

"DON'T LET THE CHILDREN WILT AWAY IN THE STREETS"
RECONSIDERING POVERTY AND PHILANTHROPY THROUGH THE EYES
OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY: THE CASE OF THE
Ç.S.S., CHILDREN'S WELFARE PROJECT

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BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

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"Don't Let the Children Wilt Away in the Streets"

Reconsidering Poverty and Philanthropy through the Eyes of Muslim Women in
Contemporary Turkey: The Case of the Ç.S.S., Children's Welfare Project

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Thesis Abstract

Zeynep Polat Satoglu, "Don't Let the Children Wilt Away in the Streets"
"Reconsidering Poverty and Philanthropy through the Eyes of Muslim Women in
Contemporary Turkey: The Case of the Ç.S.S., Children's Welfare Project"

This thesis examines Muslim women's role in philanthropic organizations in contemporary Turkey. It is the product of an ethnographic study on a group of veiled Muslim women who carry out a welfare project for the poor children working in the streets, called Don't Let the Children Wilt Away in the Streets (Ç.S.S.).

Based on the activities the Ç.S.S. volunteers undertake to achieve the social, economic, and cultural wellbeing of children and their families, this study tries to analyze the relationship between piety, philanthropy, and the middle class in Turkey. It concentrates on the emergence of volunteer subjectivity as a result of the increasing role of civil society organizations in welfare policies. Through an emotional-discursive analysis of the narratives of the volunteer subjects of the Ç.S.S. project, this study claims that emotions play a vital role in the formation of a philanthropic culture as well as the production of welfare politics today.

It elaborates on the role of emotions in the formation of a philanthropic tradition by referring to the studies that identify philanthropy as a modern kind of giving that originates from human love. It also brings up the studies that emphasize the Islamic form of philanthropy as being undertaken for both the love of God and the love of humanity in the name of God.

This thesis argues that human love and God's love complement each other and thereby, prompt the Ç.S.S. volunteers to voluntarily act for the wellbeing of humanity. In this respect, it challenges the boundaries drawn between modernity and religion, between being modern and pious. It suggests that the volunteer subjectivity which emerges within this framework of inquiry is both modern and pious. Correspondingly, it tries to demonstrate that there is compatible but as well as ambiguous relationship between the modern and the pious along with the internal contradictions of the both.

This thesis also concentrates on the Ç.S.S. as a children's welfare project. By emphasizing the recognition of children as vulnerable and innocence beings, it raises the question of which children are included or excluded from being part of this project.

Tez Özeti

Zeynep Polat Satoglu, “Çocuklar Sokakta Solmasın”
“Günümüz Türkiyesi’nde Müslüman Kadınların Gözünden Yoksulluk ve
Hayırseverliği Yeniden Düşünmek:
Ç.S.S., Çocuk Sosyal Yardım Projesi Örneği”

Bu tez, günümüz Türkiyesi’ndeki hayırseverlik organizasyonlarında Müslüman kadınların rollerini incelemektedir. Sokakta çalışan yoksul çocuklara yönelik bir sosyal yardım projesi (Çocuklar Sokakta Solmasın Projesi) yürüten bir grup başörtülü Müslüman kadın üzerine yapılan etnografik bir çalışmanın ürünüdür.

Bu çalışma, sokakta çalışan yoksul çocukların ve ailelerinin sosyal, ekonomik ve kültürel refahını sağlamak için gönüllü kadınların düzenledikleri faaliyetleri analiz ederek Türkiye’de dindarlık, hayırseverlik ve orta sınıf arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır. Sivil toplum örgütlerinin sosyal yardım politikalarında yükselen rolünün bir neticesi olarak ortaya çıkan gönüllü öznelliği üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Ç.S.S. projesinin gönüllü öznelerinin anlatlarını duygusal-söylenmesel bir analize tabi tutarak, duyguların hayırseverlik kültürünün oluşumunda ve bugünkü refah politikalarının üretiminde çok önemli bir rol oynadığını ileri sürmektedir.

Hayırseverliği, insan sevgisinden kaynaklanan modern bir yardım biçimi olarak tanımlayan çalışmalara dayanarak, hayırseverlik geleneğinin oluşumunda duyguların rolünü ayrıntılı bir biçimde incelemektedir. Aynı zamanda İslami hayırseverliği hem Allah sevgisi hem de Allah adına insan sevgisi için gerçekleştirilen bir hayırseverlik biçimi olarak tanımlayan çalışmalara da vurgu yapmaktadır.

Bu tez, insan sevgisi ile Allah sevgisinin birbirini tamamladığını ve böylece Ç.S.S. gönüllülerini insanlığın iyiliği için gönüllü olarak çalışmaya sevkettiğini iddia etmektedir. Bu bağlamda, modernlik ve din; modern olmak ve dindar olmak arasında çizilen sınırlara karşı çıkmaktadır. Bu araştırma çerçevesi içinde ortaya çıkan gönüllü öznelliğinin modern ve dindar bir öznellik olduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Aynı şekilde, modern ve dindar arasında uyumlu fakat aynı zamanda muğlak bir ilişki olduğunu ve bu kavramların kendi içerisinde çelişkiler taşıdıklarını göstermeye çalışmaktadır.

Bu çalışma, aynı zamanda Ç.S.S.’nin çocuklara dair bir sosyal yardım projesi olması üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Çocukların kırılgan ve masum varlıklar olarak tanınması üzerinden hangi çocukların bu projeye dahil edilip hangilerinin dışlandığı sorusunu ele almaktadır.

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To my family...

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Turkey has witnessed a dramatic change in the social, political, and economic realms, among others, since the 1980s, mainly due to its pursuit of neoliberal politics in order to restructure the state and society. While the 1980s and 1990s witnessed Turkey's integration into the global market, the Justice and Development Party, which has been in power since 2002 by winning the general elections of 2002 and 2007, undertook major neoliberal oriented policies.

The Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP*) was established by the younger faction of the previous Islamist Welfare and Virtue Parties. It has concentrated primarily on economic stabilization and financial liberalization, and unlike its antecedents which followed an “identity-based politics of Islamism,” it adopted a neoliberal, democratic, and European Union committed outlook.¹ There are various dynamics behind the *AKP*’s coming onto the political stage as an “Islamist” neoliberal-conservative political party and its leaving off the fundamentalist-Islamist discourse of the Welfare and Virtue Parties. One main factor in this regard is Islamist groups’ attempt to appeal to the different segments of society including those affected by the financial crisis of 2000 as well as those socially and politically excluded from mainstream Turkish politics such as the non-Muslim minorities, Kurdish people, and Muslim women who wear headscarves. Another is the February 28 process² that has undeniably influenced the

¹ Ümit Aydoğmuş, “Neoliberalism and Civil Welfare Provision in Turkey: The Case of Deniz Feneri Aid and Solidarity Association” (master’s thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2007), p. 72.

transformation of Islamist groups and led to the rise of the Justice and Development Party.

The Marmara Earthquake in 1999 was one of the most significant and tragic events of the 1990s and influenced the Turkish society in various ways as it also revealed the failure of the Turkish state to respond to a major crisis situation and meet the basic needs in regions struck by the earthquake. It paved the way for civil welfare provision organizations' cooperation with the state to alleviate the pain as well as to serve the needs of the millions of earthquake victims.³ Henceforth, through neoliberal as well as EU-committed policies of the AKP, which advocate the development of civil society organizations, the presence of civil welfare provision organizations in Turkey was consolidated.⁴ Another important result of the Marmara Earthquake was to make visible the Islamic civil organizations in the public arena which for a while lost their legitimacy in the state structure and civil society during the post-February 28 process.⁵

This short historical review of the transformation of Turkish society and state under the neoliberal politics run by the conservative Justice and Development Party is to indicate my inspiration for studying the role of Islamic civil organizations in

² The February 28 Process, which is also defined as the “soft coup” was initiated with the declarations of army-led National Security Council against Islamist groups in Turkey, in February 28 of 1997. The National Society Council compelled the Welfare Party government, which had been in power since 1995, to resign by directing the implementation of various directives that target the “cleansing” off Islamist groups from public space. The February 28 process led to the closing of firstly the Welfare Party in 1997 and then the Virtue Party, established by the cadres of the Welfare Party, in 2001 by the Constitutional Court. They were closed as they were seen as a threat to the secularism ,one of the major essentials of the Republican Turkey.
For a full discussion see; M. Hakan Yavuz , *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003).

³ Yasemin İpek, “Volunteers or Governors? Rethinking Civil Society in Turkey Beyond the Problematic of Democratization: The Case of TEGV” (master’s thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2006).

⁴ This will be discussed in chapter 2.

⁵ Aydoğmuş, p. 70.

welfare provision for the poor. This interest in Islamic civil welfare organizations which underlay this thesis combines with an interest about the role of Islamic notions of poverty and the poor in the development of Islamic philanthropic/welfare organizations.

The power of the Justice and Development Party's government and its collaborators in various municipalities has increased the visibility of Islamic groups in the public sphere, such as the noticeable increase in the number of veiled/covered Muslim women (women wearing headscarves) in the public realm. Although there are more such women present in the public sphere, they are excluded from it in certain ways since the state regulations of education and civil servant positions do not allow students or civil servants to cover. In this regard, civil society organizations provide an opportunity for veiled women to survive in the civil public sphere and to realize their goals in social, cultural, educational, and charitable fields.

This thesis is a result of my curiosity about the role of middle class Muslim women in the formation of a philanthropic culture in the urban, social, political, and economic context of Turkey. I deal with philanthropy as an issue under the concern of Muslim groups in Turkey as I wonder about the influence of changing social and political milieu on the development of Islamic philanthropic activities in Turkey.

In this regard, I decided to concentrate my study on a group of veiled Muslim women who pursue welfare activities for children working in the streets. The welfare project for working children, Don't Let the Children Wilt Away in the Streets Project (*Cocuklar Sokakta Solmasın*) is carried out by a foundation called The Life Foundation for Health and Social Services (*Hayat Sağlık ve Sosyal Hizmetler Vakfı*), as will be explained in the following pages. Various methods of and intentions for studying philanthropy could exist. However, in this thesis I have studied the

relationship between piety, philanthropy, and the middle class within the frame of modernity, Islamic culture, and the current social and economic policies in Turkey.

In this context, I look at the philanthropic activities of these middle class Muslim women in order to understand the relationship between piety, philanthropy, and the middle class. Gender also occupies an important place in philanthropic activities as women are mostly the subject and object of philanthropic activities in Turkey.

I have decided to concentrate on the relationship between piety, philanthropy, and the middle class for various reasons. Firstly, I see religious belief as an important dynamic in the formation of a philanthropic culture, as it is demonstrated by the survival of Islamic philanthropic organizations from past times until the present. Secondly, I try to look at the relation of philanthropy to the middle class since the patronage of middle and upper-middle classes in philanthropic activities influence the social, cultural, moral, and economic improvement of the recipients of charity in such a way that middle classes impose their own norms on the poor recipients. Thirdly, looking at the relationship between piety and the middle class is important in the current social, political, and economic context of Turkey which engenders the rise of a new “bourgeoisie” from within Islamic groups who were restricted in order to receive social and economic advantages in the aftermath of the February 28th process.

Bearing in mind the relationship between piety, philanthropy, and the middle class, I try to understand from it the construction of volunteer subjectivities. In that regard, one has to keep in mind the effect of current neoliberal policies that have created volunteer subjects from citizens to help the state for the welfare of society, as it will be emphasized in chapter 2.

This study of a group of pious Muslim women is based on an emotional-

discursive analysis of these women. I hope that the analysis of these philanthropist women through an emotional discourse will contribute and provide a new insight into the literature on philanthropy and welfare studies as emotions have a crucial role in the formation of a philanthropic culture. In this study, I take emotion as a social-cultural construct and with reference to Abu Lughod and Lutz, accept discourse as crucial to understanding how emotions are constituted. In this manner, I assume that social life is affected by emotional discourse in the sense that discourse means “the situated social practices of people.”⁶ Studying emotions as social phenomena rather than psychological or natural facts enable me to understand the role of emotions in the production of politics today. In this respect, I become aware of the fact that different meanings may be attributed to emotions in the changing historical, social, and political contexts.⁷ Thereby, I believe, the idea of “compassionate conservatism” emerges, and people are called for the love of the nation, and also that the volunteer subjectivity is constituted, as revealed in chapter 4.

