on a global scale, it has the 55th place among 144 countries in terms of early marriage (Save the Children Annual Report 2016: 24). This comprises women's limited access to education and employment opportunities in comparison to men, early marriage, violence against women and femicide, many stigmas attached to women under such names as customs and traditions and many limitations these bring about in social life and violations of human rights.

The fact of early marriage mostly brings to mind the fact that girls living in an environment where early marriage is approved of by social norms are encouraged to marry men older than they are, by force of their families. Another type of early marriage is the one which happens as a result of the fact that the girl elopes with a man older than herself, without the consent of her family. The type of early marriage that is the subject matter of this study is the one in which the girl and the boy are close to each other in age, mostly they are both below the age of 18 and in the majority of the cases they elope to get married. This phenomenon in Turkey, to a large extent, is a type of marriage typical of the Romani community. Therefore, being different from other types of marriage, it contains sociological dynamics unique to itself. This study focuses on the reasons for the fact of early marriage observed in the Romani community, the results early marriage brings about and some proposals for a solution. The study comprises in-depth interviews conducted with the people of the Romani neighborhoods of Mersin, the teachers at the schools predominantly attended by Romani children and the residents of the same neighborhoods who are non-Romani, in regard to titles such as education, employment, discrimination, and social exclusion, in addition to collecting demographic data from 530 households in those places. Moreover, in-depth interviews with 104 Romani women were conducted on issues like the first marriage age of themselves and their spouses, reasons for marriage, and the social, economic and psychological effects of early marriage. The scope of this study, however, will mainly be determined by the fact of early marriage.

The early marriages observed in Romani community are not because girls are married to older men by force, or the child is sacrificed for the economic salvation of the family (UNFPA 2012), or the girl is disciplined and disempowered in early ages in accordance with the patriarchal gender culture. Precarious work conditions and having to work for very low pay on a daily basis are very common in the Romani community, and there are discriminatory and exclusive attitudes toward Romanies, all of which have resulted in endogamy in a closed community; therefore, it is a fact that married couples both live in poverty. In other words, the girl is not encouraged to marry for economic reasons. In the Romani community, child marriages take place under such social conditions as children cannot have dreams, are unable to think of another lifestyle and believe they have no other option but to marry.

The dynamics of early marriage in the Romani community appear as a type of marriage in which the spouses have mutual "consent". In this context, accepting that the child has "consent" is to violate the child's rights by behaving unjustly toward him/her one more time. Therefore, this phenomenon makes it necessary to concentrate on different dynamics from early marriages that happen "by force". Naturally, accepting that the child has "consent" means to overlook the social dynamics that drove the child into this process as well as ignoring the responsibility of the social state regarding child policies. Therefore, in this study, the fact of early marriage is treated as a violation of child rights. Early marriages can neither be prevented solely and technically by determining marriage age as at least 18 in the laws, nor increasing the number of compulsory school years. In this context, we will try to discuss the social mobility among the Romanies and if there are any opportunities available for realizing the individual's abilities and skills and using them in light of the data we have. Therefore, this study aims to question the concepts of social justice, exclusion and equality in regard to the Romani community.

The main reasons for early marriage unique to the Romani community this study found out in light of the data can be listed as follows: extreme poverty in the family, the parents have jobs without social security, the law and social state cannot protect the children, dropping out of school early, discrimination and isolation directed at Romanies, typical Romani jobs, having to start work at an early age, the perception that marriage is social security, the dreams of the child are limited, the issue of accommodation, the sense of desperation, symbolic values consisting of common norms and values, social environment, the importance of the notion of producing offspring, the expectations from life being limited to marriage and family, the desire for sexual intercourse before marriage and becoming pregnant. The most important results that are brought about by early marriage are that girls leave school, the woman is disempowered in the long run, the increase in domestic violence, the transfer of this disadvantageous psychological, physical and social heritage to the next generations, that poverty becomes a vicious circle, the expectations for the girl to perform the roles of a

"bride", "spouse" and "motherhood", and for the boy to have to be responsible for the whole family at an age he cannot cope and the economic and emotional burden this brings

The Human Development Index has determined three fundamental criteria to measure human development, which are life expectancy at birth, average period of study, and gross national income per capita. However, in addition to this, to measure human development more thoroughly, the Human Development Report takes four separate indications into consideration. These are the Poverty Index, the Human Development Index Adapted For Inequality, the Gender-Related Development Index, and the Social Gender Inequality Index. These indications put forth data that intersect with one another at the same time (Human Development Report 2016). The Human Development Index Adapted For Inequality makes corrections toward the bottom in the Human Development Index depending on the extent of inequality. The Gender-Related Development Index makes comparisons between female and male Human Development Index values. The Social Gender Inequality Index puts emphasis on the strengthening of women. The Multi-dimensional Poverty Index measures the dimensions of poverty outside of income and reflects being able to live a long and healthy life.

Average period of study and expected period of study reflect being able to receive information. And gross national income per capita reflects being able to have a standard of living that is decent for people.

A standard of living that is decent for people means for the individual to live under conditions which allow him/her to develop his/her abilities and capacity, to be empowered to make decisions about his/her life, to be strong against risks, and not to be discriminated against because of his/her ethnic background, religion or gender, as well as being able to eat healthy foods and have accommodation, and having access to clear drinking and running water, education, and health services. Unfortunately, Romani children in Turkey who are the subject matter of this study do not only have problems related to having access to education, health services and decent accommodation facilities, but also they are discriminated against, they have to start work and get married at an early age at the same time. Without a doubt, these problems are intertwined. However, this study will focus on early marriage and other dynamics will be discussed in relation to this fact.

The solutions this study offers in light of the data can be listed as: free widespread preschool education; a permanent solution to the employment problem of parents; communication in the family, between spouses, parents and children, education toward family relations; the teachers who teach at district schools should receive in-service training compatible with the characteristics of the district; taking legal precautions against early marriage and not leaving loopholes in the laws; macro policies should encourage attending school instead of early marriage; the reorganization of counseling departments in district schools aimed at the needs of the district and children; the approaches that aim to

strengthen women should not solely be economy-driven, but they should also focus on social value changes, and the concept of strengthening women should be approached multi-dimensionally with the activation of formal and non-formal educational institutions to eliminate the gender culture that subordinates the woman and encourages early marriage.

The fact of early marriage in Romani community, which is the subject matter of this study, is a social problem that needs to be examined in terms of its own dynamics, as in every sociological phenomenon. In a country where extremely serious issues are experienced in the context of social gender inequality, discussing the early marriage problem in Romanies, which is a disadvantageous people, makes the problem all the more inextricable. As a matter of fact, in a country where the Romani community is not only exposed to problems of employment, education and accommodation, but also to discrimination and being collectively stigmatized as an identity, trying to analyze the fact of early marriage sociologically also involves focusing more on macro problems rather than solely discussing the Romani community at the micro level.

Methodology

This study aims to look into the early marriage issue, which is extremely common in the Romani community and continues among the young generations without a change, from a sociological perspective. The field research of this study was realized in two stages. In the first stage, quantitative and qualitative data on demographic information, level of education, employment areas, work and accommodation conditions, educational problems of the children, and practices of exclusion and discrimination were collected, including 530 households. For this purpose, the structured questionnaire form technique and in-depth interviews were conducted. In the assessment of the quantitative data the SPSS program was used. This study contains not only data collected from the Romanies, but at the same time in-depth interviews with the teachers and students in Romani schools and non-Romanies living in the neighborhoods. The first stage of the study helped us to understand the social dynamics behind the early marriage issue. The second stage of the study focuses on the fact of early marriage. In this context, some Romani women in Mersin aged between 13 and 80 were asked about the first marriage age of themselves and their spouses. However, the study was not conducted solely to collect quantitative data; additionally in-depth interviews were conducted with the women on topics including such titles as spouse selection, deciding on marriage, marriage process, dropping out of school, domestic relations, social gender culture, and bringing up children.

The fact of early marriage is an issue that particularly concerns both girls and boys especially in the Romani community. However, one of the restrictions of this study is that in this field research the phenomenon was discussed from the perspective of girls. While there are common social dynamics related to the fact

of early marriage for both girls and boys, there are also different ones depending on the gender. Therefore, the fact of early marriage from the perspective of boys is an important one worthy of another sociological study.

Romani children have many different problems such as addiction to narcotics, sex trade, child labor, etc. other than the early marriage problem. These phenomena, each of which could be a research subject on its own, will not be directly addressed in this study and will only be discussed in the context of the fact of early marriage.

According to the data of the field research, the number of residents in the home is 3-5 persons 61.6%, 1-2 persons 16.8%, 6+ persons 21.1%. The number of children is 1-2 40%, 3-5 58.1%, 5+ children 7.2% while 7.6% of the households do not have children. When we look at the education status, in Romani community in which both the woman and the man are extremely disadvantageous, it is understood that women have to experience this disadvantage much more greatly because of their gender. For example, while the illiteracy rate is 46.1% among women, this rate is 19.4% among men; the rate of elementary school graduates is 12.6% among women, while the same rate is 41.3% among men. The study, in which the level of education, professions and jobs of the parents of the interviewees were also asked about, clearly puts forth how the disadvantageous heritage is transferred from generation to generation. For example, the interviewees said that 57.1% of their fathers and 83.2% of their mothers were illiterate. 84.6% of the men interviewed have casual jobs with irregular pay. A vast majority of the women go do house-cleaning irregularly and both groups have to work without social security. It was found out that in the previous generation 96.6% of the fathers worked in temporary irregular jobs and 31.2% of the mothers went out to do jobs like house-cleaning. As for the accommodation conditions, both the observations made during the study and the statistics show that these are nowhere near a decent standard for people. 20% of the homes have one room. The homes with two rooms make up 71.6% of the whole. In 34.7% of the homes the toilet is outside and is used as a bathroom at the same time.

