

The life trajectories of Roma women living in poverty

Tackling intersectional discrimination

by **Lynette Šikić-Mićanović**

abstract

An overview of national and international studies shows that the discrimination of Roma has remained widespread in Croatia, regardless of the legislative framework that guarantees equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms to one of Croatia's oldest established ethnic minorities. Using an intersectionality lens, this article explores how experiences of ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, age, legal status, etc., and their intersections are associated with vulnerabilities. The focus of this work is on the position of Roma girls/women who have a different set of privileges as well as rights and often experience multiple forms of discrimination in relation to a number of categories of difference. Specifically, the life trajectories of three Roma women living in poverty and experiencing different levels of discrimination are presented and examined. Highlighting the multiple positioning that constitutes their everyday life, these life trajectories show that gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and other categories of difference are not distinct and isolated realms of experience and that the impact of their intersections needs to be foregrounded. In sum, these brief excerpts undeniably show how discrimination has consistently denied these Roma women personal development, self-esteem, decent living conditions, livelihood opportunities and institutional services.

KEY WORDS: Discrimination, Roma women, intersectionality, vulnerabilities, Croatia.

Studies have shown that discrimination against Roma women has “a structural and pervasive character”¹ that limits their access to employment, education, health, social services, housing and decision-making. Discrimination² can occur within the mainstream society in a context of growing racism and xenophobia, but also within Roma communities, which are dominated by patriarchal norms. In a recent survey across 11 EU Member States, results show that the situation of Roma women is worse in comparison to that of Romani men in key areas of life such as education, employment and health. In educational attainment, for example, 23% of the Roma women surveyed say they cannot read or write and 19% never went to school.³ The combination of private (domestic and care work) and public gender regimes eventually exhausts Roma women's bodies and endangers their lives.⁴ Roma women can also fall victim to sexual exploitation if they live in socially/spatially segregated and ghettoized areas, where access to any form of social and legal protection is impossible.⁵ Aptly, Kocze (2011) explains that when violations of human rights occur, “Romani women not only confront more issues quantitatively”, but “their experience is also qualitatively different” from that of both Roma men and non-Roma women.⁶

This article uses an intersectionality lens to explore how experiences of ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, age,



An isolated Roma settlement with little infrastructure in Croatia.

legal status, etc., and their intersections among Roma women living in poverty are associated with vulnerabilities.⁷ Focus on one category of social difference is unsatisfactory because this does not consider how marginalized Roma women are vulnerable to other grounds of discrimination. Intersectionality, as an analytical concept, is useful for analyzing and understanding differences and multiple inequalities in contemporary societies at both the macro- and the micro-level.⁸ Specifically, intersectionality has been described as the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power.⁹ Because women are not a homogeneous category (i.e., oppression is not experienced in the same way), intersectionality is a concept “for dealing with ‘multiple’ and ‘complex’ inequalities.”¹⁰ An intersectionality lens exposes a reality in which the lives and experiences of women that come from different disadvantage levels is shaped not just by gender but also by other social categories. Intersectionality makes visible the complex simultaneous position of women rather than reducing women to a single category by foregrounding a richer and more complex ontology than approaches that attempt to reduce people to one category at a time.¹¹ Intersectionality has become the primary analytic tool that feminist and anti-racist

scholars deploy for theorizing identity and oppression. Nash, in her extensive critique of intersectionality, defines it as the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class and sexuality to combat feminist hierarchy, hegemony, and exclusivity.¹² Importantly, she emphasizes that the intersectional project centers the experiences of subjects whose voices have been ignored¹³ as well as hidden.

Discrimination and Roma in Croatia

Discrimination against Roma in Croatia is prohibited under the Constitution, international laws, and conventions that Croatia has ratified and under which the Roma are guaranteed equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms together with other citizens of the Republic.¹⁴ Despite this legal background, both Roma women and men in Croatia continue to face discrimination as evidenced by international legal judgements¹⁵ and research conducted by national and international organizations.