I define the C.S.S. project, designed for the social, economic, and psychological improvement of poor children working in the streets, as a welfare, charity, and/ or philanthropic movement. In this vein, I define the women involved in this project as philanthropists or benevolent women. I deliberately use these words interchangeably as there are no clear cut boundaries between them in terms of their usage in the literature.⁸ However, I use the term “welfare” to emphasize the contemporary and political aspects of this movement since it is established in the

⁶ Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine A. Lutz, ‘Introduction: emotion, discourse, and the politics of everyday life’, in *Language and the Politics of Emotion*, ed. Catherine A. Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 10-11.

⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

⁸ Amy Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 7.

literature that the term “welfare” is used to describe state-centered charity activities as well as contemporary charity activities led by civil society organizations. On the other hand, I use “philanthropy” to emphasize the historical and religious aspects of charitable acts since I argue that Islamic conceptions of poverty and philanthropy have influenced the Muslim women’s involvement in this project as well as their approach to poverty. Philanthropy is also the key concept that clarifies my questions about the emotional aspect of voluntary charity activities since philanthropy’s literal meaning as human love signifies the role of emotions in the formation of philanthropy.⁹

Throughout my research on theoretical discussions of philanthropy, I have realized that there are many different arguments concerning the meaning of philanthropy and its relation to religion and modernity. In this regard, I have concentrated my research primarily on the literature written on philanthropy and particularly Islamic philanthropy, as I assumed that it would open my mind in the process of my research on Muslim middle class women’s conception of philanthropy.

In light of the historical, sociological, and theoretical readings concerning the relation of emotions to contemporary welfare policies as well as religious (Muslim) philanthropy, I have reconsidered the origins of emotions that motivate the Muslim philanthropists for welfare activities. In this regard, I shaped my study with these questions in mind: What motivates the Muslim women towards philanthropic activities? Do they use Islamic discourse in their explanation of their philanthropic movement? Do they explain their philanthropy by resting upon the recent social and political discourses defining the poverty and poverty alleviation? To what extent do

⁹ It will be elaborated in chapter 2 and 4.

emotional stages inspire their desire to help the needy? What generates their sympathy, love, and compassion for the needy—is it love for God and a desire to acquire God's blessing (*Allah rizasi*), or merely human love? Or, is it both human love and love for God complementing each other?¹⁰

With regard to the emotional discourse of the Ç.S.S. welfare project for the children, it is important to understand the Muslim women's approach to poverty and poverty alleviation as their conception of poverty constitutes the policies of welfare activities towards the children and their families. In this respect, it is important to emphasize that the Islamic conception of poverty has an important role in the formation of the idea of poverty and poor in the minds of the Muslim benevolent women and that it influences their approach to the poor. In addition to religious ideas, it is apparent that cultural practices and current political and economic goals also determine the Muslim benevolent women's approach to poverty as well as their solutions for it.

Throughout this study, I endeavor to grasp to what extent the philanthropic activities of the benevolent pious women develop under the combined influence of religious (Islamic) precepts, cultural practices, and neoliberal discourses. In this regard, it would be revealing to understand how these women make sense of poverty; to what extent they think that poverty is an outcome of structural inequality or of destiny, God's choice.

¹⁰ I elaborate on these questions in chapter 4.

Methodology and Fieldwork

This study is a product of my ethnographic fieldwork at the Life Foundation for Health and Social Services (*Hayat Sağlık ve Sosyal Hizmetler Vakfı*). I have observed the Ç.S.S. women volunteers' activities for the welfare of children working in the streets in this building of the foundation. My ethnographic work spanned one year from April 2008 to May 2009. I was not always in the field during this period, yet I tried to participate in the various activities of the volunteers which provided significant insights for my analysis. Among these activities were the meetings of the Ç.S.S. committee (volunteers), their family visits, and educational seminars and therapies for the families of the children.

My fieldwork is based on two sources—participant observation and in-depth interviews with the women volunteers of the Ç.S.S. children's welfare project. I carried out participant observation by attending the volunteers' meetings every month and their psychological and educational seminars for the poor families, as well as joining their visits to the homes of the poor families. Through participant observation, I had the opportunity to observe the Muslim women volunteers' relations with the poor families, their approach to the families' problems, and also the moral, cultural, or social language they use in their relation with the poor. Through in-depth interviews, I tried to grasp the pious women's perception of poverty, the dynamics that construct the volunteer subjectivity, and the influence of religious, cultural, and neoliberal political discourse on the women's conception of the poor and poverty. My questions in the interviews were open-ended and they were also improved and shaped by the women's accounts.

The women at the center of my research project care for children who work

in the streets in order to help their families financially. They started their welfare activities for the children as a project sponsored by the Life Foundation for Health and Social Services. The Life Foundation for Health and Social Services was established by professionals in the health sector, such as doctors and dentists, concentrating on health and social issues. Among the activities of the foundation are granting scholarships for university students in health faculties such as medicine, dentistry and pharmacy; supporting and encouraging scientific research on health; organizing seminars on cultural, historical, and health issues for university students as well as the common people; and arranging free health examinations in schools. Through these activities, the foundation aims to contribute to Turkey's development as well as to increase social welfare.¹¹ The majority of the foundation's founders and trustees are made up of men. Yet, the project towards the children working in the streets is designed and carried out by a group of women who formed "the Committee for Protecting the Children Working in the Streets" (*Sokakta Çalışan Çocukları Koruma Komisyonu*). As this committee of women works voluntarily for the welfare of the children working in the streets, I also designate these women as volunteers. Yet, there are also other younger volunteers such as university students who help the committee in the execution of the project by organizing activities for the children.

The name of this project, carried out by the Committee for Protecting the Children Working in the Streets, is Don't Let the Children Wilt Away in the Streets (*Çocuklar Sokakta Solmasın, Ç.S.S.*). The project was started in 1998. Some of the women in this project are doctors and dentists who are also members of the foundation and some are housewives who are involved in the project via their husbands who are members of the foundation or via their friendship with the

¹¹ <http://www.hayatvakfi.org.tr/VakifSenedi.aspx> (accessed March, 2009).

designers of the project. While the health professionals participating in the project deal with health issues such as the rehabilitation of children and their families, other women are responsible for social affairs including visitation of the children's families, determining and providing for their needs, organizing social and cultural activities for the children such as cinema, theatre, and picnics.