The spouses said that they had known each other beforehand with a rate of 79.4%. The rest is made up of prearranged marriages. These data clearly show that Romanies are truly isolated from society. Of the spouses, 99% of the men and 98.9% of the women stated that they were of Romani ancestry in terms of ethnic background. In fields like level of education and employability, the double impotency of women can be observed in the early marriage pattern. For example, while the marriage rate among 13-year-old girls is 20%, this is 2% among boys. These rates which are 14% and 10% for 14-year-olds, 17% and 15% for 15-year-olds, 15% and 7% for 16-year-olds, 16% and 10% for 17-year-olds respectively, show the disadvantageousness of girls. When we look at the table as a whole, the marriage rate below the age of 18 is 82% for girls, and 44% for boys. In the sample after the age of 22, there was only one woman who got married at 26. In other words, the ultimate age limit for marriage for girls can be said to be 22. This

causes many problems that affect one another as will be discussed in the following sections of the text. Among boys, the number of boys who get married is 21 between the ages of 22-26 and the rate is 20.1%. As the data show, although the early marriage pattern is a situation that is equally very bad for both girls and boys in the Romani community, it is also crystal clear that girls are in a more disadvantageous situation. This study will put more emphasis on girls regarding the fact of early marriage. However, it is of crucial importance that a field research on the reasons for early marriage among boys and the effects of this phenomenon on children also be conducted so as to have clues to find a solution to the problem.

Early Marriage

The concept that "The individual completes his/her physical, cognitive and mental development at the age of 18" leads us to categorize marriages below the age of 18 as "early marriage". Development is a whole with its physical, emotional, cognitive and social aspects. If the development of any of these aspects is hindered, this prevents the others from developing healthily. Turkey ranks 55th among 144 countries in terms of early marriage according to Save the Children Annual Report (2016: 24). In other words, marriages below the age of 18 negatively affect the physical, emotional, mental and social development of the child. The World Health Organization has stated that about 16 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 give birth every year worldwide - mostly in low- and middle-income countries (World Health Organization 2014). Unfortunately, however, in the long term, the negative effects of early marriage on the child grow apace. In this context as well, children who are married early are to be considered in the category of children whose physical, mental, ethical, social and emotional development, and personal security are in danger.

Article 3 of the Child Protection Law no. 5395 defines "the child in need of protection" as the one whose physical, mental, ethical, social and emotional development is in danger together with his/her personal security; or who is neglected or abused, or a victim of a crime (Child Protection Law 2005). In this sense, children who are made to get married at an early age are "children in need of protection". Because getting married early is a phenomenon that affects the child's physical, mental, ethical, social and emotional development negatively, threatens his/her security and is a sign that there will be multidimensional disadvantages throughout his/her life. In our society, even girls below the age of 15 are made to marry. If this is somehow realized, legal action against the suspect and his parents, and the female victim's parents is taken for their involvement in this offense. Even if the female victim is lawfully married to the suspect at the age of 17, since a regulation that is similar to the 434th article of the defunct Turkish Penal Code no. 765 does not exist in the new Turkish Penal Code, there is no impunity from punishment through marriage. Therefore, the husband of the female victim (the suspect), his parents and his parents-in-law are prosecuted,

tried and punished (Turkish Penal Code 2004; Article 434). Therefore, especially in the Romani community, weddings of early marriages are not made known, and “eloping” or “marriage through eloping” acts as a bumper in the sociological sense.

As a matter of fact, all the problems the Romani community has such as employment, education, accommodation, exposure to social exclusion, and early marriage are intertwined, with none of them having priority over the others. In other words, one problem leads to another or triggers it. The facts that marrying girls and boys in the Romani community are very close to each other in age and marriages are so-called “quasi-voluntary” do not mean that there is no problem. Moreover, to arrive at such a conclusion is a violation of child rights per se. Child marriages, which is a violation of the child’s most fundamental rights such as the right to life and development, access to education, and to live in safety is also a violation of the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has also been signed by Turkey and the application of which is full of problems.

Several international legal conventions outlaw child marriage, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. There is a general consensus among all international conventions about the following definition: “The term “child marriage” is used to describe a legal or customary union between two people, of whom one or both spouses is below the age of 18 (CRC 2017; UNICEF 2001; UNICEF 2006b; UNICEF 2015; UN 2003; UN 2015). In addition to this, the CRC has made arrangements in regard to the protection of child rights, encompassing such areas as:

The right to have and protect a name and a nationality; The right to life and development; Access to health services; Access to education; Access to social security services; The right to access a decent standard of living; The right to time for entertainment, recreation and cultural activities; The right to protection from abuse and neglect; The right to protection from drug addiction; The right to protection from sexual exploitation; The right to protection from economic exploitation; The right to protection from sale, abduction and forcible detention; The right to protection from other forms of abuse; Right to torture protection; The right to protection from deprivation of liberty; The right to direct or indirect protection from black conflicts; Freedom of expression; Freedom of thought; Freedom of religion and conscience; The right to freedom of association; The right of the children to express their views on them; The right to access necessary information; The right to keep private life private. The rights of children with special needs: child refugees; Disabled children; Minority and indigenous groups; The rights of children who have no parents, including adoption of a certain order of adoption (CRC, 2001, article 2-54).

This convention, which went into effect in 1990, was also signed by Turkey, on condition that three articles in it carry a reservation. According to Article 11 of

the Turkish Civil Code, anyone who is over 18 is an adult. In Article 10, being an adult is defined as “having the power of discernment”. However, Article 12 bears the statement that “A minor who is over the age of 15 can be made an adult in a court of law, at his/her own request and with his/her parents’ consent”. What this means is that the law leaves the door open in regard to child marriage provided that the legal guardians give their consent. If being an “adult” is to have the power of discernment, this means that it is assumed that a fifteen-year-old has the capacity to make a decision about taking responsibility for spouse selection and getting married (Turkish Civil Code 2001).

According to Article 124 of the Turkish Civil Code, the age limit for marriage is the condition that marrying persons are over 17. However, there is a statement that “the judge can give permission for marriage of boys and girls who are over 16 years of age, under exceptional circumstances and for a very important reason”. “Exceptional circumstances” mentioned here are not at all clear and are left to the discretion of the judge. It is crucial to state in this context that legal regulations made about social incidents do not always take effect in accordance with social realities and these regulations in practice. The most striking example of this is seen in the fact of early marriage in Turkey. If we are to mention the fact of early marriage in the Romani community in the context of this study, at the age of 16, which is the lowest limit in marriage, 66% of the women and 34% of the men in the sample were married. In other words, along with legal regulations, precautions that will change the social dynamics that lead to early marriage must also be taken. Therefore, expressions like “I got married at my own request”, “I quit school at my own request”, etc. that we often came across during the field research definitely need to be analyzed sociologically. This study will try to analyze the concept of “consent” sociologically. That is to say, to say that this is a consent without changing the conditions that lead children to early marriage would be treating children extremely unfairly and a violation of child rights.

Article 11 of the Turkish Civil Code states that “Adulthood begins when the individual is over 18 years of age. Getting married makes the individual an adult. Article 12 of the Civil Law states that a minor who is over the age of 15 can be made an adult in a court of law, at his/her own request and with his/her parents’ consent (Turkish Civil Code 2001). Thus, the civil code clears the way for 15-year-olds to marry. To prevent early marriages, these loopholes in the law must also be dealt with. In addition to legal loopholes, expressions like “I got married at my own request”, “I quit school at my own request”, etc. that we often come across in the Romani community are not to be seen as individual will; they are the kind of expressions that need to be analyzed sociologically. To say that this is a consent without changing the conditions that lead children to this decision would be treating children extremely unfairly and a violation of child rights at the same time. The facts that early marriages in Romani community are not “by force” as such and are rather “quasi-voluntary” or marrying girls and boys are close to each other in age do not stamp out child abuse or sexual, economic, emotional and

physical violence against the child; nor do they make this phenomenon an unimportant one in the field of social policy. If “children” get married/are forced to get married, this is not an individual choice or preference; this is a social problem.

Convention on the Rights of the Child: First Part, Article 1, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years and Article 3, States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision (CRC, 2017). However, when we look at the data, 82% of the women and 44% of the men are “children” themselves even though they have children, so the question of who will protect them and their children gains importance.

Article 5 contains the following statement: “States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognised in the present Convention (CRC, 2017). However, again, parents who have children while they are children themselves remain in a vicious circle that continues for generations, in the subjects of guidance and manipulation. These reasons, putting these articles that protect children into practice and they do not solely exist in an agreement are of vital importance.

According to Article 3 of the Child Protection Law no. 5395, even if the individual becomes an adult at an earlier age, it defines somebody who is not over the age of 18 as a child (Child Protection Law, 2005). It is deemed necessary that the definition of “child” be the same in the Turkish Civil Code, Turkish Penal Code and Child Protection Law, and this mutual definition be phrased in such a way that will be beneficial to the child (Turkish Penal Code, 2004; Turkish Civil Code 2001).

Another similar statement that makes child marriages easier is in the TPC. Article 104 of the Turkish Penal Code, which regulates the “sexual intercourse with minors”, states that “Anyone who has a sexual intercourse with a child who is over the age of 15 without coercion, threat or deception is punishable by imprisonment from 6 months to 2 years, upon complaint”. Moreover, according to Article 105, upon complaint of the victim, a person who molests somebody for sexual reasons is punishable by imprisonment from 3 months to 2 years, or a judicial fine is imposed on him/her (Turkish Penal Code, 2004, Article 104).

