

**“Voices in Transition: A Comprehensive Analysis of Albanian Romani
Women in Greece Navigating and Challenging Patriarchy and Gender
Inequality Prior to and Following Migration”**

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Abstract

Through this research I investigate the experiences of Albanian Romani women in Greece, focusing on how they navigate and challenge patriarchal structures and gender inequality both before and after migration. Through qualitative research methods, including ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews, this study explores the intersection of gender, race, and migration. It highlights the persistent nature of patriarchal norms within the Romani community and the evolving dynamics of domestic work and gender roles post-migration. The findings underscore the complex interplay between traditional expectations and the new opportunities presented by migration, revealing both subtle forms of resistance and the reinforcement of existing inequalities. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of gender dynamics within marginalized communities and offers insights for future studies on intersectionality and migration.

Key words: Romani women, gender inequality, patriarchy, migration, Albania, Greece, intersectionality

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Introduction

In this paper, I examine the experiences of Romani women in a pre-dominantly Roma inhabited village of Morava, located in Berat, Albania. Following the political changes and the fall of the Socialist Regime in the 1990s, many residents began migrating to Greece. Knowing that Albania has been historically considered a patriarchal society, and that migration has started as a movement initiated by men, I aim to examine the patriarchal structures and unequal gender roles, as well as its persistence, in particular within the Roma community from this village.

I consider this topic of a great importance, as only by knowing the root of the problem, we can be able to come up with long-term solutions. Thus, I consider the issues of patriarchy and gender dynamics not only the problem of this particular group I am focusing on, but a problem that effects the whole society. Hence, addressing these issues can be life-changing and mind-opening for many Romani women to see their values outside of the house “bubble”, and that they can, if not be in the centre, then not be in the margins anymore. Moreover, I consider this research important as it acknowledges the need to empower Romani women, as it is through them that younger generations that can grow stronger and with a spirit to fight for equality.

In this light, through this research paper, I aim to examine how have Romani women navigated the entrenched patriarchal structures and unequal gender norms both prior to and after migrating to Greece. Moreover, I aim to analyse how are these patriarchal structures maintained so strongly within the community and how can it be challenged. I consider these two questions very important, as it is about the present and future generations of Romani women, generations which have not been empowered enough and who find themselves within these persistent structures in their daily lives.

The theoretical framework I draw upon for this research delves into the intricate dynamics of mainly understanding and making sense of patriarchy and intersectionality. Central to feminist

theory, the concept of patriarchy provides a lens through which systemic oppression of women is analysed. On the one hand, pioneers like Veronica Beechey (1979) and Kate Millett (1969) conceptualize patriarchy as a pervasive system of male dominance entrenched in societal institutions, especially the family. On the other hand, revolutionary feminists attribute this dominance to biological differences and control over reproductive capacities, while Shulamith Firestone (1971) emphasizes historical control over reproduction as the root of gender inequality. Sherry Ortner (2022) further critiques the simplistic view of patriarchy as mere sexism, highlighting its complex structure in institutions like the military and police, which are organized around male hierarchies, often excluding women and marginalized men. Complementing this analysis, the concept of intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and later expanded by scholars like Amelina and Lutz (2018), emphasizes the interconnectedness of race, gender, class, and other social categories. Intersectionality provides a framework to understand the layered experiences of women, especially those from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. It critiques the generalization of white middle-class women's experiences as universal, highlighting the unique challenges faced by women of color and other marginalized groups (Crenshaw, 1991; Amelina & Lutz, 2018). In migration studies, this intersectional approach is crucial. Historically, men were viewed as primary economic migrants, with women's experiences often overlooked (Donato et al., 2006). However, understanding gender relations in migration reveals how movements challenge existing gender dynamics and create new opportunities. By examining women's migration experiences through an intersectional lens, we can reveal and uncover the intersection of gender-based inequalities with other social hierarchies, shaping women's lives in multifaceted ways (Valentine, 2007). Through individual narratives and lived experiences, this approach offers a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between gender, race, and migration (McCall, 2005; Bastia, 2014).

Hence, in this paper I aim to investigate the impact of these persistent patriarchal structures reflected on the Romani women experiences. Besides this, I aim to examine different factors that reenforce these regimes and ways on how Romani women and the wider community can navigate through these structures. My hypothesis is that besides Romani men, who are perceived as dominant in the community and wider society, the role of women is significant, as they might – unconsciously – maintain and reenforce these structures.

Thus, in order to get a full picture and understanding on this topic, I employ a qualitative method approach combined with both semi-structured/unstructured interviews to ethnographic fieldwork on gaining first sight experiences. The research focuses only on a small group of people from Morava, who currently live in Greece. Thus, the study cannot be generalised for the whole Romani community in Albania and across Europe. Hence, one of the limitations I encountered is the limited time and space to fully address all the issues that my fieldwork and interviews have revealed. Besides this, being context specific might hinder the effect and reliability for the whole community, but it does contribute as a departing point for further research in the future.

In this research paper, I begin by presenting the case study on Romani women from Morava in Chapter 1. This chapter also lays the theoretical foundation of my study, grounded in the concepts of patriarchy and the intersections of race, gender, and migration. Chapter 2 delves into the experiences of these women with patriarchy and gender inequalities, focusing on their domestic lives, economic contributions, and instances of domestic violence. It also examines their struggles with navigating patriarchal norms and gender inequalities before and after migration. In Chapter 3, I analyze the persistence of the increased burden of domestic work in post-migration, the uncertainty and the impact of community expectations, as well as I present the case of a strong Romani woman and how she dealt with domestic violence, and how all these aspects which before were left unquestioned from both Romani men and women become a site of resistance and re-evaluation. Additionally, I explore how gender roles are transmitted to younger generations, reinforcing patriarchy and perpetuating an unequal division of labor. The chapter concludes with

a discussion on the evolving dynamics, highlighting the recognition and re-evaluation of patriarchy and gender roles by both men and women.

Chapter 1 | Gendered Pathways: Migration and Patriarchal Challenges for Romani Women

1.1 Gender Dynamics and Migration: Romani Women's Experiences in Morava, Albania

In this research, I focus on a particular territory predominantly inhabited by Roma – in Morava, a village in Berat located in southern Albania. Following the political changes that occurred during the 1990s with the demise of the socialist regime, many residents began migrating to Greece. This paper does not centre on migration as the main event in their lives, however it does give an overview of the movement. Instead, I aim to highlight the experiences of Romani women who lived with their husbands' extended families. As brides, these women had specific daily duties and responsibilities. Consequently, during the migration period, most women from Morava were left at home with their families in law while their husbands migrated to Greece.

Before permanently migrating there, Romani men typically undertook seasonal work, crossing the border illegally through mountains. This arduous journey often took more than ten days, with the constant fear of being caught and imprisoned by the border police. Their long journey was necessitated by their decision to travel on foot from the nearest Albanian village on the borders to their final destinations in Greece, avoiding public transport due to persistent police surveillance. The men primarily sought work in villages around Lamia, a city in Central Greece, where they found opportunities for informal employment in the agricultural sector, such as olive and vegetable harvesting. Another preferred destination was Ano Liosia, a well-known area in northern Athens where many Greek Roma lived. Since they were very welcoming towards the Roma migrants they helped the groups from Albania with informal job opportunities in driving, transportation, trade, and manufacturing.

With their monthly earnings, Roma men could support their families back in Morava with food and money, and they also saved to build and reconstruct their homes. These migration activities

involved not only married men but also young, unmarried males, starting from age 16, who were “strong” enough to endure the long walk and work. Unfortunately, many men from the village were caught by Greek soldiers and subjected to severe beatings, endangering their lives. Both young and old men still bear the physical and psychological scars from these violent encounters, even after more than 30 years.

While they endured numerous hardships to provide for their families, putting themselves at risk by crossing the Albanian-Greek border illegally, women were left in uncertain positions of waiting. They were responsible for caring for their children, in-laws, and household chores, despite their young age. This situation elevated men to a pedestal as the main altruistic figures, willing to do anything for their families, while women became inferior, obligated to respect and support their husbands' sacrifices by caring for their families. This study does not seek to undermine the significance of the countless cases of violence and hostility at the borders. Instead, it aims to focus on the role of women and their positioning as inferior, powerless, and dependent, with no independence or right to choose how to live their lives, confined to social reproductive work. This dynamic persisted until the moment men decided to leave Morava permanently and migrate to Greece, later followed by their wives and their children in some cases.

When Romani wives and children eventually migrated, they experienced the same challenges their husbands had faced at the borders: the arduous 10-day journey, imprisonment, physical and psychological violence, and multiple forced returns. Over time, some families succeeded in avoiding capture by border police, and others migrated after 2008 with a 90-day visa. They settled in various cities across Greece, including Athens. As their children grew up and the families faced numerous challenges, they discovered new opportunities, such as seasonal work in tourism on islands like Skiathos and Zakynthos. Initially, they moved to these islands for summer work, returning to the cities for their usual jobs. However, they eventually realised they could live and work permanently on these islands, leading some to settle in Kos, a small island in the southeastern Aegean Sea, far from border troubles.

Throughout these migrations and decisions, Romani women consistently followed their husbands' lead while their voices and experiences remained silent. Based on the stories that have been told to me, most of the Romani women from Morava have been subject to domestic violence – marginalising them inside the family structures. Hence, this case study sheds light on the hidden but at the same time explicit patriarchal structures and unequal gender roles within the household that later on in migration movement intersect and shape the experiences of Romani women and the dynamics of their lives prior to and following migration.