AS FOR NATIONAL STUDIES, it was recently shown that more prejudice was expressed towards the Roma compared to any other social group (48% of respondents think that Roma live from social welfare benefits and do not want to work, while 27% think that Roma employed in the service sector would not be good for



The enduring impact of discrimination on Roma populations

Widespread discrimination against minority groups such as the Roma has influenced the way in which these groups live. There is a close link between discrimination and poverty because discrimination can both be the cause of poverty and a hurdle in alleviating poverty.²⁸ To be discriminated based on ethnicity has a direct impact on an individual's access to different forms of capital and institutions. According to the latest reports for Croatia, despite the authorities' efforts to improve integration, Roma continue to face significant barriers to effective access to education, health, housing and employment.²⁹ Research has also consistently shown that this marginalized minority group in Croatia has been largely denied rights to and access to equality. A recent report from the Ombudswoman's Office states that many Roma live in completely inadequate conditions, in isolated settlements and virtually without any infrastructure, which prevents their integration because they face significant obstacles to education and inclusion in the labor market, as well as coexistence with the rest of the population.³⁰ In the following section of this article, I will briefly draw on data from recent reports and studies to show the extent of socio-economic deprivation in Roma households.

The EU MIDIS II study (2016) found that Roma throughout Europe continue to face intolerable levels of discrimination in daily life: 80% of Roma continue to live below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold of their country; every third Roma lives in housing without tap water; one in ten live in housing without electricity; and every fourth Roma (27%) and every third Roma child (30%) live in a household that faced hunger at least once in the previous month.³¹ In comparison, in Croatia a larger majority (93%) of Roma and their children live with an income below the respective national at-risk-of-poverty threshold.³² As evidence of hardship and suffering, this study shows that 17% of the Roma surveyed in Croatia live in households in which at least one person regularly (4 times or more) went to bed hungry in the preceding month.³³ In relation to living conditions, when compared to results for the majority population in Croatia, Roma are always in a more deprived and disadvantaged position in terms of adequate living space, suitable household facilities and infrastructure as well as safety and security.³⁴

EU-MIDIS II results show that Roma children in each of the surveyed countries lag behind their non-Roma peers on all education indicators.³⁵ In Croatia, under a third (32% compared to 72% for the majority population) of Roma children in Croatia between the age of four and the compulsory education starting age participate in early childhood education.³⁶ Consequently, in

relation to educational achievement, Croatia has a high proportion of Roma without any formal education in the three different age groups (16–24; 25–44; 45+).³⁷

Correspondingly, Croatia had the lowest rates of employment with the highest share of unemployed Roma (62%)³⁸ as well as lowest share of retirees (2%)³⁹ compared with the other surveyed countries where only one in four Roma aged 16 years or older reports being employed or self-employed as their main activity.⁴⁰

To conclude, multiple poverty factors are particularly pronounced among Roma and inescapably have an enduring negative impact on Roma families' well-being that is exacerbated by discrimination. The poor and marginalized socio-economic situation of the Roma is attributed to deep-rooted social problems linked to xenophobia, racism, poverty, poor access to education and low attainment, high rates of unemployment, inadequate housing and living conditions, poor health status, and widespread discrimination. Interconnected and multi-causal, these negative factors create a closed circle of social exclusion in which Roma are unable to exit on their own and without significant support.⁴¹

Against this backdrop, I would like to draw particular attention to the position of Roma girls/women who often experience multiple forms of discrimination in relation to a number of categories of difference. Reports have shown that the exclusion of Roma women in Croatia is evident in the sphere of employment, education, healthcare, and housing. Moreover, Roma women have limited access to social welfare and assistance, financial services, and participation in public and political life.⁴² Based on research findings from a wider research project entitled Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI+) Croatia study,⁴³ Roma girls

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from birth have a different set of privileges and rights compared to Roma boys, which tend to be more pronounced in the poorest families. As a rule, they lack land and any other property and usually move away from their natal households and villages upon marriage. National reports have confirmed that Roma girls have lower levels of education than Roma boys and the rest of the population.⁴⁴ Analysis of research interviews in the RECI+ Croatia Study shows that early

marriage and/or social responsibilities related to childcare and domestic duties contribute to the high levels of illiteracy and low levels of education among Roma girls and women. Early marriage and multiple childbearing are socially prescribed within some communities; for the whole sample of 96 Roma women the average number of children was 4.47 and their average age at first birth was 18.33 years. Even though females are required to provide care to all their family members, their own reproductive health is frequently neglected. The health of Roma women is a key area of concern, considering socio-economic factors such





An example of sub-standard housing in a remote Roma settlement.