In here, in the event that a child who is younger than 18 is raped or forced to get married, criminal action is dependent on the complaint of the child, which is far from protecting the child. When the fact that there is cooperation and approval of families in child marriages is taken into consideration, the possibility

of a child finding the psychological and social power under the conditions he/she lives and reaching the authorities is unfortunately a decision deemed to be far from protecting the child. In this context, one of the most important sociological problems in the Romani community is the fact of early marriage as a violation of child rights. In this study in which 104 households were asked about their first marriage age, there were no women or men who married for the first time after 26 years of age. Under present conditions, in a society where social mobility is dependent on educational institutions, 26 years of age is a minimum age at which one has completed his/her education partially and is making an effort to find employment. To be married at this age means for the woman that she has to do the housework and look after the children, and for the man that he has at least undertaken a heavy economic burden having been employed as unskilled labor.

Child Poverty

Poverty means that the individual does not have access to the most fundamental needs such as nutrition, accommodation, clothing, clean drinking and running water, health services and educational opportunities that are necessary for maintaining one’s life. This definition and frame of poverty has been conceptualized as absolute poverty and it refers to those who have to live with an income under 1.25 USD per person per day, which is a limit determined at an international level (Human Development Report 1998; World Development Report 2000; World Development Report 2008). According to the UNICEF Report, poverty has devastating effects on the child, physically, cognitively and socially. On the one hand, the cost of child poverty is mostly paid by the child herself, who has lost her chances of a good life; on the other hand, because it leads to chronic poverty and decreases social productivity, it also has social costs.

“Not only do children experience poverty differently, but they are more vulnerable to its effects because of their particular life stage. Poverty has especially devastating effects on children’s development, often resulting in deficits that cannot be overcome later. Put another way: for a child, poverty can last a lifetime. Where a child lacks nutrition early in life, misses out on health care or education, or experiences violence and neglect the consequences are a diminished adulthood which is hard to escape” (UNICEF 2014: 4).

Child poverty is a fact that will render the child vulnerable throughout her life. In other words, child poverty leads to women poverty and disempowerment in the long run. Vulnerability, in the general sense, means to be defenseless and unprotected against risks. For children however, vulnerability means much more than being deprived only of nutrition, accommodation, health services, educational opportunities and parental protection. For the child to be defenseless means to be at risk from exploitation, abuse, physical and emotional violence also. According to Arora et.al. Risk factors and indicators of vulnerability in young

people can be considered under three main headings. They are material aspects, emotional aspects and social aspects. Material aspects are money, food, clothing, shelter, health care and education ‘dan mahrum olmayı içerir. Emotional aspects are care, love, lack of psychosocial and emotional support, child labor, exposure to crime, gang or drug use, emotional, physical sexual abuse, support, or space to grieve and containment of emotions. Social aspects are absence of a supportive peer group, of role models to follow, or of guidance in difficult situations, marriage before the age of majority, low maternal age, poor attendance in school, poor scholastic performance and risks in the immediate environment (Arora et al., 2016). Therefore, the fact of early marriage and the fact of poverty are closely related. The reasons for and results of early marriage appear as dynamics that trigger each other like a spiral. Therefore, to empower the child means to empower the woman in the future. Ending child marriage is integral to empowering women and girls. Child marriage is not only a human rights violation, but by forcing girls into adulthood and, frequently motherhood, before they are emotionally and physically mature, it also deprives girls of the ability to exercise choice—have agency – about their lives (World Bank 2016: 1). In this context, the UNFPA addresses the issue of empowerment of girls under five separate aspects. These are empowering girls by building their skills and enhancing their social assets, improving girls’ access to quality formal education, mobilizing communities to transform detrimental social norms, enhancing the economic situation of girls and their families, and generating an enabling legal and policy environment (UNFPA 2012: 51-52).

The Cycle of Exclusion and Education

Social exclusion can be defined as a systematic process of marginalization or isolation. The multi-dimensional nature of this process has economic, social, symbolic, and political aspects. Social exclusion can be analyzed in terms of the denial of social rights each citizen has to a certain basic standard of living and to participate in the major social and occupational institutions in society. In this approach, exclusion is the opposite of citizenship and mainly the result of a denial of the fundamental rights (Strobel 1996: 175).

“Education” presents the main challenge and also the opportunity for the excluded child. Education is key to breaking the intergenerational cycle of exclusion and poverty (UNICEF 2007: 5-6). Education is a positive aspect in social exclusion and social mobility, but it creates an exact opposite effect in the Romani community. This effect can be discussed in a few dimensions. One of these is that the schools the Romani children attend are located in extremely poor districts, so they have inadequate physical conditions and equipment. Another issue is that the low socio-economic level of the neighborhood makes the children “homogeneous at being disadvantaged”. In other words, there is similarity in being unable to receive academic support from their families, similarity in being

means equipping children with successful, meaningful, and healthy lives (CEIAR 2012).

For Romani children, there is a problem of “meaningful accessibility” to educational institutions. The issue is much more complicated than just getting children to legally “sign up for” educational institutions. The issue is also to create opportunities that allow children to “go to” school as well as making school accessible for them. In the context of the children that are the subject matter of this study, empowerment means to prepare children for a successful, meaningful and healthy life. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that there is equality in conditions as well as equality in opportunities in the accessibility of social resources available to children. However, Romani children face intertwined discrimination, the elements of which affect one another very negatively.

In this context, Crenshaw uses the concept of intersectional discrimination in her article. According to her, race, class, gender and other forms of discrimination are intertwined, which means they affect one another and all cause the woman to be excluded (Crenshaw 1991: 1242) For example, while a Romani girl is exposed to domestic violence at home because of her gender, she is discriminated against at school because of her skin color or accent. Or, she is discriminated against because of residential discrimination, which brands her

neighborhood as "gypsy district" and her school as "gypsy school". In this context, intersectional discrimination describes a situation where several grounds of discrimination interrelate at the same time, such as gender, ethnic origin, disability, etc. (Ravnhol, 2009). According to a UNICEF Report, intersectional discrimination affects all family members and is passed on through generations (UNICEF, 2007, p.48).

The Reasons for Early Marriages in the Romani Community

Prevalence of Romani-Romani marriages

"I'm going to marry a Romani girl, but this makes you unclean/impure for forty years ... (a 16-year-old Romani high school student)

The data presented by this study show that almost 100% of the marriages that take place within the Romani community are Romani-Romani marriages. The most important sociological result that is brought by a Romani-Romani marriage is an isolated social life. What this means is that, in the sociological sense, similar lifestyles, similar behavioral patterns and social values will be transferred to the next generations almost unchanged. One reason for the prevalence of Romani-Romani marriages is that Romanies live in closed neighborhoods in terms of ethnic identity; another important reason is that these neighborhoods are exposed to social closure in the socio-economic sense.

Social closure, for a layer or category, means the tendency to reproduce similar life chances. The areas in which the fact of social closure maintains its functionality are, when we look in the context of market for example, to gain a foothold in the labor market, proprietorship, qualifications and skills acquired through education, to exercise power in the context of authority in work life or to be in a position where one is exposed to power assertion; and lastly it refers to groups in which living quarters, places where shopping is done and free time is spent, consumption patterns, likes and pleasures differ from one another, in other words differences in prestige (Hamilton and Hirschowicz 1993: 21).

According to Parkin, social closure is a process in which access to resources and opportunities is limited to a certain group of chosen people and thus rewarding is maximized. Two main social closure strategies are observed in modern societies depending on proprietorship and academic and professional qualifications and proficiency. On the one side to be a proprietor is a type of closure designed to prevent access to production and its products, on the other side, academic and professional qualifications is a type of closure designed to exercise control over taking key positions in the divisions of the workforce and to follow it. Thus, according to Parkin, the dominant class in capitalism is comprised of those who have the producing principal capital and those who hold the legal monopoly of professional services (Miller 1975). Social closure also brings the concepts of us/them and native/foreigner together with itself. Rhetoric that legitimizes the

exclusion of the "foreign" one constantly through myths/legends, whose origin is unknown, is generated alongside.

"I'm going to marry a Romani girl but this makes you unclean for forty years, you are to put a brick in the boiler, you are to boil it seven times, boil it seven times and bathe seven times ... they think we're dirty, they don't believe we're muslim, they consider us nonbelievers ..." (a 16-year-old Romani high school student)

The effort of a group in society to have the monopoly of producing authoritarian and binding meanings for the whole society (Bauman, 1991) constitutes the origin of the distinction between "natives" and "those who are not native enough, nomadic, gypsies that cannot be made to comply with the integrity of society". The superiority of one lifestyle causes another one to be looked down upon, thereby paving the way for the proclamation of the inevitability of inequality without being questioned. Thus, "the discrimination the "nonconformant" groups of the social and political system face was being hushed up by reference to their own shortcomings, imperfections and complete otherness of these groups (Bauman, 1991). This was a kind of deauthorization exercise by weakening the potential competitive resources of the otherized group. Therefore, according to the scenario of the ones who have the monopoly of producing binding meanings, impudent foreigners that could not be tuned had features in them that would justify the exclusion and discriminatory attitudes.

"We're always like refugees, every party has been embraced by some people, what do Romanies need, they need to be on the waterfront so they could wattle their baskets, they would get their plates and pots tin-coated and send them away, they would pack them off ..." (an 18-year-old vocational high school student)

Dropping out of School Early and Typical Romani Occupations

School is not an alternative for them they enter into the other fields of life.
(non-Romani teacher)

The fact in which the child is made to drop out of school by force and get married, which is typically seen in early marriages, is not common in the Romani community. In the Romani community, when a child has "decided to get married", she has already dropped out of school. At this point, the discriminatory attitudes and exclusion Romanies commonly face appear to be an important factor in their early marriages as well. An isolated social life has caused Romanies to maintain the occupations, which are unique ones that they have inherited from their ancestors and that change a little bit depending on the conditions of the day, to

continue with their lives. Some typical Romani occupations that are still alive can be listed as basketry, bag making, tin coating, floristry, horse-drawn carriage handling, musicianship, etc. In this context, dropping out of school early means to be excluded from today's formal labor market in modern societies. This fact makes Romanies do jobs that do not require any type of certification and can be done with qualifications acquired in the family within the informal sector. Thus, one of the most results of dropping out of school early can be seen in the transfer of typical Romani jobs, which have almost become traditional, to the next generations. Boys either learn how to play a musical instrument from their fathers and become musicians who work temporarily and irregularly in the informal sector, or they go out to collect garbage. Girls on the other hand either have to look after their younger siblings at home or they go out and do house-cleaning with their mothers most of the time. Meanwhile, some typical Romani jobs such as basketry, tin coating and horse-drawn carriage handling that are almost extinct but continue to exist partially are still done by young Romanies.