However, as I have been told, the project is by and large carried out by these housewives since they have more time than the doctors to continue the project by steadily communicating with families and determining their needs. In addition to these women, there are some university students who voluntarily show interest in these children by helping them in their school courses and by helping the women in the organization of social, educational, and cultural activities for the children. The women volunteers carrying out the project meet every month to consult on the situation of the children and their families involved in the *C.S.S.* project. Throughout these meetings, the quantity and quality of charity is determined according to the specific situation of each family, and the educational, social, and cultural programs planned for the children as well as their families (actually mothers) are discussed. There are five types of assistance determined in the content of the *C.S.S.* project: support for education; support for health and sustenance; support for social activities and cultural improvement of the children and their families; financial support for the alleviation of housing conditions as well as clothing; psychological guidance and educational programs for the families such as reading-writing courses for the illiterate parents and seminars about the maintenance of family unity and healthy communication among its members.¹² In the context of these assistances, for instance, the members of the committee try to find scholarships for the advance of

¹² See APPENDIX A.

the successful children's education; organize social and cultural activities such as visiting the historical-touristic landmarks, and going on picnics, or to the cinema and theatre; and take children to artistic training activities such as music and theatre trainings where the talented children can improve their talents.

For the interview process, I met with six women among ten or fifteen committee members/volunteers. I decided to interview with these particular women since they created and developed this welfare project. Additionally, they are more influential in creating solutions to the children's and their families' problems. Besides, they are the ones who visit the families and report to other members what they observed during these visits at the monthly meetings.

Four of the women I interviewed are university graduates, while the one is a high school graduate, and another one abandoned the Faculty of Law. The women are in their forties except the one who is in her late twenties. It is also important to note that I have changed the names of these volunteers when referring to their interviews in order to protect their privacy.

When the Ç.S.S. project was first started it targeted the children in the streets, in other words the street children. However, as the volunteers began to work on the project, they realized the distinction between children working in the streets and the street children. As my informant mentioned, such a categorization was made in UNICEF's definition of street children. I have seen that this distinction is emphasized in their bulletins by defining the characteristics of street children and children working in the streets according to UNICEF's criteria.¹³ In these characterizations, it is strongly mentioned that every child who works in the streets is potentially a street child unless s/he is taken care of. Realizing this distinction, they

¹³ See APPENDIX A.

have decided to concentrate on children working in the streets. According to UNICEF's criteria, the main difference between the street children and children working in the streets is that the former live in the streets and have no contact with their families, whereas the latter live with their families and work in the streets by selling tissue, cleaning car windows, shining shoes, and so on. The street children are more "dangerous" as they generally use drugs and are involved in criminal organizations. Yet, the children working in the streets may become exposed to the dangers of the streets and become street children unless they are taken care of. Thus, my informant Ayşe told me that they have decided to concentrate on children working in the streets since their rehabilitation would be easier and also as women, they are worried about communicating with street children since, they believe, such children have a tendency towards violence and most of them are drug addicts.

Moreover, by concentrating on the rehabilitation of the children working in the streets rather than the street children, the Ç.S.S. project endeavors primarily to rehabilitate the family of a child working in the streets socially, psychologically, and economically, as the family is seen to be the source of the problems which push the children into the streets as a result of unemployment, ignorance, intra-family violence, and lack of care and communication.

The categorization of children as street children and children working in the streets is important in the sense that it signifies the categorization of the poor as deserving and undeserving poor which is very central to welfare policies.¹⁴ In line with this issue of categorization, the significant question to be raised is, to whom do the volunteers choose to provide help? In other words, I want to find out the criteria these women utilize to determine whom to help and whom to prioritize in the

¹⁴ This will be discussed in chapter 6.

distribution of aids – do they make distinctions based on the ethnicity, religious sect, or political views of the poor? Do they prioritize poor families over individuals?

Sequential Order

In the second chapter, I primarily discuss the meanings attached to philanthropy, its difference from or similarity with charity and its place in both Islamic doctrines and cultures by referring to some articles written on this issue. After that, I discuss the issue of philanthropy in the historical context of Turkey by referring to the roles of philanthropic endowments (*waqfs*) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Then I call attention to the revival of *waqfs* in Turkey as civil society organizations in 1990s, in the context of neoliberal policies. In addition to these, for some comparative purposes, I look at the development of welfare policies in the context of the welfare state and the role of women in the making of a welfare state as in the case of the U.S. Hence, by looking at the history of welfare policies, I try to compare them with welfare activism developed under the guidance of civil society organizations.

In the third chapter, I introduce the subjects of the Ç.S.S. project in order to inform the reader about the creators of this project. As the subject matter of this study is the agency of Muslim women in the civil welfare field of Turkey, I discuss the subjectivity of the Ç.S.S. women within the political, social, cultural, and religious framework that empowers the educated Muslim women in public sphere. Discussing the agency of the Ç.S.S. women within this framework enables me to understand the formation of the Ç.S.S. project and its similarity with and/or difference from other welfare projects.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters are based on in-depth analyses of the interviews conducted with the volunteers. In the fourth chapter, I discuss volunteerism as a middle class phenomenon and concentrate on the influence of the reshaping of religion under modernity and its effects on volunteerism. I attempt to make an emotional analysis of the narratives told by the volunteers by concentrating on their emotional feelings that inspire to voluntarily act for the poor. In that regard, I reflect on the origins of their emotions which generate the philanthropy movement and argue that religious belief and human love complementarily create philanthropy.

In the fifth chapter, I touch upon the issue of poverty by considering the volunteers' arguments about it vis-à-vis the religious discourse. I concentrate on the women's conception of poverty. Thereby, I try to understand the extent to which they consider poverty a result of structural inequality, personal incompetence, and/or God's destiny. In this chapter, the volunteers' narratives of their witnessing the children's and their families' poverty are illuminating for me since through these narratives, I have grasped how the notion of poverty is reformulated in the minds of the volunteers. Finally, I focus on their approach to new poverty which they define as "problematic" and "fearsome", and discuss the types of solutions they suggest for coping with it. In this regard, I emphasize their reinterpretation of Islamic forms of philanthropy such as *zakat* (the obligatory almsgiving) to deal with the inequalities the new poverty creates and evaluate this approach as related to neoliberal capitalism.