1.2 Unravelling Patriarchy

The concept of patriarchy has been pivotal in feminist theory and activism and understanding its power in different societies and communities it can serve as a lens through which the systemic nature of women's oppression is examined. According to Veronica Beechey (1979) patriarchy refers to male domination and the systemic power relations that subjugate women. On the same lines Kate Millett (1969) has characterized patriarchy as a universal system of male dominance, which is deeply embedded in all societal institutions, particularly the family institution where it is more emphasized. On the one hand, revolutionary feminists, expanding on radical feminism, argue that patriarchy is intrinsically linked to biological differences between men and women, particularly women's reproductive capacities – a view which posits that the control over women's reproductive functions is a primary source of their subjugation. On the other hand, Shulamith Firestone (1971) argues that patriarchy arises from men's historical control over women's reproductive capabilities, leading to a persistent system of gender inequality. According to Ortner (2022) patriarchy is a social system where men hold primary power and dominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property. She critiques the simplistic view of patriarchy as merely sexism, arguing that it is a complex social formation with a particular structure that manifests in various social arenas, from families and kin groups to larger institutional contexts like

the police, military, and organized religion. Moreover, Ortner's (2022) uses the military and police as primary examples to illustrate the patriarchal structure. She describes how these institutions are organized around male hierarchies and male solidarity, often excluding women and non-dominant men. This exclusion is not just about gender but also about race, sexuality, and physical ability, creating a prototype of the "superior man" who embodies all these attributes.

Hence, Beechey (1979) emphasizes the importance of developing a historically specific and contextually grounded theory of patriarchy. She argues that understanding the different forms of patriarchy in various social institutions and modes of production is crucial on having an effective feminist praxis. Ortner (2022) on the other hand adds that contemporary feminist praxis must address the intersectional nature of patriarchal power. This involves recognizing how patriarchy intersects with other forms of social hierarchy and domination, such as race and sexuality, to produce complex and overlapping systems of oppression. Feminist strategies must therefore be multifaceted, addressing not only gender inequality and patriarchy, but also the broader social structures that sustain it. Besides that, it is also important to examine the intersection of gender with other events such as migration in my case to deeper analyse how their experiences have been shaped and affected.

1.3 The intersection of gender, race and migration

Intersectionality, as a concept emerged during the 1980s as a distinguished approach to be added in the feminist theory and that would help to better understand and deeper analyse the different experiences of women who come from different racial, ethnic, cultural, economic and political backgrounds and which consequently bring in different types of inequalities experienced by women (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983; Crenshaw 1991; Nash 2008). Hence, crediting this concept to Crenshaw (1991) and others who later on used this concept on their research, intersectionality has been used as a theoretical lens to draw the attention to the interdependence

and interconnection of different essentialist categories that affect and shape women's experiences (Amelina & Lutz 2018; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Burman 2003; McCall 2005; Valentine 2007; Prins 2006). Thus, intersectionality as an approach therefore aims to examine the intersection of different forms of disadvantages that consequently help us better understand the specific experiences of certain groups of women on the basis of race, class, and gender. (Bastia 2014).

For instance, when Crenshaw (1991) first used the term “intersectionality”, she focused on addressing the invisible mechanisms of suppression which had mostly affected Black female workers. Being aware of the focus that Western feminists had, who were primarily concerned on issues that would affect white middle class – thus generalising their experiences with all women under the idea of a global female sisterhood, they totally neglected not only the subordination-domination relations among women, but also the power relations and the intersection of other factors in shaping their experiences (Amelina & Lutz 2018; Lutz et al. 2011:10ff.). For this reason, according to Crenshaw there was a need to raise awareness on the differences between the inequalities that Black women experience compared to white women (Amelina & Lutz 2018). As Squires (2008:55) argues: *“Theories of intersectionality hold that discrete forms of oppression shape, and are shaped by, one another, and ... is attentive to the cross-cutting nature of structures of oppression and the overlapping nature of groups.”*

Hence, when it comes to migration studies, the intersection of these events with gender has been widely overlooked. According to Donato et al. (2006), until the 1970s men have been considered as the primary migrants who left their countries for economic reasons, and that later on was followed by women as secondary migrants. However, many scholars started to think of gender relations connected to migration and how these movements might influence and challenge the existing gender relations (Donato et al. 2006; Silvey 2006; Curran et al. 2006). It is important to turn back on the history and pinpoint some of the main historical events which pushed people to migrate, as it is from this period where their experiences are influenced based on the role women had prior to and following migration. For instance, according to Wallace (2002), the collapse of

the socialist regime in Central and Eastern Europe has been one of the largest events which brought a large-scale migration from former socialist countries to Central and Western Europe (Wallace 2002). Hence, as Bastia (2014) argued, migration did not only become a tool through which the divisions of poor/rich, north/south, central and eastern became blurred and destabilised as migrants would move from one place to another by also destabilising fixed borders, but it also became a key to the development issues (Bastia 2014). For instance, migration besides the fact that would allow migrants to send the remittances on their homes countries while living abroad (Ratha and Shaw 2007), it would also transform this movement in an avenue for social change (Silvey 2004; Pessar 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). According to different scholars, the movement of people from one country to another creates new possibilities, not only for themselves, but for people who were 'left behind' and apparently for women (Bastia 2011, Nash 2008; Morokvasic 1984; Pessar 2005; Pratt and Yeoh 2003).

Hence, analysing and examining the migration experiences of women through an intersectional lens which includes gender, I examine the new possibilities that these movements brought in their lives. As Matsuda (1991) encourages us to ask, he said: "When I see something that looks racist, I ask, 'Where is patriarchy in this?' When I see something that looks sexist, I ask 'Where is heterosexism in this?' (Matsuda 1991: 1189). Thus, when I look at the migration movement initiated by men in Albania, I ask 'Where is patriarchy and gender-based inequalities in this?'. According to Anthias (2001: 377) gender-based inequalities are socially constructed and produced through the distinctions they made between male vs female, which consequently brings in distinctions focused on the production and reproduction of sexual differences (Amelina & Lutz 2018).

In order to deeper analyse and examine the women's experiences of gender-based inequalities in migration movements, using an intersectional approach, according to Valentine (2007) it is important to bring into focus the life stories of women and their voices. Bringing intersectionality as a lived experience it can help to examine how women see and feel about themselves differently

in different spaces, which then can be produced and stabilised by dominant groups who occupy them and develop hegemonic cultures (Valentine 2007:18). Moreover, Valentine (2007) emphasizes how social structures – intersecting with other aspects such as gender, race and migration – can produce advantages or disadvantages. She also adds that even though some studies focus on one individual story and are limiting in terms of generalisability, it still contributes to the complex feminist issues. Hence, by including individual narratives and focus specific research, it is still important as it shows how individuals negotiate their identity in different spaces and power relations (Bastia 2011, 2014; Valentine 2007). Hence, all these studies according to Valentine (2007) would fall under what McCall (2005) considers ‘intracategorical stories’¹.

1.4 Methodology

Similar to the Valentine’s (2007) approach of including life stories of women into the intersectional analysis, to examine their experiences and how the social spaces, migration and other aspects interplay to shape their life experiences, I adopted a similar methodological approach on my study. Based on qualitative research tools, I conducted in-depth interviews and ethnographic fieldwork within the community in Kos. I spent one month there in July 2023 and another month and a half from December 2023 to mid-January 2024. The small size of Kos allowed me to maintain close contact with the women, meeting them multiple times a week, which facilitated trust and a deeper understanding of their experiences. In total, I conducted 16 interviews, 8 of them who were Romani women and 6 of them men. The names of all participants, except Donald have been changed based on the assurance that their identity will stay anonymous and confidential. With Donald the consent form has been signed beforehand. The participant selection process for

¹ The proponents of the intracategorical perspective—mostly qualitative researchers—work from the premise that axes of inequality are socially produced. These researchers are aware of the inherent problems of essentialization in intersectional analyses, but they argue that dimensions of inequality should be considered as stable, historically produced categories (Amelina & Lutz 2018; McCall 2005: 1774).

the interviews utilized a chain-referral technique, commonly known as snowball sampling. Starting with an initial set of participants chosen for their relevant experiences, each participant was asked to refer other individuals who could provide valuable insights. This iterative referral process allowed the network of participants to expand continuously, as each new participant similarly referred others. Referrals often occurred when a participant encountered a question outside their experience but knew someone whose experience would be valuable. This method enabled access to individuals who might not be reached through traditional sampling, facilitated trust and rapport, and ensured the collection of diverse and in-depth perspectives. The process continued until data saturation was reached, ensuring a thorough exploration of the research topic. The snowball sampling method proved effective to access knowledgeable and experienced individuals, enriching the study's findings with comprehensive insights. Even though this approach could have led to a homogeneous sample, pushing participants to refer me to people with similar views, thus potentially limiting the diversity of perspectives, I made sure to start from the initial sampling and continue interviewing those people, and then the ones that were referred to me. This way I could get a full picture of their experiences and avoid biased findings in my research.

Some of the questions I asked were mainly regarding their role within the household, what they consider “a good Romani woman/bride” - leaving space for them to consider upon what aspects, cultural, or behavioural assets a woman from the community would be “evaluated”. Besides this, I asked them of ways they have navigated patriarchy and unequal gender roles, that would allow me to examine ways through which they have challenged or maintained these structures. During the conversation they shared how their lives were during the Socialist regime and after the demise when their husbands started migrating seasonally to Greece. Moreover, I asked them about their feelings and how satisfied they were with the roles they had within and outside the household. And lastly, I asked them about their daughters and the characteristics that they should have as women, what would they want to change, or keep from the past. Lastly, I asked them, if they would go back in time would they make the same decisions, follow the same

path that they already did, and how can this be changed. Such questions created for us a safe space to express deep thoughts and perceptions which led to rich findings and reflections.