These clothes were washed by hand in a household that does not have access to electricity or running water.



A segregated part of a suburb that is predominately inhabited by Roma.

as poverty, inadequate nutrition, unsuitable sub-standard housing and a lack of access to health services. Of the women in the RECI+ Croatia Study sample, 21% reported that they did not have any health insurance other than during pregnancies, when they were insured through the national provision for mothers-to-be. According to governmental reports, their health status is worse compared with the health status of Roma men and much worse when compared with the health status of women in the majority population.⁴⁵ Data on employment in general show a very low employment rate among the Roma population, but the employment rate of Roma women is even lower. Most of the women in the RECI+ Croatia study were unemployed (91%) and had never worked in the formal economy. Their participation in decision making at all levels (i.e., in families, at the community level and politically) is often limited. With less leisure time, any personal development and social/political involvement is restricted. Roma women's access to information and support is often inadequate and limited, because there is a marked absence of services/activities within Roma settlements. Life in segregated, remote settlements may also have an impact on their physical and mental health.

Methodology

In this article, I will present the life trajectories of three Roma women experiencing different levels of discrimination to make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes their everyday life. Roma women have been specifically chosen because they are usually voiceless and invisible in data collection, research, and policymaking. This analysis privileges Roma women's voices and lives allowing them as research participants to represent their experiences in their own voices and terms. Using semi-structured interviews carried out in 2013, Roma women were encouraged to explain how they viewed their circumstances and to identify processes leading to different consequences over their life course. These women were chosen because they all shared group status as Roma mothers living in poverty in Roma communities as well as common experiences of discrimination. They were also chosen because they live in three different counties, belong to three different religions, and belong to different age groups to show the heterogeneity of Roma populations in Croatia.

THIS STUDY ANALYZES Roma women's life trajectories because these narratives show how "individual identities are constructed at the crossroads of different axes of social difference and inequality".⁴⁶ Researchers have recommended focus on everyday life because everyday lives are rarely separated into separate processes related to any category of social difference.⁴⁷ Namely, to gain insight into processes of identification and social structures, Christensen and Qvortrup Jensen perceive everyday life "as a melting-pot where intersecting categories are inextricably linked." Although intersectionality is most often conceptualized in terms of gender and race/ethnicity in the case of Roma women, the role of socio-economic status is taken into account in this study because poverty and social exclusion may intensify

the level of discrimination.⁴⁸ It should be noted that the categories of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status are more emphasized in this study because “power and privilege as well as identities are anchored to a large degree in the intersections between these three categories.”⁴⁹

Lucija's life trajectory

Lucija is 25 and has six children aged between 8 months and 10 years. At 14, without her parent's permission, she left home to live with her eight year older boyfriend in a Roma settlement close by, where she now lives in a two-room house. In response to a question about how she met her husband she says: “He came to the school, he played soccer there and we somehow met and started talking [...] and then fell in love”. She eloped because her family did not approve of this relationship. They legally got married when she turned 18 because, as she explains: “You could then talk about their relationship”. She gave birth to her first child in a hospital when she was 15 and remembers feeling confused about all the pain and that she “was very afraid [...], full of fear”. Although Lucija received some preschool education at 6 and knew how to read before she started school, she only finished four grades of primary education. She readily recalls that her “first day of school was a really special day” and that she never missed a day of school. Lucija was an excellent pupil who loved school and her teachers. She was very upset when her parents wanted her to stop going because they were afraid that “something would happen to her and that she would run away.” Her family did not think that “school was a place for her.” This was her greatest regret:

“in my heart, this is what I regret the most [...] that they did not let me go to school. I would be someone now, I would be doing something now, I would have some job”.