This fact, just like endogamy, isolates Romanies from the social environment in which they could learn another trade or occupation in their worklife. Therefore, it does not allow Romanies to see the "other worlds" in which there are different lifestyles, norms and values. As the years spent in educational institutes increase, the fact of inward closure in jobs will diminish and the possibility of endogamy in marriages will weaken. In an isolated environment in the ethnic sense, which we may call "Romani neighborhoods", and because she is also too young to get married, the child reaches the age limit at which point she will make the decision to get married without having met almost no non-Romanies. When the conditions at home are not suitable for academic study, the distance between the child and school increases bit by bit every passing day. After a while, the child comes to a point where she thinks that the educational establishment, as well as the curriculum at school, does not mean anything in regard to her future. This turns into a situation in which the academic gap gets larger every day and education is no longer a medium that helps you have a dream about the future. Therefore, so long as the common rhetoric "The child didn't want it, she wasn't willing to study." is not analyzed sociologically, it turns into a violation of child rights in the sense that the child's right to education has been taken away. It is necessary to look into the fact of early marriage in the context of the concepts of social justice and equality. According to Article 29 in the CRC which outlines the goals of education, "Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full." Although the main goal of education has to be uncovering the talents of the child, Romani children are often subject to experiences in which their self-esteem is tarnished instead of being encouraged to learn and succeed (CRC 2001: Article 29).

"Married at a young age, ignorant, so the family is away from both the child and school. Another thing is, the child conceals his/her identities. The other children exclude the Romani children. Mostly, they get married and quit school when they're 15. This is a very different area, I didn't know it was this bad." (non-Romani teacher)

"Absence is very high. The marriage rate among the Romani students is also very high in terms of age. For them school is not an alternative, they enter into the other fields of life. For example; we go to the homes of absentee girls and we see that they've gotten married. The families go to bed very late, the children do the same and they can't get up in the morning. This is one of the reasons why they are absent from school." (non-Romani teacher)

Opportunities for Social Mobility Among Romani Children

"It's impossible for them to be successful, because they can't think, can't say even a single word."
(non-Romani teacher)

When the fact of early marriage of Romani children, which is the subject matter of the study, is discussed in the context of the concepts of social justice and equality, the questions "What is the status of the fluidity of social mobility in Romani community?" and "Are there any opportunities for the children to be aware of their abilities and skills and use them?" need to be asked first. The most important factor that determines class structuring is the degree to which a class is open or closed, and the factor that determines the degree of openness or closedness of classes is their chances of social mobility.

The concept of social mobility refers to the positive or negative changes in people's social position and status; in other words, it means major changes in the economic, social and political position of people and groups (Parkin 1973; Miller 1975; Goldthorpe 1987; Crompton, 1993). In a similar definition by Weber, social mobility tells of a power distribution by which a person's economic and political status is determined in a society. According to Weber, economic power, which means what kind of property a person has and what he or she supplies to the market, is interwoven with political power, which means to be able to activate the political mechanism and have an influence on it; and status, which means social prestige, is an important factor that separates the person from the others among the layers of society (Bradley 1996: 53-55).

The aspect of social mobility which is related to this study is the mobility between generations, especially in the determination of a person's social positions; in other words, the change that occurs in the person's social position in comparison to his/her parents. If the positive changes in a person's social position and status throughout his/her life are mostly determined by his/her parents' social

"Let's say mildly mentally disabled ... the majority of the students are mildly mentally disabled, they're not smart enough, they're at a low level of intelligence ..." (non-Romani teacher)

position and status rather than his/her own efforts and abilities, in other words, the greater his/her possibilities of mobility are determined by the extent of the advantageous or disadvantageous heritage he or she has received from his/her parents, the less we could talk about the concept of social justice. That is to say, to be able to talk about social justice, an individual has to have the same chances of having access to the social rights and benefits in society as much as anyone else, regardless of their possibilities of social mobility, social position, the occupations of the parents, ethnic background, economic, social and cultural capital, religious affiliation or sect, etc. In modern societies, an individual's social position and status are determined by his/her own abilities, efforts and endeavor; in other words, on merit or through meritocratic ways. Meritocracy in this context is a concept that refers to people's having merit for being in a certain position in society for which they have employed their intelligence and abilities, and have worked hard and made a considerable effort, instead of favoritism, bribery or innate privileges (Young, 1994, p.xiii). The most important factor in determining a person's social position in modern societies is documentation that is proof that the person is capable of doing that job and has merit, namely educational institutions. In this context, to establish social justice, people should be able to benefit from opportunities for social mobility, which depends on their enjoyment of educational institutions. It is imperative that an education system, which is suitable to the realization and development of a person's special abilities and skills, and the quality and time of it be independent from the social class of the family that person was born into. In other words, the fact that children have access to these opportunities depending on (in parallel with) the economic, cultural and social conditions of their family is a factor that is detrimental to social justice. These opportunities should be accessible for everyone.

In this context, the concept of "the principle of equal opportunity" that defines every individual's benefiting from educational institutions without any discrimination as a civil right (Turner 1997) is becoming a deception of modern societies. The quality gap between the educational institutions, the fact that the schools in the neighborhoods that change according to socio-economic levels gather "similar ones", the criteria for teachers to be assigned according to the districts, their motivation regarding education, their academic and pedagogical backgrounds, the parent-school associations and other variables that could be added to these elements all appear to be extremely important factors in determining the quality of the education the child receives, the time she remains

in the system, her absenteeism, and the process of her socialization at school. One can talk about social justice only in an education system in which it is possible to minimize the impact of the obstacles they encounter or the rocks they trip over if you will during the race, such as the economic, cultural, and social conditions of the families children are born into – i.e. "the start"; the educational quality of the schools they attend, the physical conditions therein, and all kinds of equipment/materials/books etc. that may affect success. Everyone can go to an

educational institution as required by their civil right; however if the child has to work as well as go to school, is often hungry on the way to school, cannot receive academic assistance from the parents at home, the norms and values generated by the isolated environment in which she lives discourage her from remaining at school, her "not losing" to a child who lives in a social environment where these factors are positive would only be a miracle, and the social state has to question why almost all the children leave the system at the start and develop social policies accordingly, instead of one and only "miraculous" events and the current policies that put emphasis on the "who wants succeeds" mentality. In other words, in a system where there is no equality in conditions, equality in opportunities loses its meaning, as seen in the sample of this study. As shown by the data of this study just like their parents, the children who go out to collect garbage with their fathers or to do house-cleaning with their mothers, at an early age just like their parents are trapped in the "vicious cycle of poverty" (Alcock 1997). This situation, by reproducing the poor of the future, who are willing to do "anything and everything" including the dirtiest and hardest jobs, jobs that will not be beneficial in the least but at the same time still be agreed to despite knowing that they will be exhausted and lost as they do them, and by preparing the children of the parents of the same social position for similar positions paves the way for social closure. One of the most important reasons for dropping out of school early is the fact that Romani children are often subjected to discriminatory attitudes by some of their non-Romani peers and teachers at school:

"Do you know why there is poverty? It's because people can't use their intelligence. Intelligence is hereditary. Unintelligent parents have unintelligent children. That's why all of these are retarded. For example, I can show you which of these are unwanted children. Wanted children can be understood from their faces. Look at the shape of the unwanted, not even a single of them is good-looking. All of these are empty-headed. Even a tin can make a greater noise. It's impossible for them to be successful, because they can't think, they can't even say a single word." (non-Romani teacher)

Therefore, to prevent discrimination and enable Romani children to have humane lives cannot be made possible only through legislative regulations. It is imperative that precautions directed at improving the living conditions of Romani children be taken.

Parental Unemployment and Low Educational Level

"I've been working since I was 8. I've done many jobs."
(26, male, car washer, elementary dropout)

The educational level of the parents plays a very important role in regard to the child's attendance at school in terms of time and quality. This does not only refer

to the absence of academic assistance for children at home. The facts that the parents' being a role model for the children, and the reference groups of the children (Runciman, 1969) are composed mainly of their families, close relatives and neighborhoods are also extremely encouraging factors in early marriages.

There are more "discouraged workers" in underdeveloped countries than in developed ones. Because in underdeveloped countries, people who have lost their hopes trying to find a job about the search more frequently than people in developed countries. However, this phenomenon only means that the unemployed are not mentioned in official statistics. Ironically, for an unemployed person in a poor country where there is no unemployment insurance or any other forms of social support, being out of work would be too costly (Gillis et al. 1987: 183). In such a case, the greatest support is child labor at home. Therefore, the cost of parental unemployment and poverty has to be paid mostly by children.

There is no certain age to start work in the Romani community either, as in every other community that faces poverty, exclusion and discrimination together. The child has to start work at the lowest possible age when he/she can handle a job and contribute to the home. The jobs they do include collecting garbage with their fathers, separating the garbage that comes home, doing house-cleaning with their mothers or seasonal labor in agriculture; the children open their eyes either in a field, at a dumpsite or in a sewer.

"I've been working since I was 8. I've done many jobs. Steel doors, plumbing, electric work, automotive bodywork, grocery, selling desserts, my last workplace is a carwash. I've been working at a carwash for 8 years. I've risen from the rank of apprentice. I've got no insurance. Because many workplaces avoid insuring employees. We can't do anything because we've got no backup. I can freelance in any area other than this. I mean what is freely available. I'll do it. Whatever comes to your mind ..." (26, male, car washer, elementary dropout)

The Social Environment

"...necessity, how do we feel you know, as if we've got to..."