The question design I posed, particularly those about patriarchy and unequal gender roles could have pushed participants towards discussing these topics, thereby confirming my pre-existing beliefs and expectations. However, in order to avoid this, first of all I went there with no expectations about the experiences that I might encounter, and second, I equipped myself with the necessary academic knowledge about patriarchy and gender norms, which later on during my fieldwork served as measurement tools to analyse how patriarchal and unequal this community shows up to be, later on followed by interviews, where my interlocutors were free to express how they perceive these attitudes, based on their understanding.

The reason why I chose this methodological approach is because by including the voices of women in this topic can enrich the analysis which can later on lead to the reveal of many other important aspects that with the quantitative data you cannot fully address. Besides this, ethnographic fieldwork on itself was one of the most important methods that allowed me to observe people's lives in their natural environment. Moreover, as a young Roma woman who is fascinated and interested on addressing Romani feminist issues, I became deeply connected to the experiences of the women from my community who have constantly been facing gender-based inequalities and violence, especially within patriarchal societies like Albania.

My research aims to illuminate the dependence of Romani women on men and their lack of agency, revealing the normalisation, acceptance, and internalisation of these issues within their communities. This personal connection fuels my motivation to amplify their often-overlooked narratives, as migration stories typically spotlight men, leaving women's experiences in the shadows. Hence, through this examination, I contribute to a deeper understanding of gender inequality and the social structures that perpetuate it, while laying the groundwork for further research on this critical issue.

1.5 Motivation

The inspiration for this research came through my partner, Donald, from Morava, whose Roma roots connect him to the village where my interlocutors resided. Through Donald, I was introduced to the powerful yet heartbreaking stories of Romani women. Despite immense hardships, these women often remained silent, adhering to traditional roles rather than asserting their rights. However, some of them had the courage to challenge these norms and reclaim their rights by defying community expectations. Donald played a crucial role in bridging the gap between me and these women, facilitating my access to their stories. His connection to the community allowed me to engage with women who, while geographically distant, felt spiritually and culturally close to me. Before initiating formal research, I formed bonds with these women in Kos.

Being Donald's partner, made me to be considered their "future" bride, essentially a family member, which positioned me as an insider. Consequently, they were open from the beginning of our conversations, sharing stories about their lives, roles as women in the family, and as Romani women in the larger community, including their values, traditions, and perceptions of gender roles and patriarchal attitudes. Listening to their normalised stories that had gone unquestioned, became the foundation of this project. The focus on Romani women provided me with a lens to observe and analyse deeper issues of patriarchy and gender-based inequalities. These women often emphasised how differently I was raised compared to them and their children who were my age but married, noting the privileges I had, including education, living abroad, being open-minded, and independent.

During this research, I found myself having bias views sometimes, due to the position I had as an insider. Having a personal connection to these people, would sometimes make me lose the focus of the research and I would find it difficult to objectively analyse certain behaviours or practices due to this personal connection I have with them. However, one of the strategies I used to tackle this was by choosing a diversified sampling. Besides the observations I had inside

Donald's family, I started to engage with a broader spectrum of the community there, including those who were not directly connected to Donald. Besides that, sharing my fieldwork with other colleagues have immensely helped me to provide an external perspective. Besides that, one of the issues I was a bit concerned of, has been cultural misinterpretations that could have aroused during my fieldwork and interviews. The strategy I used to prevent it was by involving members of the Romani community in the analysing process and to check if there is any cultural misinterpretation, or bias views.

1.6 Research Significance

This research has two primary objectives. Firstly, it aims to provide a platform for Romani women to express the harsh realities they face, thereby giving voice to their experiences and raise awareness on the importance of addressing gender-based inequalities and patriarchal issues – largely missing in the Albanian literature that includes Romani Studies. Besides this, including their voices into the research would significantly contribute to address the contemporary feminist issues that focus on the intersectionality of gender with migration, and race – bringing in topics that would leave space for further research in the future. Secondly, it contributes academically to the understanding of gender inequality and patriarchal structures within minority groups and the role that migration, the surrounding community and traditions play in making these structures persistent or weakened over time. By addressing urgent feminist issues, the research seeks to attract the attention of NGOs focused on migrant minority women. Highlighting these women's stories is essential to raise awareness and advocate for their empowerment, ultimately disrupting persistent gender disparities.

1.7 Challenges and Adaptations/ Limitations

One significant challenge I experienced during this research was the language barrier during my fieldwork. Romani was the primary language for some of the women, who struggled to express themselves in Albanian. In these cases, Donald helped as a translator. To bridge this gap and create a safe space for these women to also consider me as an insider, as I actually am one of them, I started learning Romani greeting words, which not only facilitated communication but also fostered trust. Embracing elements of my culture and language helped me to create a space where they felt comfortable sharing their experiences naturally. Having both an insider and an outsider perspective as a researcher allowed me to approach the topic with empathy and critical distance. Moreover, having a specific focus on a specific case might limit the generalisability of my research in a broader context which includes other groups of Roma. However, addressing such important and emergent issues through real life story narratives, does enrich the study and the contribution of it on the broader literature of Romani feminism and beyond, on analysing intersectionality.

Chapter 2 | Patriarchy and Gender Equality in Albania

2.1 Historical Insights and Personal Narratives

Albania has historically been known for its patriarchal system, which is explicitly manifested in the roles assigned to both men and women. Men have traditionally been viewed as the financial and physical providers for their families, while women were considered fragile and responsible for childcare and often the care of the husband's extended family. As Connell (1987) and Messerschmidt (2005) state, patriarchy demonstrates the historically institutionalized dominance of men over women in all dimensions of social life, including the family, labor market, and the state. Moreover, the formation and persistence of these patriarchal structures intersect with issues such as class, race, culture, and economic background. For instance, after the Second World War, Albania's socio-economic development was low, and society was organized according to patriarchal kinship structures (Lerch, 2013).

Masculine pride has historically been emphasized in Albania, but this was challenged with the establishment of the socialist regime in 1946 and the subsequent rapid industrialization and urbanization processes. Socialist ideology and the economic goals set by Enver Hoxha promoted gender equality, mandating equal political rights for women and compulsory economic activity for all, regardless of gender (Lerch, 2013). This initiative aimed not only to regulate women's position relative to men but also served clear political purposes. According to Kellici and Danaj (2016), one of the Socialist Party's goals in promoting gender equality was to create a large labor force necessary for the country's reconstruction. Additionally, women's participation in the public sphere challenged patriarchal practices by reducing men's dominance over women in all social dimensions, thereby increasing state influence within the family and making families dependent on the state (Kellici & Danaj, 2016).

Starting in 1967, when Hoxha announced the campaign for the “emancipation of women,” women began working not only at home but also in the public sphere, military activities, and

“voluntary labor,” resulting in a double burden where they were responsible for both productive and reproductive work (Kellici & Danaj, 2016). This top-down approach contributed to reducing structural inequalities, which had previously been explicit. However, it lacked influence in the private domain, as women remained in subordinate positions within the household, responsible for “care” work. Thus, according to Lerch (2013), even though women's public position was strengthened, they remained subordinate to men within the household, with their primary role still being reproduction, meaning patriarchal institutions were not truly disrupted during socialism in Albania. Despite the socialist regime's efforts to challenge patriarchal structures, traditional social institutions were not adequately challenged, and gender inequalities persisted in the household economy, labor market, and cultural domain (Lerch, 2013). The persistent features of patriarchy continue to affect many women's lives, in particular of those who are part of the Roma minority.

During this period of state efforts to diminish gender and race inequalities, Vullnetari and King (2016: 202) posed the dilemma: ‘Did socialism emancipate women?’. Despite guaranteed employment for all citizens, the regime remained oppressive, especially for women in rural areas. The extended family structure was considered the traditional bastion of patriarchy in Albania, where the position of each household member was underpinned by a patriarchal hierarchical structure, known as the ‘Balkan’ family type (Vullnetari & King, 2016; Kaser, 1997).

When I asked my interlocutors about the emancipation it was said:

I was not aware about the plan for the emancipation of women and all these gender issues that Enver Hoxha tried to solve at that time. The only thing I knew is that I had to work now, and on the other hand continue to take care for both my husband, children and my parents in law because they were living with us... **Sara**

From Sara’s answer I could observe the unawareness that both women and men in the villages had on the “emancipation plan”. This unawareness led to ineffective and unreached goals, since instead of affecting their lives positively, it had more negative impacts. In contrary, it added to the women role the burden of doing both the productive and reproductive work, while men maintained the

same dominant position within the family revealing strong patriarchal structures within this Roma community resided in Morava.