While she was still at school, it was her responsibility as the oldest daughter to do all the household chores for her own family and for her brother's family as well. Her older brother was physically abusive towards her because she often refused and did not have time to do household chores before school for his family.⁵⁰

SOCIAL WELFARE BENEFITS are their main source of income, although her husband who finished seven grades of primary school education has occasional jobs in public works⁵¹ but for only six months at a time. Other earnings come from his work in the shadow economy, which is irregular and seasonal. Much to her regret, she has never been formally employed. Everyone in her family has citizenship and health insurance. Even though

this large family lives on an income below the national at-risk-of-poverty threshold and in substandard conditions,⁵² she still has aspirations to obtain a computer for her children. With a definite future-oriented attitude, she has already started to save for her children's secondary school education. Ambitious aspirations for her children were echoed by her throughout the interview because she would like to give them “everything that she didn't have”. With six children, this is not an easy task because school meals, excursions, books and stationery are not free of charge in this municipality.⁵³ Most of all, she wants both her daughters and sons to have jobs when they finish secondary school; this is her “greatest dream”.

LUCIJA'S DISCRIMINATION STARTED at home: with gender violence from male members of her household and as the oldest daughter who was required to do all the housework in two Roma families.

Even though she did very well at school and still loves learning, she prematurely missed out on educational opportunities and possibilities of personal development. Although her family wanted her to leave school early, the educational system did not question and further investigate why she was not at school.⁵⁴ At 15, she was completely unprepared for early and multiple childbirth; this indisputably was an experience that had deep physical, intellectual, psychological and

emotional impacts on her well-being.⁵⁵ In substandard and overcrowded living conditions without running water and bathroom facilities, her role in the household is considerably more difficult with six young children. Her locality in this particular municipality is also discriminatory because she is not entitled to certain benefits that would be otherwise awarded to her if she were living in another municipality/county. Based on her ethnicity and lack of formal education, she is highly unlikely to find a job in the formal economy. Intersecting with ethnicity, gender, low socio-economic status, age, patriarchy, tradition, low education levels and geographical isolation, her life trajectory's experiences maintain a cycle of gender discrimination and women's marginalization.

Jelena's life trajectory

Jelena is 31 and has four children. Her childhood was rough and much worse than her present living conditions. As a child, she shared a bed with three siblings and she remembers that “there was never any food at home”. Jelena often had to work and beg with her mother in the surrounding villages. She only got to finish five grades at primary school; the school did not allow her continue because of an accident that kept her in hospital for a month. Although she eventually finished three additional grades at night school, she was very upset about not being able to finish

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her primary education at school. Looking back, she realizes that there were no other options open to her other than an early arranged marriage at 16. She resisted and ran away from home on the day before the wedding. When her male relatives found her they beat her up in the car and then at home. In her own words, she recalls:

“I got up in the morning all swollen, my lips, and everything [...] I was getting married, all in white, my sister was dressing me up [...] I took the dress off, she put it on me again and then started hitting me, I kept on taking it off and she kept on hitting me!”

She also remembers that she did not know anything about pregnancy⁵⁶ and went for her first checkup at 7 months. Out of fear, she said that she let all the women at the gynecologist’s go before her that day. Unfortunately, her common law marriage was full of violence and misery. Her first husband, an alcoholic, often punched her in the face. The scars and stitches on Jelena’s face compellingly prove her ordeal. She called the police a number of times to report his drunkenness but never reported the domestic violence because she has “always been scared of social services.” After two children and a trip abroad to see relatives, she decided that it would be best to separate from him. Her current relationship is with a man who has never been to school and has no employment or health insurance. Problems with alcoholism and gendered violence have also scarred this relationship, but she earnestly tries to keep it under control.

She attentively tries to give her children what she did not have in her childhood and admits that she sometimes steals scrap metal to feed her children. Although this is risky behavior, she does not have any other options in the absence of social support. In many ways, any income depends on her health and physical strength because her current husband is often in prison. She has lived all her life in the same isolated, ghettoized Roma settlement. Her living conditions could be best described as subhuman with no indoor bathroom or toilet; three family members sleep on the floor and none of the beds have bed linen. All of her furniture looks as if it has come from the rubbish dump. Her biggest problem is food, the most basic necessity leaving little money for anything else. She lives off social welfare benefits and even uses this money to pay off loans for urgent house repairs.