The sixth chapter focuses on the Ç.S.S. project as a welfare project designed for the welfare of children. In this chapter, I primarily discuss the concept of childhood in a cultural and religious perspective. In this regard, I try to understand childhood phenomenon in its relation to modernity and Islamic culture. Through the

discussion of the childhood concept, I endeavor to grasp the perception of a child in the minds of the volunteers. Then, I touch upon the relation between the women volunteers and the poor families. Through analyzing the volunteers' accounts of their relationships with the poor children and their families, I examine the kinds of discourses they use in their approach to the problems of the poor. In this part, I discuss the issue of philanthropy not simply as a matter of human sensitivity but also as a matter of politics, related to the social, moral, and political concerns of the volunteers. I consider social, political, cultural, and moral stances as constitutive of a "normative" notion of humanity. In this regard, I try to understand the volunteers' "normative" notion of humanity. Thereby, I mention the role of social, political and moral stances in setting the limits for understanding humanity.

CHAPTER 2

A SHORT HISTORICAL REVIEW OF PHILANTHROPY AND WELFARE POLICIES

Philanthropy vs. Charity: Similarities and Differences

In this chapter, I will outline a short historical review of philanthropy and welfare policies with regard to their role in the context of Turkey since the Ottoman modernization and in the context of Europe and the U.S. I will discuss the notion of philanthropy and charity with regard to the similarities and differences in meaning attributed to each of them. In this way, I will reflect upon the meanings and functions of these concepts within Islamic history and the Islamic tradition as well as modernity. I will discuss them based on two aspects—in terms of their role in Islam and modernity—as I study a group of pious philanthropist women who are inspired by their religious beliefs as well as contemporary discourses about the poor and poverty in their welfare project for poor children.

In addition to a reflection on the meaning of philanthropy and charity, I will also delve briefly into the role they have played throughout Islamic history and in contemporary welfare policies. In this regard, I believe that the discussion of these concepts, philanthropy and charity, and their functions will clarify my understanding of contemporary welfare politics—pursued either by the state or civil society organizations—and the stimulating factors behind them.

In the introductory chapter of an edited book about an historical account of philanthropy in Germany, Great Britain, North America, and Canada, Thomas Adam

refers to the failure of scholars both in Europe and America to develop a unified theoretical concept of philanthropy. He states that this has resulted in a confusion of terms and has led to many misunderstandings. He realized that in many conferences he attended, scholars from different backgrounds used terms such as “philanthropy”, “charity”, “benevolence”, “giving”, etc., interchangeably and without defining these terms.¹⁵ He states that although philanthropy has been defined as a religious duty in almost every major religion, it has changed over time—the forms, concepts, and goals of nineteenth century philanthropy, for example, differed tremendously from sixteenth century and twentieth century versions.¹⁶ The authors contributing to this edited volume explore philanthropy from an historical perspective and in a cross-national context, using examples from Germany, the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain. Their historical research focuses on similarities and differences among these societies throughout nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Throughout the volume, philanthropy is considered as a phenomenon that has evolved over time as a result of changing social and political environments.¹⁷

The second part of the book analyzes the relation between nineteenth century German bourgeoisie and philanthropy, and argues that philanthropic activities by German elites such as financing research institutions and scientific projects were undertaken as efforts to achieve social recognition and distinction.¹⁸

In a similar fashion, in her article about the philanthropic activities of wealthy Jewish and Greek families in Istanbul in the second half of the nineteenth century,

¹⁵ Thomas Adam, “Introduction,” in *Philanthropy, Patronage, and Civil Society: Experiences from Germany, Great Britain, and North America*, ed. Thomas Adam (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 4.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

Nora Şeni refers to the philanthropic activities of these wealthy banker families as attempting to achieve social recognition as an elite group.¹⁹

Şeni argues that while eighteenth century was the age of enlightenment in Europe, the nineteenth century was the age of philanthropy.²⁰ She refers to the literal meaning of philanthropy as being “human love” (*insan sevgisi*) and in this regard, claims that philanthropy is “a kind of solidarity based on the establishment of educational and health institutions in the name of modernity and progress rather than in the name of religion or God.”²¹ Hence, she argues that philanthropy is a kind of “love of doing good” (*hayırseverlik*) that replaced religious kinds of helping such as charity, *zakat*, and *sadaqa* as a result of the interpretation of the world through reasoning rather than through religious doctrines.

Referring to the investments of these nineteenth century urban elites of Istanbul and Europe in the fields of health, education, and art—establishing health and educational institutions, art museums, and more—Şeni states that philanthropy characterizes the social responsibility of the elite and is distinct from charity in the sense that it represents all kinds of attempts of preventing the emergence of pain instead of trying to alleviate already existing pain. Thus, she defines philanthropy as a manifestation of “human love” embodied in the investments for the benefit of human beings, whereas charity, in her estimation, is a kind of religious giving performed simply to alleviate suffering.²² That is why, she argues, at the beginning

¹⁹ Nora Şeni, “Hayırsever/Bankacı Figürü: İstanbul’da Yahudi ve Rum Büyük Aileleri (19. Yüzyıl),” in *Seni Unutursam İstanbul*, trans. Şirin Tekeli and Saadet Özen (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2008), p. 136.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 123.