2.2 Patriarchal Dynamics and Intergenerational Expectations

Kajanová et al. (2015) contextualise the historical and cultural foundations of Roma patriarchy, showing that male authority and dominance have always been prevalent, and the patriarchy has been manifested in various aspects of their daily life, varying from decision-making processes to the distribution of domestic responsibilities in the family. Similar to the Albanian patriarchal structures, one of the core elements discussed widely among scholars is the gender role expectations imposed on Roma women. Mrhálek, Kajanová, and Lidová (2015) explain that Roma women are predominantly expected to fulfil roles that revolve around caregiving, household management, and child-raising. During a conversation I had with Mira, while having a coffee in the garden of Donald's house and talking about me as a future bride and how I should perform in the house if I want his family to like me, she noted:

In the first months of my marriage, I had to show my parents in law that I am a worthy bride for their son and the family there... the only way I could "prove" that was by showing my mother in law my ability to cook and clean properly... if you didn't have these values as a woman that the only person to blame would be my mom. **Mira**

According to my interpretation, Mira's quote highlights the traditional expectations placed upon women within certain cultural contexts, particularly emphasizing the roles of cooking and cleaning as markers of a "worthy" bride. In her early months of marriage, she felt compelled to demonstrate her competence in domestic tasks to her in-laws, viewing these skills as essential to gaining their approval and respect. This notion reflects deeply ingrained gender norms, where a woman's value was often measured by her ability to manage household duties. Mira's statement also reveals a generational responsibility, suggesting that if she lacked these skills, the fault would lie with her mother for not instilling these values in her. This perspective underscores the pressure on women to conform to specific societal standards and the continuing cycle of these expectations being

passed down through generations. Thus, these roles for my interlocutors were not simply tasks but were aspects considered essential components of a woman's identity and duty within the family and community. According to I. Hancock (2002) Roma communities have traditionally shown to have been shaped and affected by patriarchal structures, where gender roles are distinctly defined, and male authority is predominant. As Mrhálek, Kajanová, and Lidová (2015) have noted earlier, women often bear the responsibility for domestic tasks, while men are typically seen as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers. These roles are reinforced by cultural norms and practices, such as early marriage and arranged marriage, which are prevalent in many Roma groups.

For instance, during the interview I had with Sara where I asked about her marriage life and the responsibilities she had, Sara said:

... it was in our tradition and it still is that when a woman gets married she has to go and live with her husband's family and it is the bride from that moment that takes care for everything in the house and for his parents, especially mother in law – from the moment the woman gets married all the responsibilities that the mother in law had are taken over by the bride...and we would get married so young and our mothers in law would teach us more things than our mothers... **Sara**

This quote from Sara reveals significant insights regarding gender roles, cultural traditions, as well as intergenerational learning. Women moving to live with her husband's family upon marriage has shown to be a common practice in the Albanian culture, however what are more prevalent through that quote are the expectations of roles that brides and women should perform when it comes to domestic tasks. The statement that "*our mothers in law would teach us more things than our mothers*" suggests a system of intergenerational knowledge transfer. Young brides learn the skills and duties of running a household from their mothers-in-law rather than their own mothers, emphasizing the role of the mother-in-law in this cultural context.

Moreover, the transfer of responsibilities from the mother-in-law to the bride signifies a shift in household authority. The mother-in-law, who held significant control and responsibility, passes these onto the bride, that indicates a hierarchical structure within the family where the older generation exercises authority over the younger. Besides this, through the conversations I had with

my interlocutors would reflect how societal expectations are ingrained and perpetuated through family structures. The aspect that the young brides have been socialised into their roles through direct “training” from their mothers-in-law perpetuates the tradition and ensures the continuity of patriarchy and unequal gender norms.

2.3 Gendered Power and Violence in Romani Communities

This unequal division reveals strong power dynamics which are assigned based on gender perceptions and how this power later on is used as a tool to control and reenforce these divisions even more. Symbolic power is one of the most interesting aspects that Bourdieu (1989) discusses, analysing the capacity that this power has to impose a vision of the social world and its divisions. Those who hold symbolic capital, such as educational credentials or titles, according to Bourdieu (1989) have the power to legitimize certain perspectives and marginalize others. However, this might not be the case on the Romani communities, as the symbolic power in these cases is entirely based on the gender perceptions they have embedded and made sense of. In patriarchal societies, men often hold more symbolic capital, allowing them to define and enforce gender norms that privilege masculinity and subordinate femininity. Symbolic power also operates through language and classification systems.

The way we name and categorize people and behaviours contributes to the maintenance of social order. For example, describing assertive behaviour in men as "leadership" and in women as "aggressiveness" reinforces gender stereotypes and legitimizes male dominance (Bourdieu 1989). There are many cases when the symbolic power translates into non/verbal, and gender-based violence – as a response or extreme manifestations of power dynamics. This type of the manifestation of the power, can also be translated into a manifestation of patriarchy within the communities of people. For instance, Mira noted during a conversation we had together with Sara and Anna while having coffee:

My husband in my eyes had the same power and control inside the house as Enver Hoxha had on the state. I had to work, but everything I would contribute would go back to the family and I would not keep money for myself. **Mira**

Through this statement, it is clear that the comparison of her husband's authority within the household to Enver Hoxha's control over the state, reveals the significant control and dominance that men have within the family. Consequently, what Mira stated implies a lack of personal freedom as well as the lack of autonomy within her own house, suggesting that the family "system" is similarly oppressive and controlling as the socialist regime over the state. However, besides this my interlocutors mention that almost everyone at a time has been economically active – even though living in the villages did not give them many opportunities or choices regarding the work they wanted to do, or if they wanted to work at all. However, despite her (Mira) work all the contributions were directed to the family indicating the lack of financial independence and control over her own earnings. In all, when it comes to analysing these aspects in the light of gender roles, it does reflect the traditional structures where the male figure was the one to hold financial authority, thus making female's economic contributions to be subsumed under the family's collective finances often managed by men. At the same time, Mira's comparisons illustrate extreme power imbalances in personal relationships, drawing our attention to the potential for domestic control and coercion.

Not rarely, this power would transform into domestic violence for many women who lived in Morava. According to Bourdieu (1989) domestic violence often stems from symbolic power dynamics that allow certain groups to legitimize their perspectives and marginalize others (Bourdieu 1989). All eight of my women interlocutors have experienced domestic and physical violence from their partners. However, domestic violence always has consequences, especially to women as they are more subject to experience it compared to men. For instance, Kozubik et al. (2020) explores these consequences of domestic violence against Romani women in Slovakia – an analysis and case that I found similar with the Albanian Romani women in Kos, regarding health.

For instance, Romani women in Slovakia face significant challenges due to domestic violence, experiencing physical, psychological, and economic abuse often exacerbated by social isolation. Gender stereotypes and patriarchal structures in their communities contribute to and sustain the violence. Many Romani women there live in segregated settlements with limited access to information, education, and specialized support services designed to help victims of domestic violence (Kozubik, van Dijk, & Rac, 2020). The lack of awareness about available resources and the absence of such services in their regions further hinder their ability to seek help. Consequently, these women suffer from severe health issues, including anxiety, depression, headaches, weight loss, and motor activity problems. Addressing domestic violence against Romani women, according to Kozubik et al. (2020) requires targeted interventions that consider their specific ethnic and gender contexts to effectively reduce their marginalization and improve their health and well-being (Kozubik, van Dijk, & Rac, 2020).

Similar to this case, Roma women who are now living in Greece are isolated in the small island of Kos which does not offer them many possibilities to address domestic violence or ask for specialised support. Living in the island has somehow “segregated” and isolated the community, making the cases of domestic violence visible only among them. For instance, one day, I woke up earlier than usual in the morning and I prepared coffee for me and Mira. After we drank the cup of coffee, I saw her taking multiple different coloured pills and I asked about the reason of using too many medicinal pills. Mira said:

I have problems with my heart, blood pressure and soooo many other things. Recently I had a surgery in my heart because it does not work properly, I was dying... the reason why I came to this point is because for many years, since I got married my husband beats me and physically abuses me. You see that I also don't have my first two teeth? He broke them both while beating me. **Mira**

At this point, I asked her the same question I would ask my mother (who has the same age with Mira) of why did not she break up, and why did she not address the violence?!

Even though he beats me still, I love him, where can I go now that I am old. If I would be younger, yes I would leave him and I would find another one. But now I am too old for

that, I am not beautiful anymore, and I understand why he beats me. I talk too much and I say wrong things... **Mira**

These quotes speak a lot. The quotes from Mira poignantly illustrate the devastating impact of domestic violence and the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms that often prevent it from being adequately addressed. Mira recounts severe health issues, including heart problems and the loss of her teeth, directly resulting from prolonged physical abuse by her husband. Despite the severe and chronic nature of the abuse, the question of why she did not leave or address the violence reveals a common societal misunderstanding of the complexities involved in escaping abusive relationships. Mira's reflections highlight several critical themes: the emotional and psychological manipulation that binds victims to their abusers, the role of age and dependency in trapping victims, and the internalized self-blame that results from long-term abuse. Her belief that she deserves the abuse due to her perceived flaws and her feeling of being too old to leave underscore the entrapment many victims experience. These interpretations reveal how patriarchal control, the lack of support systems, the normalization of abuse, and the silencing of victims collectively contribute to the persistence of domestic violence. Mira's narrative provides a powerful insight into the personal and systemic barriers faced by victims, emphasizing the urgent need for societal change to support and protect those affected by domestic violence.

Kozubik et al. (2020) for instance discusses the significant health issues that arise from domestic violence against Roma women, highlighting both psychological and physical consequences. Often, these health issues are compounded by the constant physical and mental stress caused by domestic violence, leading to long-term psychosomatic problems. The authors emphasize that the chronic stress from living in a violent environment often manifests in cardiovascular and digestive issues, sleep disorders, and eating disorders. The lack of specialized support services and the social isolation these women face further exacerbate their health problems, making it difficult for them to access necessary medical and psychological care (Kozubik et al., 2020).