(32, female, literate)

"... our Romanies would get married around 13-14 and tell me "You're a spinster, you don't get married.", those ages would look so great, 19 years of age would be like maturity, I mean ... When are you going to get married, when is your dowry going to be ready, this and that ..." (27, female, elementary dropout)

"I got beaten, over and over again, the last time he beat me up I was passing out and coming around... During that time, what do you think you'd be thinking of? To save yourself... I was thinking of my wedding cassettes, I sought refuge in my aunt's home..." (32, female, elementary dropout)

same time and make it possible for a common lifestyle to continue. This common lifestyle, for example, makes the definitions of "womanhood" and "manhood", and creates a social gender culture on which there is consensus. Or, it associates a certain lifestyle with a certain ethnic identity. According to Bourdieu, families are integrated bodies, which are activated by the tendency to maintain the power and privileges they have thanks to common fertility strategies, educational strategies, marriage strategies, and economic strategies (Bourdieu, 1998). Thanks to the cultural capital that is transferred from generation to generation in the family, a common semantic world, set of attitudes, common ways and lifestyles appear in a community. Symbolic capital has the value of an indicator.

For example, in a society where early marriage is approved of by the social norms, early marriage will bring the person a social status. If the fact that a 13/14-year-old has still not had a date is a situation which could tarnish his/her prestige and if social approval is also important for the person, he/she would act accordingly. Or, the prestige that will be brought by having children at the age of 15-16 and having grandchildren at the age of 35 may cause a common lifestyle to come into being. What is also seen in the Romani community is, for example whatever the symbolic value of a gown worn by a child of a middle-class family at a graduation ceremony is, it is the same for a wedding dress worn at the age of 13-14 in that particular culture. In other words, "the gown" has been replaced by "the wedding dress". For a middle-class girl to succeed in school and get good grades, and for a Romani peer to have a dowry are equivalent status indicators. In this sense, status groups are groups that distance themselves from other ones in terms of lifestyle, social esteem and honor. Members of a status group put a social distance between themselves and individuals who do not belong to their groups by making them and us distinction.

The social environment teaches the individual the norms and values that belong to society, so it is a very effective and important factor for the individual to develop their social identities. Among these identities are the individual's gender, religion, ethnicity or nationality. The individual normalizes behavioral patterns that comply with society by developing and reinforcing behaviors that are approved of by their family, peer group, educational institution, etc., and abandoning those that are somehow condemned/criticized or subjected to negative reaction. Not only do these behavioral patterns that are approved of enable the individual to have an identity in social life, but also bring them credibility at the

Giddens defines culture as "the values that members of a certain group have, the norms they follow, and the material products they make". "Society is a system of mutual relations that holds individuals, who share a common culture, together. No culture can exist without society. But, by the same token, no society can exist without culture (Giddens 1989: 31-32). Culture is the act of putting or adding a designed, artificial order in place of that of nature. Culture does not only bring such an artificial order, but it also attaches value to it. Culture is a matter of choice

(Bauman and May 1990). Social integration is seen in terms of how near or far people are in relation to average social norms and the standards that unify life in society (Strobel 1996: 179). If social integration is defined like this, the group that is excluded creates a unique "reactive culture". This is crystal clear in the Romani community with their almost one hundred percent Romani-Romani marriages, doing jobs unique to them, daily lifestyles, dropping out of school, way of marrying, and early marriage pattern.

The poor are not only deprived of resources, consumption and social relationships and ties. In reaction to their situation and the forms of rejection they are subjected to, they develop survival strategies, forms of adaptive and reactive culture, a 'socialization to exclusion' (Strobel 1996: 181).

"The child becomes 9-10, praise be, I'll make my son want to marry her, the light goes on in that girl's head, I'm gonna be a bride."

(45, male, elementary dropout)

To be "strong" and "successful" are determined according to reference groups. In here, the way to be "strong" goes through narcotics or "brute force" etc., not through school. The child's attitudes develop depending on the ones that are "approved of" by his/her social environment. In the semantic world of the child, "to be strong and successful and able to bring home the bacon" you have to prevail through brute force or the use of drugs among the peers. The positive role model – the teacher, who is assumed to have different norms and values and is the nearest one, does not mean "a concrete reality" to the child. The "ethos" of the social class the teacher belongs to is extremely alien to the child, therefore it may not be fully realistic to think that teachers could be role models. The statements of the teachers are also proof of this analysis:

"Because the things the children see in their lives and the things they see in the teachers are very different, so they don't regard the teachers as role models."

"Why, because that's what they see in the family, there's nothing else..."

(female, 46, illiterate)

Discrimination against Romani People

"...told him to touch me, look I'm human like yourself..."

(16, high school student, Romani)

Discussions on poverty do not only use indicators related to meeting basic human needs. In addition to these indicators, concepts such as equality, security, social justice, exclusion, stigmatization, political participation, polarization, strengthening, etc. which are very important in social sciences are also included

in discussions on poverty. Debates on finding out who are responsible for poverty are debates that have been continuing for many long years in developed countries. The crux of these debates is on what taxes of taxpayers and working people are to be spent. Naturally these debates constantly keep the subject of the poor who deserved/do not deserve to receive shares from the resources of the social welfare state on the agenda (Parkin 1973; Rose 1974; Donnison 1982; Wilson 1987; Peterson 1991; Wilson 1992; Oyen 1992; Townsend 1993; Alcock 1997). The view that the poor deserve to be poor because they live in defiance of the generally accepted values and norms of society is discussed through the conceptualization of "poverty culture". According to this, personality traits such as disorganizedness, laziness, adventurousness, impetuosity; domestic relations such as early marriage, cohabitation, leaving the children, violence against the woman, the breakup of the family due to lechery; failure to adapt to urban life, benefiting from the government agencies, problems of integration with the city that have to do with unwillingness regarding organizational issues; economic reasons such as being unable to save money, having the children work, unemployment; social and psychological features such as hedonism, alcoholism, hatred of the police force, and a suffering complex constitute the theses that are set forth in the reproduction of poverty culture and to explain the reasons for poverty (Lewis, 1969; Lewis, No date).

"A friend of mine heard that I was Romani, he shunned me, I went up to him, told him to touch me, look I'm human like yourself, you can't find another friend as humane as me..."

(16, high school student, Romani)

"...While I'm collecting garbage, people look at me with disgust."

(16, male, garbage collector, elementary dropout)

The discriminatory rhetoric against Romanies can be outlined at least under a few headings in line with the data of this study. The discriminatory rhetoric against Romanies, from physical stigma to ethical judgments, exhibits the language non-Romanies used against Romanies during the interviews of the field research:

- Physical stigma: "These have a different kind of dark complexion..."
- "...It's interesting that there are genetically different kinds of dark complexion among these... like a black person..." (46, male, non-Romani, elementary graduate, lives in the same neighborhood)
- Ethical stigma: "These are promiscuous..."
- Vocational stigma: "Tin coaters, basket-makers, horse-riders..."
- Spatial stigma: "Gypsy neighborhood...", "Gypsy college"
- Behavioral stigma: "They would belly-dance even if hungry..."
- Cognitive stigma: "They're not smart, at a low intelligence level..."

This discriminatory and stigmatizing rhetoric has not only closed Romanies to the outside world in the spatial sense, but at the same time it has also encouraged Romani-Romani marriages. There is a proverb in Turkish, "Bir kaşık ayran sabahı bayram", which is used to mean that Romanies are carefree, easygoing people who never worry about what is going to happen to them tomorrow. Many examples of discourse and prejudice against Romanies are the easiest way to discriminate, exclude and stigmatize an ethnic identity with "complacency" and proclaim it a scapegoat. Therefore, field researches that would refute this kind of stereotypes are very important.

For Romanies, who have to work from childhood on doing jobs like house-cleaning and playing musical instruments and receiving around 20-30 liras a day for these, the "They live on a daily basis, they never think about tomorrow." rhetoric is an extremely stigmatizing and ideological one that covers the existing social injustice.

"Mom used to tell me, son: Never marry a non-Romani girl, they'd shit into your pot (they would ruin your home)." (19, male, elementary dropout)

"The daughter of my aunt is married to an Arab, they don't leave her at my aunt's home, because we're Romanies we can't look after anyone, we don't know how to raise children, since this is how people see us we don't want them either." (34, female, illiterate)

"Romanies must be taught humanity in a place abroad." (76, non-Romani male, primary school graduate)

Social Norms and Symbolic Capital

"She was kind of old, got married at 20...!" (57, female, illiterate)

"I was born in 1999 and I'm a spinster already..." (18, female, elementary dropout)

"Don't we want our children to go to school and go places, I mean they shouldn't think about marriage, but the environment we live in makes you, you've got to, how do we feel you know, as if we've got to do this ..." (32, female, literate)

"She looks around, her aunt doesn't go to school, her uncle doesn't either, the rear wheels always follow the front ones ..." "I look around, my friends don't go to school, I follow suit ..." (16, elementary dropout)

"They're saying to a 22-year-old woman, 'You're causing the child to grow old at home' ..." (36, female, elementary dropout)

parent be changed from having children and grandchildren at a young age to creating humane life conditions for oneself and one's children.