JELENA HAS NEVER been formally employed but would like to become a caregiver for older persons. She wanted to continue with secondary school education to get this qualification but cannot afford the fees. This young mother is uncertain about whether she will be able to afford secondary school education

for her children, as she is now struggling with the costs of primary school education. She only has one aspiration for her children: she does not want them to steal for a living. She has had very negative experiences with social services; they have closed doors on her, stepped on her feet, kept her waiting for hours and screamed at her whenever she asked for extra assistance (i.e., money for food). She wrote a complaint to the Ministry but is frightened to complain too much out of fear that they will take one of her children away from her. She is very disappointed with the efficiency of the social services and their lack of understanding: “They are not prepared to help us with money but will not find us jobs either.” Jelena has also had firsthand experience of discrimination from the majority population while trying to earn a living. She explains how access for Roma is restricted everywhere, even at the rubbish dump:

“At the rubbish dump they say ‘hey Gypsy f... your mother!’ They swear at us, insult us [...]. Where can we go? We, Roma, Gypsies, as most of them call us, we can’t go anywhere! We don’t have anything, no access, no respect, nothing! Wherever you go, they slam the door in your face.”

Strikingly, Jelena has suffered from discrimination for the duration of her life trajectory and is most likely to suffer in the future. As a target of tradition, she had to marry a man selected by her family and respect the rules of a patriarchal family/community.⁵⁷ She proves that domestic violence within the Roma community is a taboo issue – despite its recurring nature,

“AS A TARGET OF TRADITION, SHE HAD TO MARRY A MAN SELECTED BY HER FAMILY AND RESPECT THE RULES OF A PATRIARCHAL FAMILY/ COMMUNITY.”

this is something “nobody talks about” and she obediently follows this rule. She chooses not to fight and report gender violence perpetrated by close family members and both partners. This is a clear example of intersectionality, showing how gender, ethnicity, patriarchy, low socio-economic status, and age in combination with stereotypes and prejudices creates a

particular kind of burden for her. During her childhood, Jelena was excluded from education at an early age and was not supported by the education system following a short absence. Subsequently, she is excluded from the formal labor market due to various intersecting reasons (low educational levels, poor socio-economic status, discrimination) and finds it impossible to find labor opportunities in its informal segments. Fortunately, she and her children have health insurance, but her incarcerated husband is not insured. She continually experiences hardships and perceives discrimination in accessing social services and feels stigmatized by these experiences. To make ends meet, she is forced to steal to ensure her family’s survival placing her in a more vulnerable and dangerous situation.



Preparations for winter.

Mirsada's life trajectory

Mirsada is 48 and a divorced mother of 11 children aged between 2 and 28 years. She has lived in a Roma settlement⁵⁸ for 20 years in reasonable living conditions. There are 10 members (children and grandchild) in her single household and they all have citizenship and health insurance.⁵⁹ Her first husband died, and she is divorced from her second with whom she has no contact. As he offers little support, she feels quite abandoned, especially because she has extra responsibilities with one of her children who has an intellectual disability. She finished primary school⁶⁰ and reminiscently recalls that she liked school and learned a lot more than children learn today. She claims that the school system was different in the early 70s when she was at school:

“There was no discrimination back then. In short, I can simply explain this to you, no one looked if I was black, if I was Roma or, I don’t know, in any other way as if I was another nationality, but they looked at me equally, like all the other children”.

Reflecting on her children's school experiences, Mirsada is particularly disappointed with the former school principal because she feels that he overtly discriminated against Roma children.⁶¹ As a result, some of her children did not like school and left early, which has made her mothering role more challenging. She explains that one of the main problems is that her children tend

to know Romani-chib better than Croatian, which places them in a disadvantaged position (instead of a position of recognition). Even with a primary school education, she recognizes that she is not in a position to provide compensatory education (e.g., help out with school work) in higher grades and often relies on her older children who have finished a higher level.

Her main source of income is now exclusively from social benefits, which are insufficient to meet her household's and children's needs. Any request for extra assistance (she mostly refers to what her children need for school) from social services is always denied. She mentions the permissible work (collecting scrap metal and recyclables) that she used to do in the past to feed her children but this is no longer possible due to legislation changes. She admits that “you couldn't make a fortune from this work but at least it helped pay the bills and buy food”. Mirsada even contemplates selling clothes at the market to make ends meet, but she cannot risk paying a hefty fine.