For instance, in Mira's case, she never visited a psychologist to express her emotions and the burden of violence she kept silent and continues to keep silent for many years. Besides this, she never thought about addressing the violence to higher authorities. Health consequences that she was experiencing were a 'special' unfortunate case that I encountered during my fieldwork in Kos, and it was hard to handle from both sides. After all, Mira still continues to perform in both domestic sphere and labor market, while constantly having the hidden fear of expressing herself due to the idea that what she speaks, might turn against her in the form of violence. In these cases, community and the way how they build their perceptions on the domestic violence plays a pivotal role. For instance, communities with strong patriarchal values and traditional gender roles often normalize and accept domestic violence, which can worsen the situation for victims.

Kozubik et al. (2020) found that in Roma communities, a significant proportion of both men and women believe that under certain circumstances, men are justified in being violent towards their wives, as also my case showed. This belief is often associated with lower educational levels and socioeconomic status, further entrenching the cycle of violence. Besides this, in some communities, victims of domestic violence are stigmatized and blamed for the abuse they suffer. This can discourage victims from seeking help or reporting the abuse. According to Anderson and Saunders (2003), societal attitudes that blame victims or perceive them as responsible for the abuse can reinforce the control and power of the abuser, making it difficult for victims to escape the cycle of violence.

This was also evident on the violent cases within the community in Kos, where men and women surprisingly – including those who were subject to domestic violence – claimed that *'these women must have done something that their husband's beat them'*. Hence, it is very important to emphasise the consequences that these shared perceptions within the Roma community have, especially when this mentality comes from the victim's side. Moreover, it is important to challenge all these harmful thoughts by providing support, raising awareness – aspects that would not only help victims to

escape or find out solution to stop abusive situations and begin the healing process, but also to challenge patriarchal structures and its persistence.

2.4 Silenced Struggles: Navigating Patriarchy in Pre-Migration Romani Life

All these issues of domestic work, double burden of having to do both the productive and reproductive work, the dependence within the household and inferiority felt compared to men were experienced by all Romani women, while still remained largely invisible. Women, hard to navigate through these structures and feeling weak to change anything would remain silent, thus perpetuating their position within the Romani community and the family. Especially the intersection of age and gender would make it much harder to push women to speak. Their young age and dependency on their husbands weakened and silent their voices and thoughts to seek for change. Ina, another woman from the village, during the interview I conducted, said:

We did not navigate or challenged patriarchy; we accepted the reality – the only reality that was taught to us from everyone in our community. We could see other non-Roma women having a different life, but I was raised with the idea that we are Roma and we will never be like them. **Ina**

On the other hand, Anna on her interview said:

I always wanted to raise my voice if something was wrong, but I couldn't do that because my husband would turn to me and violate me. **Anna**

According to my interpretations, both Ina's and Anna's quote highlight the complex issues faced by Romani women, including the dual burden of productive and reproductive labor, household dependence, and a sense of inferiority compared to men. These challenges, though common among Romani women, often go unnoticed. The systemic structures in place make it difficult for women to navigate or challenge their positions, leading to silence and perpetuation of their roles within both the family and community. The intersectionality of age and gender further exacerbates these issues, as younger women, in particular, feel more dependent on their husbands, silencing their voices and thoughts regarding change. Anna's statement on the one hand, adds a

personal dimension to this struggle, revealing the direct consequences of attempting to speak out against injustice. Her fear of her husband's violent response underscores the severe consequences that can deter women from seeking change. Ina's quote on the other hand, illustrates the internalization of patriarchal norms, where the acceptance of their situation is ingrained from a young age. She points out that, although aware of different lives led by non-Roma women, the belief that their reality as Roma is immutable was deeply instilled – an aspect which we will further analyse in through their post migration experiences in Greece.

Chapter 3 | Navigating Gender inequalities and Patriarchy: Post-migration experiences

3.1 Migration and Societal Change in Post-Socialist Albania

Following the demise of the socialist regime in the 1990s, both the political and economic frameworks crumbled, leaving all individuals, irrespective of their social standing, gender, or ethnicity, without employment (Carletto, C., Davis, B., Stampini, M., & Zezza, A., 2006). The deterioration of political and economic conditions, following five decades of complete isolation, and the advent of liberal democracy caught many citizens off guard, ill-equipped to navigate the ensuing crises that would persist for several years, drastically altering the lives of countless Albanians. Since the 1990s, Albania started to be considered a country on the move, where migration both internally and externally in the house-hold level became one of the main strategies to cope with economic hardships of the political transitions (Carletto, C., Davis, B., Stampini, M., & Zezza, A., 2006).

Migration was perhaps considered a very important political, social and economic phenomenon in the post-socialist Albania and the demographic changes have clearly shown and continue to show the move of people. Regarding internal migration, a considerable number of Albanians who were living in rural areas moved to the capital city of Tirana, as there they could find temporary or long term jobs to overcome the financial crises, while the other part who did not move to Tirana, migrated abroad, mainly in Greece, Italy and France (Carletto, C., Davis, B., Stampini, M., & Zezza, A., 2006; Vullnetari & King, 2016). **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** show the statistics of the demographic changes over the course of 60 years, from 1960 until recently in 2022.

During the socialist regime a high number of the population resided in the rural areas and perhaps were included in the cooperatives, working in farming and agriculture. With the mass migration movement that started after the 1990s, the rural population decreased drastically - making these areas inhabited only by the old generations. The economic focus shifting to urban

centres heightened the necessity for rural inhabitants to transition away from agriculture and explore alternative business opportunities in urban settings.

Rural Population in Albania 1960- 2022 | Source: World Bank staff estimates based on the United Nations Population Division's World Urbanization Prospects: 2018 Revision

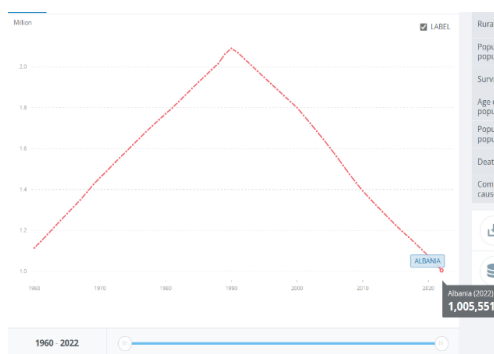


Figure 1. Rural Population in 1999

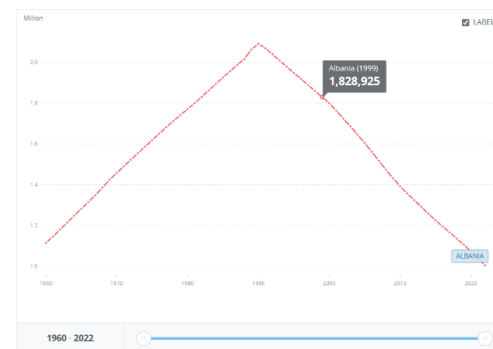


Figure 2. Rural Population in 2022

To grasp the enduring presence of patriarchal systems within these internal movements from rural areas to the urban setting, many scholars have linked gender with migration as two different aspects which interconnect and affect patriarchal structures and gender roles. The rural areas compared to the urban ones have often lacked the full influence of state intervention and consequently the outcome of the emancipation plan influenced less than in urban areas. As Çaro, Bailey and Wissen (2012) have noted, patriarchy in rural Albania has mainly been characterised by the strong male dominance and rigid gender roles, which are deeply rooted in cultural and traditional norms. For instance, migration in Albania has always been regarded as a family project (Curran, 1995), where first the decision to migrate is initiated by men and followed after by family reunion (e.g. King and Vullnetari 2003; Bonifazi and Sabatino 2003; King and Mai 2004; Cattaneo 2009). Hence, considering that migration can alter the dynamics of position, power and status within and outside the household, when migration is examined through a gender perspective, we can clearly observe how the relationship between migration and gender can have significant effects on roles and power relationships of each household member (Curran, 1995; Lauby and Stark 1988).

3.2 The Burden of Domestic Work on Romani Women in Kos, Greece

In order to analyse how Romani women in Greece have navigated or challenged patriarchal structures and unequal gender norms I embarked on a transformative journey into the heart of familiar dynamics in Kos – a very small island where a considerable number of Romani families from Morava have resided. In order to get a deeper understanding of their experiences I had to become one of them. Being considered the “new” bride – as Donalds partner – positioned me in a vulnerable position as a researcher, but also a privileged one. Being perceived an insider would pose me to experience gender-based inequalities, but at the same time this position would allow to better understand the dynamics inside this Romani Community. Hence, the first place I would get to pass most of my time was the kitchen.

Together with Anna, while we embarked on the daily rituals of cooking and cleaning, forging bonds that transcended linguistic and cultural barriers, her overtired and sometimes overwhelmed expressions bore witness to the invisible burdens borne by women, whose labour remained invisible yet indispensable within the familial hierarchy. A touching moment of revelation occurred during a conversation with her as she articulated the pervasive inequities embedded within traditional gender roles, despite the minor changes that the migration had brought in their lives after migrating to Kos. I brought in mind a conversation I had with Anna while we were cooking for the family and other people. Observing her tiredness as she was working during the day and then cooking and cleaning in the evening, she said "Mountains are used with the snow". I asked her what she meant with that phrase, she said "*Women are used to being overloaded with work, cleaning, cooking and everything, while men do not do any of these.*" At that moment, I felt that I should also put some more snow on my mountain as I was not used or raised like that.