"She married the guy she loved, let me do the same, hey I'm going to wear this wedding dress..." (Woman, 46, illiterate)

"Because there is nobody else in the same neighborhood who lives an alternative, different life the children aren't aware that they've got a problem. If people are living the same life, they're not bothered by it." (non-Romani teacher)

Similar social rank and ethnical identities will intermarry, live in the same type of residential areas, and send their children to the same schools. From this interaction will emerge social attitudes and behaviour which differentiate members of one class from another, indeed, if little intergenerational social mobility exists, a distinct subculture will develop (Lloyd 1984: 31). During the socialization process, the child develops behaviors similar to those who are around and in interaction with her. The child takes the adult individuals around her as role models and assimilates the cultural structure and internalizes it. These common behaviors mean that the person has received the approval of the society she lives in. This process, at the same time, creates a system of social values and norms that is unique to itself, depending on the social class, ethnic identity, religion/sect or dominant gender culture the person belongs to. To act within the frame of common norms and values enables the individual to have a sense of belonging. At the same time, these values and norms that have been created make it possible for the social structure to continue. As Huizinga put it, people are in need of meanings and order. The player who objects to the rules or does not comply with them is a spoiler (Huizinga 2006: 29).

Another layer of prestige that is made normal by social values and brought about by having children and grandchildren at an early age is seen in the comparison of the number of children or grandchildren among peers:

"... She says 'Look I had mine get married, I've seen the grandchild of my grandchild', 'You've still got one grandchild only...' " (42, female, literate)

"I'm 61, I've seen the grandchild of my grandchild, I don't care even if I pass on, I've seen everything, it's like this in our community , if you get married at 30 the film is over, you've got a child and you're 32, you will have gray hair until the child grows up but if you get married when you're young your children grow up with you, I've got a son who is 42, I grew up with my children." (61, female, illiterate)

"Getting married young is a very good thing, your children get married, you can see your grandchildren, but when you're 30, you get married, you have children, you'll have to raise children, you die, I got married when I was 13, look I've seen my grandchildren, my grandchildren have children..." (53, female, illiterate)

"I got married at 15, look now I've got 4 grandchildren..." (38, female, illiterate)

The fact of early marriage in Romanies is a social fact that is also related to boys as well as girls.

"Men also get married early, my grandson got married at 13, my son got married at 13, we had the boy circumcized, he's still in bed, his girl is with him, circumcision is done, the following year the wedding is, look he's my son but he has a grandchild, he's got a grandchild, so it's good to get married early." (66, female, illiterate)

Patrarchal culture supports motherhood ideologically and glorifies the woman in a symbolic sense. Almost in every culture motherhood has great importance in helping the woman attain social status and value. The family, which has a place in the ideological apparatus of the state such as education, religion and political institutions, is the also first place where socialization occurs.

"If you get married at 25, those are spinsters, they're old, they're not wanted, I'm a young girl of 16, what would I do with you at 30, I want a young husband who is suitable for me, today's girls are like that... My husband is six years older than me, look my husband's gotten old I'm still young, what's the good of it, life comes to an end..." (46, female, literate)

One of the important elements of social closure is not only to have a monopoly on economic privileges and hand them down to the like, but at the same time to produce separate and discriminating practices. For instance, the things a lower class worker eats or more importantly the way she eats them, her marriage style,

fertility, education, exercise style, or the way she expresses her political views, etc. gather actuators as homogenous as possible, and function as a principle of classification that constitutes its own "dispositions" (Bourdieu 1998). According to Bourdieu, the school system preserves the difference between students equipped with unequal cultural capitals through a series of selective transactions, and separates the ones with a cultural capital from those who lack it; in other words draws the social border lines. The gradation act at school, in fact, establishes the social class distinctions that are to create a permanent order. The ones that are selected through selection are given the "graduate of..... school" label, which they will carry throughout their lives. The ones that are degraded as a result of the selection, in a way that fully complies with Bourdieu's definition, as put forward by the data of this study, are subjected to disparaging and sarcastic language and stigmatized as graduates of the "gypsy college" at best or "guests" of it who will be leaving shortly, the labels they will carry until the end of their lives. Bourdieu, in this sense, takes the educational institutions as a way of establishing a state aristocracy, the authority and legitimacy of which are determined by the title of the school through the secret relation between the ability at school and cultural heritage. The distinction developed by school is, in this context, a consecration, i.e. the placement of certain individuals in a sacred category, into the nobility as it were (Bourdieu, 1998).

Extremely Limited of Child's Dreams

"*The best thing is to work as a propane delivery man.*"
(male, 14, elementary dropout, garbage collector)

Many factors such as the facts that the Romani community has extremely weak links with social institutions, for example, the ratio of elementary dropouts is very high, they do certain jobs unique to themselves in work life, their neighborhoods mostly consist of Romanies, etc. prevent the children from seeing the cultures/lives outside of their own neighborhoods to a great extent. In other words, the fact that there are no other dreams for a Romani child to have except for being "married with children" confines him/her to this small world as it were.

"They don't let the child be dressed like a child, a child is supposed to be dressed like a child...but everyone at that age is dressed like this ..." (54, female, illiterate)

In all practices from clothing to diet, from spouse finding/selection to parenting style, speech, appearance, and selection of the neighborhood to live in, commonality and the cultural division that comes out of it bring about the formation of a closed social group that is unique to itself. An individual gains prestige in the group he/she belongs to to the extent that he/she is a bearer of the common values.

"You can't even have a wedding ceremony in early marriages for fear that it could be heard of and averted." (61, female, illiterate)

"They would get their bag and leave, now they send a message, 'Mom, don't look for me' ... Fugitive girls send a message to their mothers..." (36, female, elementary 3rd grade dropout)

To have the dreams of a child taken away from him/her means that the child closes his/her eyes to the possibilities of the future or he/she is blinded. This is the biggest obstacle to the development of the child's existing capacity.

Having to Begin Work Life at an Early Age

"Go work, get a job, prepare your dowry ..." (48, female, illiterate)

One of the most important indicators of poverty and perhaps the most important one is the fact that children have had to take responsibility for the sustainment of the home. When parents do not have socially secure and regular jobs, children have to start work as early as possible. In the Romani community, children begin to go out to collect garbage, which is one of the commonest jobs, or they play an instrument, which is taught by their fathers, to try to make a living by doing daily jobs. Girls for the most part go out and do house-cleaning with their mothers or they have to look after their siblings at home while the mother is away at work. The most important sociological result of this fact is apparent on the perception of having taken "the role of an adult" created in the child's mind. The connection the child makes between making money and being an adult results in the "I'm making money, so I can get married." mindset. For girls, bearing responsibility for children results in the "I'm taking care of my siblings, so I can take care of my own children." mindset. In other words, "bringing home the bacon" leads to the role of a "father" in boys, and "looking after children" leads to the role of a "mother" in girls at a very young age. When the time is ripe, making the decision to get married becomes meaningful in itself for children. In this context, the issue of early marriage encompasses many phenomena from economic exploitation of children to emotional exploitation of them. Therefore, without changing the conditions in which children live, it would be impossible to eliminate the fact of early marriage by "making compulsory attendance tables at school" or making legal arrangements for the marriage age. In particular, regarding early marriages as children's voluntary choices is the greatest violation of child rights.

"I quit school in grade 2, I didn't want it, I failed a year, again I was in grade 2, I was in grade 2 twice, I got bored, left it altogether ..." (female, 19, mother of two, elementary 2nd grade dropout)

"Go work, get yourself a job, prepare your dowry, tomorrow you'll get married you have no dowry. What does the child do if you insist on this?" (48, female, illiterate)

The statements in this excerpt indicate a very common situation regarding Romani children. Under such conditions as there are no opportunities for study at home, the parents lack the academic background that could support the child in the school subjects, and there are almost no literate people in the social environment of the child, expecting the child to succeed at school is no different from expecting a miracle to happen.

Early Marriage as Social Security

"... I married all of them, I mean I've got no single children left, they wouldn't suffer ..." (58, female, illiterate)

In particular, in a society that cannot have access to social security mechanisms institutionally, the meaning of marriage becomes the same as economic security among spouses and relatives. To this we can add the economic value of the child rather than his/her emotional value (Kagitcibasi 1982). In other words, the fact that the parents have to work in jobs without social security leads to the expectation that the children will also begin to work and contribute to the home economically as early as possible. If one dimension of social security and solidarity is economic, another dimension of it is emotional and social solidarity. The emotional solidarity between the couple and cooperation among relatives the parents think they have made possible for their children by marrying them appears to be another reason for early marriages.

"If I close my eyes right now, I don't have to worry about anything, I married all of them, I mean I've got no single children left, they wouldn't suffer, my husband and I are alone at home..." (58, female, illiterate)

The Issue of Broken Families

"The children live a short period of puberty, they carry a lot of responsibility ..." (non-Romani teacher)

Together with economic deprivation, Romani children also often experience emotional deprivation especially due to the prevalence of broken families. In broken families, especially in cases when the parents do not take on the responsibility of the child, either the child cannot make a choice between the "stepmother's home" and the "stepfather's home" or he/she has to seek refuge in

the grandmother's/grandfather's place. In such cases when the child needs to love/be loved and to belong but these cannot be met in the family, the child seeks for ways to meet these needs. Two of these, unfortunately, cause the child to be involved either in prostitution or a social environment affected by drugs. Another way happens to be the one in which the child, who is experiencing emotional deprivation, decides to get married by thinking "At least we become the family of each other." Thinking that marriage is "salvation" to be freed from the conditions they live in is a very common perception among the children.

"I have many students with family problems. There are many broken families. Some of the classes have 40% such students. This is one of our most important problems." (non-Romani teacher)

Another problem caused by the fact of broken families is the fact that the eldest sibling in the home has to take the responsibility of the younger ones. Most Romani children have to take on adult responsibilities without having lived their childhood in the emotional, physical, cognitive and social sense. As one of the teachers in a Romani neighborhood said, the eldest girl in the home often becomes the second mother, which proves that the children live a short period of puberty. "You can't want anything from your family, no way... This becomes a problem, then you say 'I don't want my children to go through this', 'Why shouldn't I be free of this, why shouldn't I live in a better home ...'".