In sum, Mirsada is in a vulnerable position because she is a single Roma mother in a very large household with limited access to different forms of capital and with no support from her former husband. As she has no possibility of finding employment, she feels helpless, fatigued and not well positioned to provide for her children, especially her child with special needs. Intersecting with ethnicity, gender, low socio-economic status, age, low education levels and single mother status, her life trajectory's experiences maintain a vicious cycle of discrimination. Nevertheless, Mirsada thinks that her children are more dis-



criminated against at school when she recalls her own memorable school experiences. She lacks the self-confidence and status to confront teachers when she feels that her children are being mistreated or not learning enough. As evidence of indirect discrimination, she cannot depend on social services because new legislation has reduced all benefits with no exceptions, which has had a considerable impact on families living in poverty. Even though she is willing to work in the informal market, this is now impossible as recent legislation restricts all activity in this sphere.

The life trajectories of these three Roma women reveal diverse paths; they reflect the ways through which intersectionality interplays as well as the discrimination that shapes their everyday life experience. These different trajectories suggest the multiple ways in which gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, low education levels, patriarchy, etc., might interact to create new and deeper discriminations. It also shows how the intersection of different forms of disadvantage produce persistent and intergenerational poverty and social exclusion. Although these life trajectory excerpts convincingly convey women's agency, they also bear witness to the social exclusion and sense of disempowerment that transpires in their everyday lives. Moreover, it is evident that many of these experiences of discrimination are not always resiliently fought by these women who are being discriminated against.⁶² This does not mean that they do not "act as powerful women solving 'small issues' of everyday life".⁶³ Their life trajectories movingly reflect the ongoing daily challenges they have faced since childhood and their coping competences as Roma mothers and often the sole providers in large families under precarious living conditions.

With little capital and under conditions of severe poverty and social exclusion, they have to work much harder to fulfil all their income-generating, household and care-related work and responsibilities. Finally, their words and explanations reveal first-hand experiences of being hurt and offended, suffering and anguish as well as feeling humiliated, which in all likelihood undermines their agency.

Concluding remarks

"The more a person differs from the norm, the more likely she is to experience multiple discrimination, and the less likely she is to gain protection".⁶⁴


Clearly, these life trajectories differ considerably from the norm (i.e., as defined by mainstream society) and these women are



Completely inadequate living conditions in a two-room house for a family of seven.

the least protected regardless of the discrimination they have endured throughout their lives. Their gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age and other categories of difference are inextricably linked with their experiences of life, family, work, and institutions. The impact of these intersections continually and persistently transpires as disadvantage and disempowerment. Importantly, these life trajectories show that gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and other categories of difference are not distinct and isolated realms of experience and that the impact of their intersections needs to be foregrounded. These short descriptions of their lives undeniably show how discrimination has consistently denied these Roma women personal development, self-esteem, decent living conditions, livelihood opportunities and institutional services.

The right to equality and non-discrimination are the funda-

mental values of the European Union of which Croatia is a part, yet research shows that discrimination and intolerance towards Roma are still very common. Pertinently, in relation to policy making, researchers have asked: Is equality achieved through treating people the same or recognizing their differences and treating them according to their distinctive needs? Their answer is that the same treatment and different treatment are required to deal with disadvantage that occur due to differing circumstances.⁶⁵ Needless to say, raising awareness of these differing circumstances that exclude and marginalize Roma need to be underlined among policy makers and the wider population. Moreover, the psychosocial factors arising from discrimination such as stress, shame and low self-esteem also need to be underscored to raise awareness and increase understanding among those who (un)wittingly discriminate. 

Lynette Šikić-Mićanović is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences "Ivo Pilar", Zagreb, Croatia.

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Note: All images by the author.