What I was aware of, is that the idiom Anna used with the mountains as an illustration of the countless amount of time Romani women put into domestic work, reveals the lack of power they

felt they miss to change something. Besides this, through what Anna said I could analyse and observe the invisible and yet indispensable labour of women. The metaphor that she uses with the snow on the mountains symbolise the heavy and persistent burden placed on women, something which reveals a naturalisation of these burdens at the same time. Bringing the example of mountains can make us think about just as snow is naturally found on mountains, the heavy load of domestic work and unequal responsibilities is seen as a natural and inevitable part of women's lives in Kos. Moreover, the mountain also represents the traditional, rigid structures of patriarchy that are slow to change, while the snow signifies the continuous accumulation of domestic responsibilities and societal expectations that women are expected to bear without complaint, as Sara mentioned:

We have to do all the cleaning and cooking. There is no need for someone to tell us what to do because this is our job. If we don't do the house chores, and if we don't cook, who is gonna do that? **Sara**

E. Goffman (1959) states that people manage their expressions to control how others perceive them. For instance, Anna's verbal expression of mountains, and also Sara's answer reveal a controlled way they both use to communicate their resigned acceptance of gender roles. However, their physical tiredness and the daily rituals serve as expressions given off, which reveal the other side of the coin – that of the heavy burden they feel despite their acceptance of these gender roles. The conversations and the time I spent with these Romani women in Kos, can be examined through two different positions: that of being in the front stage and on the backstage. In the public and family setting, these women perform their role dutifully, adhering to the traditional expectations placed upon them. While the conversations I had with them while cooking, or cleaning, or also while staying and having a coffee, can be perceived as backstage moments, where they felt comfortable to express their true feelings about the inequities that they face.

Despite the work being essential for the functioning of the household, and by extension that of the society, the reproductive work remained rarely acknowledged and appreciated. Moreover, being a duty given to women, being internalised and naturalised, it makes the work invisible and

not appreciated enough, while it also emphasizes the unequal division of labour within the domestic sphere. What is fascinating to see is, not only from Anna but from all the Romani women I interviewed, is the fact that they already acknowledge and feel the inequalities in this sphere transforming these verbalisations of the inequities from their sides as a form of resistance. Naming and recognizing the problem is a crucial step towards challenging and changing these deep-seated norms, and it is something that did not occur while they lived in Morava. The conversation I had with Anna, for instance, where she explains the metaphor, represent a moment where she while stepping away from the others, reveals the strain she feels due to these traditional expectations. Goffman (1959) mentions that when an individual presents her/himself, he/she exerts a moral demand upon others to treat them in a certain way. Anna's expression subtly demands recognition and empathy for the burdens she bears, hence calling for a re-evaluation of the gender roles within the family structure.

3.3 The Persistence of Patriarchal Norms in Roma Communities

During my interviews, I asked my interlocutors about the roles of men and women within the family and the underlying principles or ideas guiding their distribution. Most of the women I interviewed stated similar thoughts on the question, hence here is what one of them said specifically:

Our mother taught us how to behave, as one day we will get married and we needed to know particularly how to clean, cook and be humble, not raise our voice more than our husband. **Sara**

This statement, made by Sara, a 45-year-old married woman with one daughter and one son, reflected explicitly the traditional gender roles that women are expected to embrace. Moreover, it also reflects the internalisation of these norms and of what Mrhálek, Kajanová, and Lidová (2015) consider the socialisation process. The idea that some norms have to be passed and learned through generations can be a good thing, but at the same time might also be problematic as it

emphasizes patriarchal norms and weakens the power of women and young Romani women to make changes out of the “bubble” that the community has offered and suggested to them.

Besides this, the idea that the skills being taught are specifically mentioning marriage, indicated the cultural emphasis on marriage being considered one of the key life goals and a significant social institution for the Roma community – considering it a pivotal event for their children, one that they need to be specifically prepared for. Basically, as Kóczé (2009:32) puts it in the marital context, “[G]irls success in life depended very much on a successful marriage”. Hence, a successful marriage depends very much on how women and girls perform within the household. These aspects do not simply reveal the unequal redistribution of domestic labour, but numerous concerns which are linked with the education level, economic situation of these families and the surrounding community and shared values they have.

Furthermore, the statement of Sara to “*not raise our voice more than our husband*” reinforces patriarchal norms by suggesting that women should be subservient to their husbands, as Mrhálék, Kajanová, and Lidová (2015) also state. Even the skills of cleaning, cooking, and humility that Sara mentioned are skills that have been traditionally associated with femininity, hence perceived as qualities that women should embody to be considered good wives. Hence, the statement besides the fact that it reinforces gender inequalities by suggesting that women’s primary value lies in their ability to maintain the household and support their husbands, it does not acknowledge the potential of the Romani women to look outside of this box and the domestic sphere.

These aspects were also evident during my ethnographic fieldwork, where my role as Donald's partner led to me being regarded as "the bride of the house." A role which in itself came with a multitude of unspoken expectations, primarily focused on domestic labour, since I was staying with them for two months, living in their house without any cost. Hence, cooking, cleaning, and catering to the needs of the family became my primary responsibilities. Conversations with Donald's mother, Anna, further unravelled the enduring burden placed upon women. Despite allusions to economic and social progress, the weight of domestic work remains firmly entrenched

on feminine shoulders. Formal gatherings served as a microcosm of this dynamic, where women primarily focused on serving the needs of men while rarely participating in conversations. Their voices, confined to the domestic sphere, remained largely silenced within the broader social context. The theory of practice introduced by Bourdieu (1989) can help us understand how everyday practices and individual's position might turn out to be the main reasons that maintain and strengthen patriarchal norms.

In our community, men have always been the main pillar of the house, because they were the ones who provided more in the family financially, before we came to Greece. If a man would not provide in any case they would for sure be 'judged' by the whole community. He would not be considered a 'proper' man. **Vera**

For instance, during the interview I conducted with Vera, a nearby Romani neighbour of Donald's family, from Morava, she mentioned how men were often valued and given 'capital' upon the ideas of what he possesses and what not, showing his value as a man in the family. As Bourdieu (1989) explores, social structures and practices can perpetuate and reinforce power dynamics, including patriarchal norms. He introduces the concept of "social space," where individuals and groups occupy distinct positions based on their accumulated "capital" – economic, cultural, social, and symbolic (Bourdieu 1989). These positions and the interactions within this space are structured by the objective relations between different forms of capital, which operate independently of individual consciousness and intention.

Vera's answer, in my understanding vividly illustrates the entrenched societal norms in the Roma community, where men are predominantly valued based on their financial contributions to their families. In this case, economic capital is crucial, as a man's worth and identity hinge on his ability to provide financially. Within this social space, the community's collective expectations and judgments highlight the importance of social capital. Roma men have internalized these expectations, same as Romani women, which has led to the development of a habitus that compels them to meet these financial standards to be considered "proper" men. Bourdieu's (1989) idea of social space becomes clear here, as the positions men occupy are determined by their ability to

accumulate and display economic capital. This space is not entirely a physical one but a network of social relationships that dictate individual roles and status. The objective relations within this space - how different forms of capital interact - shape the community's perceptions and judgments. Furthermore, the notion of habitus from Bourdieu, explains how these expectations are ingrained in men's behaviour.

Similar, these Roma men that Vera's pointed during the interview, have internalized the belief that their primary role is to provide financially – a system of beliefs that is passed down through generations, becoming a part of their identity and influencing their actions and decisions. Hence, Bourdieu (1989) argues that social structures, the rules and norms of society, work in two ways. First, they exist outside of us (objectively) and guide how we act and think. Second, they exist inside of us (subjectively) by shaping our habits, skills, and attitudes based on our life experiences. These internalized habits and attitudes, which Bourdieu calls habitus, then lead us to behave and think in ways that fit the existing social rules and norms. In other words, our environment influences how we act, and how we act reinforces the environment. (Bourdieu, 1989).

The same way, I could observe that Roma from Morava, tended to be more affected from the subjective social structures, which has also led to the internalisation of certain gender-based habits and attitudes, that consequently make patriarchal structures more persistent over time. Examining gender and patriarchy through Bourdieu's framework, we can argue that patriarchal norms are embedded in the social structures and habitus of individuals. Everyday practices, such as language use, body posture, and interpersonal interactions – all reflect and reinforce these norms. For instance, the habitus of men and women includes learned behaviours and attitudes through the process of socialisation that conform to gender expectations, thereby perpetuating gender hierarchies.

3.4 Intergenerational Transmission of Gender Roles Among Roma in Greece: Challenges and Cultural Perspectives

Roma girls stated to have received instructions mainly through their mothers who observe and internalize the behaviours and attitudes of older female relatives, who serve as role models for the prescribed gender roles. From childhood, Romani girls and boys are socialized into these gender-specific roles. Girls are taught to prioritize family responsibilities over personal ambitions, often through direct teaching and modelling by older female relatives. Boys, on the other hand, are encouraged to adopt roles of authority and financial responsibility. This socialization process ensures the perpetuation of patriarchal norms across generations (Vives-Cases, C., Espinar-Ruiz, E., Castellanos-Torres, E., & Coe, A. B., 2017). For instance, Donald would often say:

If I would have been a Roma girl and not a boy, for sure I would not be studying now. I would have probably been married with three children, exhausted by the idea that I would have all these responsibilities women have on my shoulder. So, I was lucky I was a boy, because I cannot really imagine if I would be able to fight and be where I am now. **Donald**

As we can observe from this answer the family and community expectations for Donald would be entirely different from those expectations that the community has set for him now. Interestingly, the community expectations for him now, are still gender-based:

The Roma community from my village is expecting me to be a very successful and rich person, different from all the other men who could not continue education. And I am 'afraid' from these expectations sometimes, because there is always a 'what if I don't...' **Donald**

As different scholars argue, these gender role expectations are deeply ingrained in people everyday life within the community and clearly serve to reinforce the patriarchal structure of Roma families. Women's responsibilities on the other hand, are seen as natural extensions of their subordinate status, which consequently legitimizes and perpetuates male dominance within the household – a dynamic which is maintained through cultural norms that valorise male authority and female subservience (Mrhálek, Kajanová, and Lidová 2015). Mrhálek, Kajanová, and Lidová

(2015) on the other hand highlight the significant impact of these gender roles on women's autonomy and opportunities.