The Issue of Accommodation

"The girl lies under the boy..."
(Romani kindergarten teacher)

When we look at the physical life conditions of Romanies, for the most part we see the type of accommodation in which all family members have to live in a single room, which opens to a common yard. One of the most important effects of these negative physical life conditions on the children is that they do not have a decent environment in which they can study. However, together with this, especially in homes where the father comes home from work in the early hours of the day, the family waits for him until then and the child is not in a position to go to school in the morning. One of the attendance problems at school is that the children cannot be at school in time. Another effect of these negative physical life conditions on the children is that they witness the privacy of their parents. This situation causes the child to be sexually stimulated and make sexual contact with the opposite sex at an early age. When all of these factors come together, bad accommodation conditions trigger early marriages.

The child learns by imitating his/her immediate environment. In an interview with a teacher in a kindergarten that mostly Romani children attend, the

teacher said that some of the children got under the tables and imitated the sexual acts of their parents.

"...One day I looked, a girl and a boy got under a table, the girl lies under the boy..." (Romani kindergarten teacher)

Expectations from Life and the Feeling of Desperation

"She wore an engagement dress, I will too."
(female, 53, illiterate)

The feeling of desperation, in the simplest way, means you do not believe that some things could change. Under the conditions of this isolated life, the children do not believe that there might be a way out of these conditions, and as a result they do not have "dreams". To perceive the conditions under which they live as "bad", they should have seen the "good" one. Similarly, to be able to call their marriages "early", they should know how their peers live in the same age they got married. In other words, in the isolated world of theirs everything is normal and the way they "are supposed to be". Perhaps the only example the children could find from a different social environment are their teachers, who are impossible to be taken as a reference because of the incredible "social distance" the two parties have created between them.

"They seem to have accepted the bad conditions, we're going to live the same way our parents lived. That's just the way things are." (28, male, elementary dropout)

"We're a community whose only expectation from life is marriage and children, don't you think early marriage is normal? What a 9-10-year-old girl dreams about is, 'I'm going to be have my hair done this way, I'm going to be wearing that dress, I'm going to do that when I'm married, there's constant thinking about marriage... Why, because that's what she sees in the family, there's nothing else, when she looks at the parents, they too got married early... What could a 13/14-year-old be thinking, pink dreams ... She wore an engagement dress, I will too." (30, male, graduated)

The Importance of the Thought of Continuing the Lineage

"She's got no place in the afterlife, she doesn't have a child, there's no lineage, look the tree has dried there ..."
(65, female, illiterate)

The fact that a person's value and social status are, to a great extent, determined by "having children", in other words, in the "continuation of one's lineage" is an important element of the traditional social gender culture. Not to have/Being

unable to have children who will continue your lineage is described as “to be a dried tree”, “to die without producing offspring” or “to have lived for nothing”, and the sole and most fundamental goal in life is thought to be continuing one’s lineage.

“People get married early in our communities, once you grow old you’re done, your battery is dead, we had a guy named Cello, his mom showed him beautiful women, like princesses, he didn’t want any of them, he grew old, he became a spinster and died without offspring, he died as an unmarried man, with no offspring, he died without leaving any children behind... he has no place in the afterlife, not even a single child, no offspring, look the tree has dried there look, I’m putting my clean laundry on it, but if it gives fruit I’ll eat them and sit in the shade of it, what else... look the tree has dried, what’s the fruit of it? Its offspring, children, I’m illiterate but I know some things...” (65, female, illiterate)

To Have Sex Before Marriage and Become Pregnant

“Today girls are newly married but they’re already carrying a baby...”

(57, female, illiterate)

Young people think that getting pregnant will force their families to marry them. In other words, getting pregnant has become leverage over families to make them give their consent to a marriage.

“Today girls are newly married but they’re already carrying a baby, they’re pregnant, they dance with their stomachs stretched like this, pity on that baby no, after birth the marriage is over, I say ‘if only it hadn’t happened’, but this has always been like this ...” (57, female, illiterate)

“She married so young, wetted her bed, wetted her husband too, her husband was like ‘What did you do, did you piss yourself pussy’, she was 13 ...” (66, female, illiterate)

“I took a bride, a bride, she married my son in the third grade, my son went for military service, the girl was four months pregnant, I invited her to stay with me, she was wetting my beds, I put a sponge layer under the sheets, she then gave birth... You dig, she married so very young, she kept pissing herself ...” (50, female, illiterate)

To Have Children While Being a Child Yourself

“She’s got no breasts, what would you expect from her, we have girls who haven’t been sick (meaning menstruated) yet.” (52, female, illiterate)

To have at least two children before the age of 16 means to try to raise children while being a child yourself. Being a parent at an age when your own physical and emotional needs as a child have not yet been met creates problems and the negative results of this will be transferred to the future generations as “heritage”.

“We had a child, I had great difficulty raising the child, we simply didn’t know how to...” (65, female, illiterate)

“She’s got no breasts, what would you expect from her, we have girls who haven’t been sick (meaning menstruated) yet.” (52, female, illiterate)

Another sociological result of the woman having a child at an early age is that she has to quit working until the child(ren) reach at least a certain age, even if the job requires unskilled labor. When we consider the fact that children are born one after the other, we can easily come to the conclusion that the woman will have to stay away from work life and this will make her completely dependent on the man in the economic and non-economic sense.

“... We got married, we were so young and we immediately had children. I had to work anyway. If I’d let my wife go work who would’ve looked after the kids?...” (30, male, elementary graduate, garbage collector)

Not Knowing Enough Child-Rearing

“I was in love, so let’s elope, we all did it, children must be looked after...” (36, female, elementary dropout)

Getting married while being a child is a phenomenon that transfers this vicious cycle to the next generations. Parents who have not yet matured enough in terms of knowledge, background and emotions to raise children repeat the same mistakes that had sealed their fate on their own children.

While preparing the children for the future, it is very important to discipline them, learn how to use the time productively and teach them this. Among the responsibilities of the parents and social state are to determine goals in life and prepare for the child the conditions that will help him/her achieve them. To determine goals in life does not mean early marriage; it means to motivate the child to receive an education and have a career, and there should be favorable conditions at home for the child to achieve these. Reforming the counseling services at school in compliance with the special conditions of the neighborhoods and having the counselors receive in-service training towards this may be a good start in this context. Additionally, policies directed at improving parent-teacher associations are also important. Having the schools in the neighborhoods that are disadvantageous to the teachers cease to be “penal colonies” and providing in-service training that will cancel out stereotyped discriminatory thoughts and

attitudes are likely to produce good results in winning back the children to school and establishing a close rapport between the parents and schools.

"...I got married at 17. My wife was 13. We Romanies elope oftentimes. When we love somebody, we'll get her. Mothers, fathers can't really stop us for that matter..." (30 male, elementary graduate, garbage collector)

"It may be because our children are so free, so free, extremely free, families don't really care..." (36, female, elementary dropout)

"I met my husband in the street, did we love each other, yes, what's this, because of freedom, all youths are out, they look at one another, 'I love you, come on let's elope, I'm in love' so, all of us were like this, that's why I say children must be looked after..." (36, female, elementary dropout).

Encouraging the children to ask questions at home and at school, pedagogically supporting the children who are afraid to ask about what they do not understand are among the things that are likely to affect school attendance and school success in a positive way.

The Outcomes of Early Marriage

Early Marriage and Violence Towards Women

"I was like a stress ball ..." "

(32, female, illiterate)

Early marriage is an important omen/antecedent of violence against the woman at the same time as well as being a type of violence against the child. Early marriage of the woman also means a hindrance to her gaining strength. The woman's strength means that she is able to reach the level of economic, intellectual and emotional competence that gives her the power to make her own decisions about her own life. Getting married at a young age means, on the other hand, that she has stepped into a life in which she will be devoid of all of these.

"I got married and restrictions began in my life, 'You won't go there, you won't go here...' There was no freedom, and what's more violence began afterward, he was somebody who would hit me whenever he was annoyed ..." (27, female, married at 13, illiterate)

"The child was born in the third year of my marriage, I gave birth to my son when I was 16. His family accused me of not having a baby for three years. "People throw rocks at a fruitless tree, this and that, implications, harassment, and so on ..." (23, female, illiterate)

"...When he hit me my son would cry, I was like a stress ball, he was somebody who would hit whenever he was annoyed ..." (32, female, illiterate)

"There's beating with a belt, there's beating, why? It's because I hid some money in my chest and pulled it out among others ..." (56, female, illiterate)

"The man beats up the woman, of course this is everywhere in the world..." (67, female, illiterate)

The Woman's Disempowerment

"When you don't have money and you want something ... You're dependent on him." "

(41, female, illiterate)

One of the most important results of marrying girls is the economic dependence of them on the man, which oftentimes could last for a lifetime. Having a child especially in the first year of the marriage results in the mother's having to leave even the daily jobs she does. The fact that the woman has to be at home doing housework and parenting allows the man to wield more and more power over the woman in the home.

"When you don't have money and you want something, 'Please get me that', you need to beg, You're dependent on him." (68, female, illiterate)

"If one day something happens to your spouse, if you don't have an education, how are you going to cope, how are you going to get by, most of our women, we have women wasted outside ... Now you'll ask why, if your husband gives you money, gives you what you need. If your husband doesn't have a job, if he doesn't have money you don't either, but there's a difference between being at work and being out of work ..." (47, female, illiterate)

Another fact that defines the woman's disempowerment is that the woman has to live under the man's oppression despite being economically independent. Therefore, in the sociological sense, the woman's gaining strength does not only mean economic independence. A woman who develops emotional dependence on her husband at 13-14 years of age is often unable to have the power to have the courage to make her own decisions about her own life even if she is subjected to violence:

"I have a niece but her husband is a real trickster, the man is so smart, my niece loves his husband very much, she works, goes out for house-cleaning, let's say she makes 50-60 TL, she gives all of it to him, her husband gives her money if he feels like it, sometimes he doesn't give any, the man gives the money to his mistress, she

dig, she's such a sucker, if I was her I wouldn't give my money to that guy, I wouldn't go near him, am I that stupid. I do hard work all day, he gets the money and gives it to his mistress..." (64, female, illiterate)

Most of all, it requires the empowerment of girls themselves; empowerment so that girls are positioned to make decisions at the right time; empowered so that, exercising free and informed consent, girls can make the decisions that will safeguard their own futures, transform their own lives and enable them to live in the dignity to which they, as human beings, are entitled (UNFPA 2012: 58).