²¹ “Oysa filantropi anlamıyla hayırseverlik, dinsel bir retorik kullanmadan, din ya da tanrı adına değil de ilerleme (progres) ve ‘modernlik’ adına, mantık ve bilime dayalı eğitim kurumlarıyla, sağlık kurumları oluşturan bir ‘dayanışma’ tarzıdır.” Ibid.

of the nineteenth century in France, the philanthropists who established orphanage and dispensaries should be considered among the cadres of the French Revolution.²³

In a chronological manner, she argues that philanthropy replaced charity, which is based on religious giving and whose influence weakened with the development of a welfare state in the European context.²⁴

Similar to Seni's emphasis on the distinction between the meanings of the words philanthropy and charity, Amy Singer draws attention to some authors' attempts to draw a precise dividing line between philanthropy and charity as distinct phenomena—while the former describes the nineteenth and twentieth-century realm of rational, professionalized, secular action aiming at developing society for a better future, the latter derives from spiritual or religious motivations to relieve the suffering of poor.²⁵ However, Singer also notes that a careful examination of historical and sociological writings on philanthropy and charity demonstrates that distinctions between the two are not universally adopted, and are, in any case, “unhelpfully rigid”. She points out that it is not an easy task to separate the two, especially when the terms of discussion originate from another language—one which frames these acts differently. “Nor”, she argues, “is it always possible to untangle religious and secular inspirations in any one place or time or in any one person, since religious teachings are a fundamental aspect of ethical education in many parts of the world...even where schools are organized with a secular and rational outlook.”²⁶

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Amy Singer, p.6.

²⁶ Ibid.

In light of these arguments, I want to discuss Islamic philanthropy and charity, placing both of them in the context of Islamic understandings of beneficence. In this regard, I will touch upon the discussions surrounding the role of philanthropy and charity in Islamic doctrine, their similarities, and their differences.

In a recent article entitled *Muslim Philanthropy and Social Security: Prospects, Practices, and Pitfalls*, Sami Hasan analyzes philanthropy as an act of preventing poverty and providing the basic needs and rights of people through establishing institutions such as schools, health clinics, and orphanages. In this article, he discusses philanthropy in Islam by referring to Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and hadith, and writings and practices based on Islamic doctrines. In this regard, contrary to Şen'i's distinction between philanthropy and charity, the former being defined as a signifier of progressive and modernist tendencies and the latter as a kind of religious giving in the name of God in order to alleviate suffering, Hasan defines Muslim philanthropy as an endeavor to improve the well-being of people. He develops his argument by referring to Caliph Omer's saying that "if you give *zakat*, enrich the recipients."²⁷ Additionally, he refers to many Muslim jurisprudents' (*faqihs*) suggestion that "it is better to give enough *zakat* to one person by pulling the person out of poverty instead of giving smaller portions of *zakat* to individuals that does not bring a long term economic benefit for the recipient." Similarly, by referring to the commentary of the Qur'an by Yusuf Ali, Hasan asserts that Islamic doctrine and the prophet's tradition emphasize strategic philanthropy, because a purposeless act of charity is unacceptable.²⁸ Thus, according to Hasan, schools for general

²⁷ Sami Hasan, "Muslim Philanthropy and Social Security: Prospects, Practices, and Pitfalls" (paper presented at the 6th ISTR Biennial Conference, Bangkok, 9-12 July 2006), p.4. Available [online]: <http://www.istr.org/conferences/bangkok/WPVolume/Hasan.Samiul.pdf>.

²⁸ Ibid.

education, religious schools, orphanages, skill development programs, etc. in all Muslim communities have been the major beneficiaries of *zakat* for hundreds of years.²⁹

Parallel to these arguments, Hasan gives examples from different Islamic countries, including Yemen, Egypt, and Malaysia, where there are educational institutions, health clinics, and urban services supported by *waqf* or *zakat* funds.³⁰ I would like to argue that Hasan's definition of "social security" is vital to understanding his and other scholars' (e.g. Hartley Dean and Zafar Khan) perspectives on Muslim philanthropy. Hasan explains social security in the following: "Social security, in a broader sense, includes elimination of conditions detrimental to the survival, functioning, progress, and sustention of human beings to enjoy a 'full life.'"³¹ He states that the fundamental aspects of survival, functioning, progress, and sustenance refer to sufficient food, health, education, and skills development, and not discrimination on the basis of color, gender, social and political backgrounds. As deprivation of these causes poverty, he argues, achieving such living conditions thus becomes rights as opposed to just needs.³² In other words, investing in fields like health or education is to provide people who lack the means to acquire these through their own incomes with their basic rights through the giving of the wealthy. In this context, it would be probable to discuss the concepts of "right" and "need" in the Islamic definition of *zakat*.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p.1.

³² Ibid., p. 1.

Hasan, referring to Naqvi's arguments on the Islamic code of property relations, suggests that a property owner's right to property is limited by the good of the community. So they are not the absolute owners but only the "trustees" of God's property as long as they provide the wellbeing of the community; not understanding this responsibility for the greater community could lead to the removal of the owner's control over property. He proceeds with his discussion by stating that "the Islamic principle of property suggests that the needy people have a right in the wealth of a rich person because everything belongs to God and He graciously has bestowed some property on some so that they can be grateful and help others in charity."³³ Dean and Khan support Hasan's ideas about the "rights" and "needs" of needy people by emphasizing that *zakat* is the right of the whole community to the wealth of individuals, and strengthen their argument by referring to a saying from the Qur'an: "And in their wealth is the right of him who asks, and him who is needy." (Qur'an, 51:19).³⁴ They then refer to eight categories of people who have the right to receive *zakat*; however, since it is beyond the scope of this paper I will not refer to these categories.

What I would like to emphasize in this discussion is the fact that in the definition of *zakat* in Islam, the relation between the wealthy and the needy is not constituted on the basis of eliminating the suffering of the poor by providing his needs—it is based on the constitution of social justice through giving the poor her/his basic needs which are their "rights" on the wealthy. Accordingly, *zakat* is not defined simply as a voluntary act by the Muslims to give to people who are in need. Rather, it is a religious duty, imposed on Muslims to give a proportion of their disposable

³³Ibid., p. 1, 2.