Even though there are attempts to resist these deeply enrooted patriarchal attitudes and gender roles, mainly from young Roma girls, the impact and the control that older generations have on deciding “what is good and what is bad” for their lives, is problematic at some point. For instance, Mrhálek, Kajanová, and Lidová (2015) highlight that the children of Roma women who are confined to traditional roles are less likely to break free from these patterns. Girls often follow in their mothers' footsteps, taking on caregiving and household responsibilities from a young age, which interrupts their education. Boys, on the other hand, adopt the dominant roles modelled by their fathers, perpetuating the cycle of patriarchy (Mrhálek, Kajanová, and Lidová 2015). Thus, resistance to gender equality efforts is often reinforced by older generations who adhere strictly to traditional norms. These older individuals, who have lived their lives within the confines of these gender roles, often see any deviation as a threat to cultural identity and cohesion. They may view the promotion of gender equality as an attempt to undermine their traditions, values and culture (Vives-Cases, C., Espinar-Ruiz, E., Castellanos-Torres, E., & Coe, A. B., 2017).

Hence, this adherence creates a significant intergenerational conflict within the community. Younger Romani women who aspire to break free from the traditional roles that the community has set and pursue education or careers often face opposition from their elders. This conflict can manifest in various forms, from subtle disapproval and social pressure to overt actions such as discouraging or preventing young women from participating in activities that challenge traditional norms (Vives-Cases, C., Espinar-Ruiz, E., Castellanos-Torres, E., & Coe, A. B., 2017). It is worth noting that the Roma have a very diverse and rich cultural history, and their social structures and gender dynamics are deeply influenced by their unique traditions, historical experiences, and the broader contexts in which they live. For this reason, understanding these dynamics requires a nuanced approach that respects the cultural heritage of the community I also come from, while critically examining the impact of patriarchal structures.

Thus, it is important to understand cultural practices from the perspective of an insider when analysing Roma gender dynamics. For this reason, I bring cultural relativism where according to F. Boas (1940), cultures should be understood based on their own values and norms rather than judged against the standards of another culture, by having an empathetic and holistic approach. While C. Geertz (1973) emphasized the importance that the understanding of the symbolic meanings or behaviours has on underpinning cultural practices. He argued that culture is a system of shared symbols and meanings, and anthropologists must immerse themselves in the cultural context to interpret these symbols accurately (C. Geertz, 1973). For instance, the Roma community has a different approach to the gender-based differences, which in their understanding are not linked, or connected to the ideas of being patriarchal. In contrary, they have set these roles so that everyone contributes within the household in different ways and everyone's work is praised. Since these norms and traditions – which lie upon the patriarchal mentality – are transmitted from one generation to another, Romani women have lost the sense of considering it as a barrier for their daughters' lives, because this has been the only example they have been raised of. Moreover, being a disciplined woman (knowing how to clean and cook), is essential in life, but that should be for both men and women.

3.5 The Evolving Dynamics of Gender Roles: Recognition and Re-evaluation

Not rarely, I would find myself in uncomfortable positions of not knowing what to do, or how to behave because of being unaware of their expectations toward me. However, during my stay there I also wanted to share a message of the strong women which should not be valued only for the physical energy they put into work both paid and unpaid, but also the consistency and love language they show through the “care” work. Mira said:

We didn't know anything else besides cleaning and cooking. Ah, but when we came to Greece and started to work, then I felt more tired and sometimes sad, asking myself why

is it bothering and tiring me so much? Of course, it is very difficult to do both: to work at home and then come and do everything at house, especially with my husband who cannot help me because he doesn't know how to do anything. This is our job. **Mira**

The paradox between considering domestic work as an act of love, while at the same time showing little to no satisfaction at most of the times pushed me to analyse the factors that contribute to the mentality of “care” work as a way of showing love while being involuntarily imposed on the shoulders of women. For instance, Baxter and Western (1998) analyse this existing paradox by examining the division of labour and the factors that contribute to this division. According to these scholars it is surprising to see the percentage of women being untroubled by the unequal division of labour at home - which reveals the embeddedness and normalisation of these roles which might look “natural”, but in reality, are socially constructed. Numerous reasons such as women's lack of resources and power within marriage (that in other words can be translated in a Bordieuan terminology as the lack of ‘capital’), the ideologies of traditional gender roles and the time they spend in the labour market, are all factors that contribute to the unequal division of labour. All these realities contribute to the view of considering housework as the primary responsibility of women.

In addition, many scholars have pointed out that women who consider housework as their primary responsibility, thus considering the unequal division of labour acceptable and natural, do so because they consider this aspect as an essential part of being ‘good’ wives (Baxter & Western, 1998). However, this narrative does change based on the status that women possess within and outside the household. For instance, research has shown that the distribution of the economic resources between partners becomes a significant determinant of the division of domestic labour (Ross 1987; Baxter 1993). In other words, according to these scholars, the time women spend on domestic labour is more or less connected to the time they spend on the labour market, their education and their status in the society (Lennon and Rosenfield 1994; DeMaris and Longmore 1996). In this case, limited resources will lead to reduced expectations, as women facing constrained choices may perceive their circumstances as fair and be satisfied with minimal support

from their husbands in household chores, in contrast to women with more economic resources and alternative opportunities beyond marriage (Baxter & Western, 1998).

From the time we came to Greece, and I started to work 2 jobs every day, I have a higher salary than my husband and I contribute in the house more than him. **Anna**

For instance, this was not the reality of Anna and most of the Romani women from Albania in the older generations. Even though she would financially contribute more in the family, nothing changed on her position within the family regarding the domestic work. She still had to perform within and outside of it, so that the needs of both of them (husband and wife) would be fulfilled. However, it did affect other aspects of their life – their husband-wife relationship. Considering the high amount of time that Anna spends working, and all the domestic labour she has to do afterwards has pushed men to “re-evaluate” the power that women have, which is not just symbolic. This has led men to think of the figure of women as “strong”, wise, and capable of going forward in life – making them (women) the biggest supporters in all aspects of their lives. Here are some quotes that my Roma men interlocutors said:

My wife is so strong. I don't know what I would do if she would not be here. **Jani**

My wives' salary is higher than me. She is contributing so much in the family, and still raising our children properly. I love her so much. **Peter**

In the past, I didn't see the value of my wife, the village we were living in didn't allow us to see things clearly sometimes, but now I really value my wife. She is the person I am spending my life with. **Jimmy**

The answers from Jani, Peter, and Jimmy illustrate a significant transformation in the recognition and appreciation of Roma women's roles within their families and communities. Jani acknowledges his wife's strength and admits that he doesn't know what he would do without her, highlighting his deep appreciation for her resilience and integral support. Peter expresses pride in his wife's higher salary, emphasizing how she not only contributes financially but also balances this with raising their children, showcasing her ability to manage multiple demanding roles. His statement, "I love her so much," underscores his admiration and affection for her multifaceted

capabilities. Jimmy reflects on his past failure to appreciate his wife, attributing this to the restrictive views of their village. He now values her highly, recognizing her as the person he is spending his life with. This change in perception signifies a profound shift from traditional undervaluation to a modern appreciation of women's significant impact on the family. These quotes reveal stronger emotional bonds and deeper affection within these relationships, pointing to a broader cultural change in the community. Men are beginning to see and value women's roles in a new light, moving towards greater gender equality and mutual respect. This evolving recognition of women's contributions both domestically and financially is reshaping the dynamics of husband-wife relationships, making women the strongest supporters in all aspects of their lives.

3.6 Domestic Violence post-migration: A story of resistance and change

Family dynamics in Kos did differ from one another, and so was the behaviour of Romani women towards their husbands. I have covered until now the ideas of how gender inequalities are being transmitted from one generation to another. Moreover, we have touched upon the ideas of who is considered to be a good wife, connected with what values this wife should have. On the other hand, the power men hold positions women in a vulnerable position that for a very long time did not allow them to raise their voices, but certainly made women to “accept their fate” and pass this fate to younger generations in Greece. Hence, acknowledging that there are certain inequalities and burdens that women are experiencing it is not enough to bring the change. Even the recognition from the men’s side of the burden that women have is not enough to improve the situation of Romani women in Kos. Besides this, we cannot expect to change the whole society at once, but everything starts from somewhere, and in my case, the change should start within the household and family, to later on have a wider impact on the community.