The approaches that aim to strengthen women not only focus on economy but also on social value change and address the concept of strengthening women from many aspects. Some of the typical, intercultural features of the strengthening process are the increase in the participation in the decision-making process, the woman's becoming more equal with the man in the family and in society, her enjoying the political and legal rights more, and the increase in her self-esteem (Cheston and Kuhn 2002: 17).

According to many feminist social scientists, even though poor men are also as weak as women in terms of benefiting from the material resources in the public realm, they are still in a more privileged position due to patriarchal family structures. In some societies, when a man is seen by his environment dominating his family and wife, this is the most important indicator of his social prestige. In the Romani community, the men's access to the resources is also limited due to their low educational level and concentration on unskilled jobs. Nevertheless, because of such patterns as preserving their decision-making position, using violence against women, and leaving their spouse and children unattended, it is possible to speak of male dominance.

"They make you wear a wedding dress, they give a wedding party, there's the stepmother, stepfather, sister-in-law, there's grumbling and nagging, sickness would come out of it, but if you could earn your bread, if you had an education ... you'd be able to feather your own nest, and when it comes to talking back you'd be able to do it as well, but if a woman doesn't have a job how could she talk? ..." (52, female, illiterate)

In early marriages, it is also important that the woman maintain good social relations with her stepmother/stepfather and close relatives, and learn the roles of a "bride" in the face of this social environment, in addition to her duties for her children, spouse and the economic and social welfare of the home. Another result that comes out of patriarchal gender culture, in other words accepting that the man is privileged and superior in everyday life practices, is the perception that the man's using all sorts of violence against the woman is an ordinary fact of life.

"He's a man, men are womanizers, 'He wonders where do I go today, which field do I enter, should I pick up a flower', at the end of the day he's

a man, he sees himself as a governor, 'I'm the greatest' he says 'No one is above me' there are such men ..." (65, female, literate)

"Are you hungry?" he says, no ... 'Stay home' he says, 'Do you need anything?', you bought a wedding dress, you organized a wedding party for me, you made me your prisoner, is there such a thing, are we in 2017, or in 2018, people should be smarter ..." (68, female, illiterate)

Conclusion

In this study, the fact of early marriage was discussed in the context of the girls in the Romani community. It should be noted that in this study, which is based on field research data, the most important reasons for early marriage were found to be as follows:

- Romanies have to live a very isolated life because they are often discriminated against
- Because of this isolated life, almost all marriages are Romani to Romani
- The norms and values brought by the isolated social environment are transferred from generation to generation almost unchanged
- Because of the low educational level of the parents, they have to work for very low pay in unskilled jobs, which makes them live in abject poverty
- Because poverty is transferred from generation to generation, the children have to take part in the economic struggle of the home
- The children have to adapt to adult roles at a very early age because of having to look after their siblings at home, in addition to their economic support for the home
- The children of broken families think that they can compensate for their needs such as belonging, love and approval through marriage
- They are not motivated enough to attend school because they are discriminated against by some of their non-Romani peers and teachers at school
- The educational institutions play a discriminatory and exclusive role instead of playing a fair and inclusive one
- In most cases, the whole family – 4/5 people - has to live in a single room, which causes the children to fail to do homework, which in turn brings failure at school
- The children, who have to work while attending school, lag behind the school curriculum academically, which causes them to be stigmatized as "retarded"
- The importance of the thought of continuing one's lineage and the symbolic value brought by being married, social approval and the need for feeling that one belongs to a group
- Because of having to live in a single room as the whole family, the children have to witness the privacy of the parents

- As a result of learned helplessness, the children expect nothing from life but to find a spouse and get married
- The children have to live in a social environment and family in which the conditions that would enable them to have childhood dreams are completely gone

The children are devoid of their fundamental rights because of early marriages. In the sense of absolute poverty, the children who are devoid of basic nourishment, accommodation, education, clean drinking and running water have to live in physical living areas that are not healthy and suitable for the development of their capacity. Moreover, the facts that there are no supportive peer groups for the children, there are no educated adult role models who could set goals for a more humane life in the future and function as guides, the children of broken families are devoid of emotional support, and the physical, economic and emotional burden that is brought by bearing the responsibility of younger siblings have all caused the children to take on adult responsibilities at a very early age.

Some precautions that may prevent early marriages can be listed as follows:

- In modern societies, the most important institutions that can provide people with social mobility opportunities are educational institutions. In this context, the most important tasks educational institutions must undertake can be listed as follows:
- The teachers working at the schools in disadvantaged districts must receive in-service training that is compatible with the features of the districts
 - The counseling departments at the schools in disadvantaged districts must be reorganized in accordance with the needs of the districts and the children therein
 - Macro policies must not encourage early marriages, they must encourage school attendance
 - In order to eliminate the gender culture that subordinates the woman and encourages early marriages, formal and non-formal educational institutions must be activated effectively
 - New applications that will make parent-teacher associations more active must be introduced
 - Seminars must be held in order to enlighten families about the realms of existence and rights to life of different identities and cultures, such as ethnic identities, sectarian belonging, etc.
 - Preschool education must be extended and free of charge, and especially in disadvantaged districts there must be easy access to preschool education for children

Precautions that must be taken in economic institutions:

- Precautions against early marriages must be taken in the laws and legal loopholes be minimized
- Legal penalties must have a deterrent effect against people who are responsible for early marriages, without the possibility of remission or mitigation

Legal precautions:

Precautions that will enable social value transformation:

- Taking precautions to eliminate patriarchal gender culture
 - Developing social gender policies to change the perception that early marriage brings status and prestige to the woman and she has a privileged position as a result of being the "preferred" or "selected" one
 - Being aware of the fact that strengthening girls is the same as strengthening women
 - Approaching the concept of strengthening women from different aspects and focusing not only on economic goals but also on social value transformation
 - Formation of school subjects at school that will create awareness in social gender equality
 - Parents must be given seminars about social gender equality in schools, non-governmental organizations, and in workplaces, etc.
 - Education on communication in the family, between parents, between parents and children, and domestic relations must be provided
 - Children of broken families must be protected by the government and they are not to be exposed to abuse and exploitation
- Understanding that child marriages are a violation of child rights, and benefiting from educational rights is not a privilege for the children of a particular social class, but it is a right for all children. The principle of equal opportunity is not enough in regard to the children's benefiting from the right to education, there must also be equality in the conditions on a social justice basis. Poverty and the disadvantageous heritage cannot be overcome unless the children's basic abilities and skills are developed in early childhood.

Under such social conditions as:

- the children are excluded by being stigmatized as “gypsy”;
- the neighborhoods they live in are called “gypsy neighborhoods”;
- the culture that is unique to them is described as “They dance day and night even if they’re hungry”;
- the schools they go to are stigmatized as “gypsy colleges”, in line with the insinuation that they are worthless;
- in the public realm “gypsies” are “preferred” to be invisible;
- the fact that Romanies are at the bottom of society has just become a “self-fulfilling prophecy”.

Perhaps the first article of the violation of child rights must be “to kill children’s dreams”. A social structure that produces the conditions of early marriage means to rob the child of his/her dreams, hopes for the future, and the right to live a humane life.

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RELIGIOUS TRENDS AMONG MUSLIM ROMA IN BULGARIA

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Since the abolition of the Ottoman domination in the Bulgarian lands in the late 19th c. and the early 20th c., the Muslim Roma in Bulgaria have formed a heterogeneous meta-group community part of the Roma ethnic minority and Muslim religious minority in the country. Their religious affiliation to Sunni Islam is an important factor for their cultural development and it is largely intertwined with their ethnic/group identity. Traditional self-perceptions of religiosity include different beliefs, norms, behavior and practices defined by the group and family concepts and knowledge. The article draws attention to the parameters of the religious affiliation of the Muslim Roma with regard to related issues of intra-group specifics and identity, and the processes of preservation and change of the traditional form of religion. Factors that affect the preservation or change of this traditional religious belonging to a greater or lesser extent are: the policies towards the Roma and Muslims in the country; the activity of religious organizations; the access to education; the increased mobility of the population since 1990; the increased social inter-ethnic communication.

Key words: Muslim Roma, religious conversion, identity

Introduction

In the international socio-political agenda, the issue of contemporary interpretations of the Islamic religion in various Muslim communities and societies is particularly relevant. In Bulgaria, as a country inhabited by an ethnic heterogeneous Muslim population (Turks, Roma, Pomaks, Crimean Tatars, as well as newly-settled foreigners and refugees from the Middle East and North Africa) and occupying a frontier position between the Christian and the Muslim world, the 'Islamic problem' in different cases is also discussed by a number of politicians, journalists and scholars. In the context of globalization, foreign influences, cultural transfers and increased mobility of the population, the local Muslims face a lot of challenges of reconsidering their religious beliefs and behavior. Although they are well-known through the media coverage (more often one-sided and 'spicy') and by various academic studies, being the *Others* in the Bulgarian society make them a constant object of public interest.

In view of their diverse ethnic and cultural group specificities a common model for their study is hard or impossible to be developed, therefore, they are most often examined on ethnic and local levels as an integral part of society. So far a number of different thematic researches dedicated on different Muslim communities have been made, but the changes in their current development regarding their identity, religion and cultural heritage have not yet been