³⁴ Hartley Dean and Zafar Khan, "Muslim Perspectives on Welfare," *Journal of Social Policy* 26, no. 2, (1997): p. 198.

wealth for members of the community who are in need. Thus, Dean and Khan argue that although *zakat* was originally a voluntary act of love, it is to be distinguished from charity or almsgiving (*sadaqa*), which are voluntary. “*Zakat* is “enrobed with religious sanctity and ensures the redistribution of wealth, not by coercion, but through the acceptance of moral principles.”³⁵ Although they refer to the different enforcement strategies to maintain *zakat* provision during the second decade of Islam and after the death of the prophet Muhammad—such as the constitution of *zakat* as an annual religious tax on property or waging war against those Muslims who withheld it—they emphasize that *zakat* is a moral principle which ensures support for the weak through the compassion and self-discipline of the strong.³⁶

Thus, in line with Dean and Khan’s discussion, I might argue that *zakat* is a voluntary act based on the awakening of emotions like compassion and love; yet at the same time, it is also an act of piety (according to the Qur’ān and the sunna) which is supposed ultimately to bring to the donor an increase of property in this world and religious merit in the next. That is why Dean and Khan claim that the giving of *zakat* can be both “altruistic” and “instrumental.”³⁷

In light of these discussions, it should be born in mind that *zakat* is not the only form of giving in Islam although it is the only *obligatory* form of giving for Muslims. Throughout the many verses in the Qur’ān, Muslims are encouraged to give in charity.³⁸ Similarly to Dean and Khan’s ideas on *zakat*, Hasan explains two major reasons behind philanthropy in Islam: “Two major reasons for giving in

³⁵ Ibid., p. 196-197.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 197-198.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 197.

³⁸ Hasan, p. 2.

charity are to show gratitude to the Almighty and to purify the earnings.”³⁹ In addition to *zakat* as an obligatory form of giving, he refers to the permanent endowment or Islamic foundation (*waqf*) as forms of giving and in this respect argues that the spending of wealth may also be for increase in “self-purification” since it increases the person’s position and dignity in the moral and spiritual world.⁴⁰ Thus, although “*zakat* purifies the wealth out of which it is given and not the ‘soul’ of the donor” and thus “serves the cause, not of charity, but of social justice”,⁴¹ according to Hasan, whatever the form of giving, *zakat* or benevolent endowment, the spending of wealth may also serve the purification of the ‘soul.’⁴²

As discussed above, Hasan, Dean and Khan believe that philanthropy is a more Islamic concept than charity.⁴³ In this regard, contrary to Şeni’s definition of charity and philanthropy as being associated with religion and modernism respectively, they prefer to use philanthropy to explain Islamic forms of endowment. Yet, one should keep in mind that, in Islamic doctrines, charity is also emphasized as a voluntarily act of giving, which is defined as *sadaqa*. Thus, we can see that both concepts, philanthropy and charity, are associated with religion as in the context of the Islamic act of giving. However, regarding the arguments made by Şeni, Hasan, Dean and Khan, one should bear in mind that Şeni makes her arguments in the context of Jewish and Greek philanthropy, while other authors specifically discuss Muslim philanthropy. Hence, I can state that the distinctions between these religions’

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Hartley Dean and Zafar Khan, p. 198.

⁴² Hasan, p. 2.

⁴³ Hasan, p. 2.

doctrines about the issue of philanthropy and charity may lead the authors to use different concepts to explain religious forms of giving.

The Tradition of *Waqf* (Philanthropic Foundation) in the Islamic World

Philanthropic foundations have a longstanding history in the Islamic world.

According to Murat Çizakça, they have a history even older than Islam; records show the existence of such endowments in Ancient Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome as well as the pre-Islamic Arab world, thus raising the possibility that the Islamic world may have been influenced from the earlier civilizations in the construction of Islamic *waqfs*.⁴⁴ At this point Çizakça states that such a *waqf* system did not originate in Islam, as it is not specifically mentioned in the Qur'an and many eminent scholars of Islamic jurisprudence initially objected to some aspects of the *waqf* system. He explains its development in the Islamic world despite the fact that it is not specifically mentioned in the Qur'an as stemming from two reasons: historical and economic.

I will concentrate on the historical reason. Çizakça states that the great Islamic conquests had enriched the Muslim world beyond any imagination achieving the economic preconditions for the emergence of this institution. Additionally and more importantly, he refers to the prophetic traditions and Qur'anic verses that strongly emphasize the importance of doing good and charitable deeds and redistributing wealth respectively.⁴⁵ He quotes a *hadith* that could encourage the believers for doing charitable deeds as a preparation for the hereafter: "...When a

⁴⁴ Murat Çizakça, *A History of Philanthropic Foundations* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2000), p.5.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

man dies, all his acts come to an end, but three: recurring charity, or knowledge (by which people benefit), or a pious offspring, who prays for him.”⁴⁶ Thus, it is for these historical reasons, he argues, that the *waqf* has been embraced in the Islamic world although it is not mentioned in the Qur'an specifically, and was objected to initially.⁴⁷

Around the frame of my research, I would like to discuss the development of *waqf* establishments in the context of Ottoman Empire and Turkey with a focus on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries are important turning points in the history of the philanthropic endowments in the Islamic world as the *waqfs* were exposed to widespread and deliberate destructions that they had not experienced. In this context, Çizakça mentions that the greatest destruction took place not in a region colonized by the Western imperialist powers, but in Turkey, one of the rare countries in the Islamic world that was not colonized.⁴⁸

In the nineteenth century Ottoman context, Çizakça interprets the centralization of the *waqf* system as an impediment to its capacity for autonomous action. Two powers are explained as being allied in their hostility towards the *waqfs*: the Ottoman State and the Western powers. This alliance resulted in the centralization of the *waqf* system.⁴⁹ The Ottoman State authorities decided to centralize the *waqf* system in order to increase the state revenue by enabling the collection of taxes from the peasantry cultivating the *waqf* lands, no longer by the *waqf* trustees but instead by the treasury officials. They also wanted to revoke the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 1.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 81-82.

waqfs because the latter had started to dominate the state lands, tended to intensify the nationalist ideas among the members of *millets* and provided a rich source of revenue to relieve the pressure of the “financial protectorate.”⁵⁰

The financial protectorate emerged as a result of the external borrowing following the Crimean War. After the Crimean War, external powers such as France and Britain began to intervene directly in *waqf* affairs and in 1860 demanded the abolition of the *waqf* system as a response to the government’s request for a loan.⁵¹ Thus, both the Ottoman State and Western powers allied against the *waqfs* for their own interests—for the Ottoman State, their autonomous action would be a potential threat for its unity both politically and economically in the age of nationalism; for Western powers, the revenue collected for the *waqfs* was a hindrance against the flow of money to the public treasury, which was under the control of the Public Debt Administration, controlled by Western powers following the Ottoman government’s bankruptcy.⁵²

I noted earlier that at the beginning of the Republican period, the leaders of the Turkish Republic were against the *waqfs* as well. Yet, according to Çizakça, the reason behind the Republican leaders’ hostility to the *waqfs* was the leaders’ attempt to cover the Ottoman-Islamic past. Thus, they were against the *waqfs* which might revive Islamic activities.⁵³ The “*étatiste*” and “populist” ideology of the Republic also played an important role in legitimizing the destruction of the *waqf* system.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 80.