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- 33 *Ibid.*, 16.
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- 36 *Ibid.*, 23.
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- 38 Being unemployed does not always mean being discriminated against, but there are categories of citizens who are at a particular risk of discrimination in the field of employment and thus the risk of poverty and social exclusion. Among others, these are members of national minorities, especially Roma.
- 39 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma*, 18.
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- 41 Government of the Republic of Croatia, *Nacionalna strategija za uključivanje Roma za razdoblje od 2013. do 2020. godine* [National Roma Inclusion Strategy from 2013 to 2020]. (Zagreb: Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2012), 30, accessed August 24, 2017. <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/arhiva/Nacionalna%20strategija%20za%20ukljucivanje%20Roma%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202013.%20-%202020.pdf>
- 42 Government of the Republic of Croatia. *National Roma Inclusion Strategy from 2013 to 2020*, 79.
- 43 This was a joint initiative sponsored and supported by the Roma 'Kopači' Initiatives at the Early Childhood Program (ECP) of Open Society Foundations (OSF), the Roma Education Fund (REF) and UNICEF. The aim of this study was to collect data on the situation of Roma and the challenges that Roma families face. Fieldwork was carried out by a team of researchers from the Ivo Pilar Institute and Roma assistants in 2013 at five different locations: Kozari putevi, Capraške poljane, Parag, Darda, and Vodnjan/Galižana. Although this study was not representative, these locations were chosen to capture the heterogeneity (in terms of language, religious, cultural, social and historical differences) of Roma populations that live throughout Croatia. Research sites covered areas with significant Roma populations as well as rural and urban locations. Lynette Šikić-Mičanović, et al. *Roma Early Childhood Inclusion+ Croatia Report*.
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- 46 Baukje Prins, "Narrative Accounts of Origins," *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(2) (2006): 284.
- 47 Ann-Dorte Christensen and Sune Qvotrup Jensen, "Doing Intersectional Analysis: Methodological Implications for Qualitative Research", 117, 120.

- 48 Angela Kocze with Raluca M. Popa, "Missing intersectionality: race/ethnicity, gender, and class in current research and policies on Romani women in Europe," 25.
- 49 Ibid., 113.
- 50 Her father was also physically abusive towards her but not to the same extent.
- 51 The public works programme, co-financed by the Croatian Employment Service, is implemented by the local government as well as non-profit organisations. Jobs, which last up to six months, are in the field of social welfare, education, protection and conservation of the environment as well as public utility works in Roma settlements. The aim of this programme is to include unemployed persons who are members of the Roma national minority in the labor market, providing socially excluded Roma a short-term opportunity to acquire work experience and an income.
- 52 This construction does not have facilities (i.e, electricity, tap water, indoor bathroom and toilet) and only a few pieces of furniture. As they do not legally own the property, it is impossible for them to access any public utilities.
- 53 In comparison to other locations e.g., Zagreb, the local municipality in this county does not cover the cost of school meals and only 50% of the costs of school books.
- 54 Primary school education (8 grades) or until the age of 15 is compulsory in Croatia.
- 55 Although she is only in her mid-twenties, she looks considerably older.
- 56 She admits that she did not know anything about having babies and that when she felt her baby move she thought that she was hungry and needed to eat.
- 57 Early marriage is a strategy of traditional communities to reduce the burden of poverty within a crowded household. This practice also exposes situations where opportunities (in education and formal labor market) are scarce.
- 58 She is not as traditional as some of the Roma women in this settlement because her household is nuclear and she is the head, her mobility is not restricted within and outside this community, she does not have to be accompanied by males in public spaces, and she can freely smoke.
- 59 Lack of citizenship is a common problem among Roma at this locality. Frequently, these stateless persons cannot obtain citizenship because they are unable to pay outstanding health insurance debts. In some cases, even their children who were born in Croatia are unable to obtain citizenship and many other rights such as rights to education, social protection, political participation, etc.
- 60 Interestingly, in comparison, two of her oldest children finished primary school while her children between 15 and 18 years of age did not.
- 61 She refers to a serious incident when her son who was in first grade was hit by a teacher with no repercussions.
- 62 It should be noted that Romani women have not only raised issues of multiple discrimination (based on race, class, and gender) but have also tackled more controversial issues that demanded looking within their culture, such as virginity testing and early marriage, domestic violence, forced prostitution, and human trafficking. Debra L. Schultz, "Translating Intersectionality Theory into Practice: A Tale of Romani-Gadže Feminist Alliance," *Signs* 38 (2012): 37–43 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/665802>
- 63 Enikő Vincze, "Roma Women's Voices and Silences on Unjust Power Regimes. Roma Rights," 13.
- 64 Sandra Fredman, "Double trouble: Multiple discrimination and the EU law," *European Anti-Discrimination Law Review* 2 (2005): 14, accessed September 17, 2017 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/lawrev2_en.pdf
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