I have mentioned how Mira have been subject to violence – a violence which started when she was living in Morava, and which still persists nowadays in Greece. A violence which brought

many health issues to her life. However, there have been other similar experiences shared by other Romani women in Kos who experienced violence during their stay in Morava and Kos, but who chose a different way to navigating it. The story of **Besa** is one of them, a story shared with me and Donald during my fieldwork in Greece and a recent discussion we had with her a few weeks ago:

My husband was violating me many times in Morava. I would get sick of him many times, but I was so weak to break up with him and continue my own life because I had no place where to go. During the Covid-19 time, he also cheated on me and broke up with me to marry another woman whom he said he loved and that was one of the hardest moments of my life. However, after one year he came back to me and I accepted him because I still loved him despite the things that he had done. Just to mention, he also has a child with the other woman. But since he came back, I thought that he had changed, but he continued to physically abuse and violate me so many times, so I decided to report him to the police. The police warned him by saying that if I go one more time to report any abusive behaviour he would end up in jail. After that we had so many arguments, so many people would see me differently because they didn't like the fact that I went to the police, even though they knew what he was doing to me for so many years. I got a well-paid job in Kos, I also bought my own car, I didn't need my husband for anything, why would he violate me? And at this point, it was too much, I decided to break up with him. I don't want to know what the community thinks, I just want to live a peaceful life, because I do not deserve this. **Besa**

This is a brief story captured from the discussion with Besa, is a 55-year-old Roma woman, who broke up with her husband at this age. She begins by recounting her deep sense of powerlessness as her husband repeatedly violated her, with no options or support to escape the abusive relationship when she was both in Morava and in Kos. The COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point when her husband's infidelity forced her to reassess her situation. Despite hoping for change when he returned, his continuing abusive behaviour underscored how entrenched patriarchal attitudes can be – which also shows the persistence of patriarchy and its negative effects when not addressed. However, taking the courageous step to report him to the police was a critical shift, where Besa took the courage to challenge the expectation that she should silently endure the abuse. Although the community reacted negatively and perceived her behaviour as deviant, despite knowing her suffering, she persisted and overlooked the community expectations by focusing on herself. Thus, securing a well-paid job and buying her own car symbolized her journey toward

economic independence and empowerment which later on became crucial for breaking free from abuse. Her ultimate decision to leave her husband was a powerful assertion of self-worth, rejecting oppressive norms and prioritizing her peace and well-being over societal approval.

This story of resilience reflects broader shifts in gender norms in post migration period, as well as it shows the crucial steps of active resistance where Besa decided to navigate and challenge patriarchal norms and gender-based injustices. This story has led both Romani men and women in Kos to reconsider domestic violence and power relations, the husband-wife relationships, while women on the other hand show and express a new perspective on navigating these patriarchal issues deeply embedded in their communities. Even though still in an inner conflictual basis, the story of Besa is about to bring new changes not only for the younger generations, but also for the current one who is subject to violence, or any other form of injustice done to them.

Chapter 4 | Concluding remarks

Through this research I aimed to explore how Romani women navigate patriarchal structures both prior to and following migration, as well as how these structures are maintained within their communities. The study focused on the experiences of Romani women from Morava, Albania, who migrated to Greece. Through ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, this research has uncovered the intricate dynamics of gender roles, the impact of migration on these roles, and the persistent nature of patriarchal structures.

4.1 Navigating Patriarchal Structures Prior to Migration

Prior to migration, Romani women in Morava were deeply embedded in a patriarchal system that dictated their roles and responsibilities within the household. These women were expected to manage domestic tasks, care for children and in-laws, and support their husbands. The concept of the "good Romani woman" was closely tied to her ability to fulfill these roles effectively. As highlighted in the interviews, women internalized these expectations from a young age, influenced by their mothers and mothers-in-law (Mrhálek et al., 2015). This socialization process ensured the perpetuation of traditional gender roles across generations.

Despite the heavy burden of domestic work, women's contributions were often undervalued. The patriarchal norms that placed men as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers were deeply rooted in cultural traditions and reinforced by the community. This power dynamic was evident in the narratives of women who described their husbands as the dominant figures in the household, akin to the control exerted by Enver Hoxha during the socialist regime (Connell, 1987; Messerschmidt, 2005).

4.2 Navigating Patriarchal Structures Following Migration

Migration to Greece introduced new dimensions to the experiences of Romani women. While the economic opportunities in Greece allowed some women to contribute financially to their households, the burden of domestic work persisted. Women continued to shoulder the responsibilities of caregiving and household management, often working multiple jobs to support their families. Despite these contributions, their roles within the family structure remained largely unchanged (Baxter & Western, 1998).

However, migration also provided a platform for women to articulate their frustrations and recognize the inequities in their lives. The interviews revealed moments of resistance where women expressed their desire for greater autonomy and a more equitable division of labour. These expressions of discontent can be seen as a form of subtle resistance against the entrenched patriarchal norms (Goffman, 1959).

4.3 Maintaining Patriarchal Structures

The persistence of patriarchal structures within the Romani community can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the intergenerational transmission of gender roles ensures the continuation of traditional norms. Older generations play a crucial role in socializing younger members into these roles, perpetuating the cycle of inequality (Vives-Cases et al., 2017). The cultural emphasis on marriage as a pivotal event in a woman's life further reinforces these norms, with young girls being prepared for their future roles as wives and mothers from an early age (Kóczé, 2009).

Secondly, the community's collective expectations and judgments play a significant role in maintaining these structures. Men are valued for their ability to provide financially, while women are praised for their domestic skills and subservience. These expectations create a social environment where deviations from traditional roles are met with disapproval and stigmatization.

(Bourdieu, 1989). The symbolic power dynamics within the community legitimize male dominance and female subordination, making it challenging for women to break free from these constraints.

Hence, these findings equip us with a nuanced understanding of how Romani women navigate patriarchal structures in different contexts. The findings align with feminist theories that emphasize the systemic nature of women's oppression and the intersectionality of race, gender, and class (Crenshaw, 1991; Amelina & Lutz, 2018). The study also supports the argument that migration can both challenge and reinforce existing gender dynamics, creating new opportunities while maintaining traditional inequalities (Donato et al., 2006; Silvey, 2006).

For instance, Bourdieu's theory of practice and the concept of symbolic power provided a valuable framework for analyzing the persistence of patriarchal norms. Hence, I illustrated through the case study how social structures and habitus shape individuals' behaviors and attitudes, reinforcing gender hierarchies within the community (Bourdieu, 1989). The internalization of these norms, coupled with the community's collective expectations, creates a resilient system of inequality that is difficult to dismantle.

4.4 Domestic Violence prior to and following migration

The narratives of Romani women like Mira and Besa highlight the complexities of domestic violence in post-migration settings and underscore their resilience and agency in challenging patriarchal structures and gender-based inequalities. By documenting Besa's journey from powerlessness to empowerment, we see a vivid example of how personal resistance and economic independence can become powerful tools for change. Despite facing societal backlash and deep-seated patriarchal norms, Besa's actions demonstrate a critical shift towards self-assertion and community awareness.

Her story illustrates that change, although gradual and fraught with challenges, begins within the household and can ripple out to the broader community. This narrative provides a compelling answer to the research question by showcasing the ways in which Romani women navigate and

challenge patriarchal systems, using their experiences to foster a dialogue about domestic violence, power relations, and the redefinition of gender roles in post-migration contexts.

A short reflection:

During my fieldwork in Greece, I had the chance to reflect upon these families' experiences, but also my own family's experience with patriarchy and unequal gender roles. Being raised in a patriarchal family, where my father would be the one who would take decisions in our family, I have observed numerous changes and differences in my father's behaviour. For instance, in contrary to what a patriarchal, traditional father would do, my father valued education so much, that he would allow us and even impose in us the dream for education. I remember one quote he used very often with me and my two older sisters "You cannot keep two pumpkins in one armpit" – always explaining through it that we cannot have someone in our life while on our studies. With this quote, he would not offer us to choose which "pumpkin" we would like to keep. No one spoke to him about the importance of education, and he did not finish school either, however he wanted us to be educated. He married my mother, when she was 16 years old, but he did not want us to choose our partners while we had other priorities to reach.

What I want to express through this story, considering my own experience and other Romani women's experiences during my fieldwork, is that I do see a tendency from men who reproduce patriarchal attitudes, to be the ones who break it, while the men and women who say that they do not have that mentality, unconsciously reproduce it. For this reason, it is important to choose which pumpkin we are going to keep under our armpit – patriarchy and unequal gender norms and continue to reproduce it, or the pumpkin of equality, empathy, support and change. And I would close this paper by posing a question for men and women to reflect: You cannot keep two pumpkins in one armpit, which one are you going to choose?!

4.5 Implications for Further Research

The findings of this study have several implications for further research. Firstly, there is a need for more in-depth studies on the intersectionality of gender, race, and migration within marginalized communities. Future research should explore how these intersections shape women's experiences and contribute to the persistence of patriarchal norms. Comparative studies involving other marginalized groups could provide a broader understanding of these dynamics and highlight common patterns and differences.

Secondly, there is a need for longitudinal studies that track the experiences of Romani women over time. Such studies could provide insights into the long-term impact of migration on gender roles and the strategies women employ to navigate and resist patriarchal structures. Understanding these processes can inform policies and interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering marginalized women.

Thirdly, future research should examine the role of men in maintaining and challenging patriarchal norms within the Romani community. Exploring men's perspectives on gender roles and their involvement in household responsibilities could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. Interventions that engage men in discussions about gender equality and encourage their participation in domestic work could be crucial in shifting cultural norms and reducing the burden on women.

In conclusion, my research delves into how Romani women navigate patriarchal structures both before and after migration, and how these structures persist within their communities. I've uncovered the deeply entrenched nature of gender roles and the persistent inequalities these women face. By connecting my findings with existing literature and theoretical frameworks, I've aimed to contribute to a broader understanding of gender dynamics within marginalized communities. The implications of my study underscore the need for targeted interventions and inclusive approaches to promote gender equality and empower Romani women. Through

continued research and advocacy, I believe it is possible to challenge and transform the patriarchal structures that constrain women's lives and opportunities.

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