⁵² Ibid., p. 81.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 86.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 89.

The rise of democracy as well as capitalist accumulation contributed to the revival of *waqfs* in the 1960s. The preparation of a new legislation in 1967 by the parliament allowed the revival and restoration of *waqfs*.⁵⁵ With this legislation many *waqfs* began to be established, including the Vehbi Koç Foundation and *Diyanet Vakfi*, and the *waqfs* were exempted from paying taxes.

Despite the developments following the 1967 legislation towards the *waqfs* which Çizakça describes in detail, the old conflict between the state and *waqfs* has arguably continued. The explosion in the number of new *waqfs* caused a strong reaction. In this respect, the National Security Council drafted a bill empowering the Ministry of Interior Affairs to close down any *waqf* that was considered to have deviated from its original purpose stated in its deed and/or which engaged in fundamentalist activities.⁵⁶

The Revival of *Waqfs* or Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Neoliberal Age

In the Turkish context, the past 20 years have witnessed an increase in the size and effect of civil society organizations (CSOs) in all spheres of social life, from culture, education, and health to poverty alleviation programs. The increasing influence of civil society organizations is attributed to the functioning of neoliberal policies that encourage the role of civil society in welfare provision to relieve the burden of the state. In other words, analysts have argued, these policies encourage the retreat of the state from the sphere of social welfare provision. Yet, it should be kept in mind that the state continues to undertake social welfare policies through its institutions, such

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 90.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 107.

as the Institution for the Protection of Children (*Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu*), and funds like Social Help and Solidarity Encouragement Fund, as well as through local municipalities helping the poor.⁵⁷

In this respect, some analysts have interpreted the survival of state-sponsored welfare policies despite the expansion of civil society's influence under neoliberalism as a means to legitimize the existence of the state, as well as to keep the poor under control against the probability of social unrest.⁵⁸ In this vein, Susan Hyatt argues that the activities of civil society organizations are intimately coupled with the actions and interests of the state. She states that Foucault's concept of *governmentality* helps explain this connection since by *government* Foucault meant "all those forms of expert intervention characteristic of modernity, including systems of welfare, social and health services, and urban planning, that encourage individuals to behave in ways commensurate with the interests of a liberal, well-tempered, regulated society."⁵⁹

In this regard, she refers to the emergence of the "volunteer" as a "new kind of political subject" of neoliberal governance who undeniably accepts the "particular requirements of the present form of neoliberal governance." In this way the "volunteer" contrasts with the image of the citizen, "whose social contract with the state once included the expectation that the state would take a major role in providing, among other services and amenities, a 'safety net' for the poor."⁶⁰ Thus,

⁵⁷ Nadir Özbek, "Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türkiye'de Sosyal Devlet," *Toplum ve Bilim* 92(Spring 2002): pp.23-24.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

⁵⁹ Susan Brin Hyatt, "From Citizen to Volunteer: Neoliberal Governance and the Erasure of Poverty," in *The New Poverty Studies: The Ethnography of Power, Politics, and Impoverished People*, ed. Judith Goode and Jeff Maskovsky (New York; London: New York University Press, 2001), p.205.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

the “volunteers” in civil society organizations internalize the neoliberal discourses by defining their role as social responsibility towards society, as I will demonstrate in the delineation of my observations in my fieldwork.

Ümit Aydoğmuş has argued that under neoliberalism, the so-called “pre-modern” protection systems and institutions reemerge in contemporary societies.⁶¹ The emergence of poverty alleviation foundations, such as Deniz Feneri and Kimse Yok mu? Associations in the late 1990s, and many other philanthropic foundations established before these associations, reflect the revival of “pre-modern” and traditional poverty alleviation formations which were based on the links of gift-giving, community, neighborhood and parenthood.⁶² Aydoğmuş, in his study on Deniz Feneri Association, argues that the reintroduction of these “pre-modern,” religious, and social institutions under neoliberal policies indicates how the neoliberalism shifts its route from economics towards politics through the community, neighborhood, family and locality.⁶³ Similarly, Hyatt emphasizes that contemporary neoliberal social policies frequently target the “family” and the “community” as desirable spheres of governance.⁶⁴

Partha Chatterjee has usefully drawn attention to the relation of community and capital.⁶⁵ Chatterjee considers the only legitimate form of community in modern society to be the nation, and argues that the nation represents the universal family

⁶¹ Aydoğmuş, p. 50.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Hyatt, p. 219.

⁶⁵ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: colonial and postcolonial histories* (Princeton; N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 234.

which is comprised of bourgeois nuclear families.⁶⁶ Referring to Hegel's idea that the unity of family, the bourgeois nuclear family, is formed by love and the free surrender of the family members' individual wills rather than a contractual relation among the family members, Chatterjee argues that human beings are born in society not as pure unattached individuals free to choose their social affiliations (such as gender, ethnicity, or class) but as already ascribed members of society. Thus, the claim of liberalism for the freedom of choice of individuals is itself fallacious in the sense that human beings cannot exist as "individuals" before they are born, and when they are born, "they are already ascribed as particular members of society."⁶⁷ Then, liberal theory recognizes this phenomenon as accidents of "natural inequality," which social policies of welfare or equal opportunity must alleviate.⁶⁸ In this respect, Chatterjee makes a connection between capital and community, and he states that community is the "pre-history" of capital in the sense that it is a "natural, pre-political, primordial stage in social evolution that must be superseded for the journey of freedom and progress to begin."⁶⁹ At the same time, this primordial stage cannot be entirely suppressed since the domain of a civil society ruled by liberty, equality, property, and so on provides an adequate justification for the lack of equality and freedom within the industrial labor process itself.

Thus, Chatterjee states, although Marx saw the destruction of the pre-capitalist community as fundamental for the emergence of capitalist production as the separation of the mass of laborers from their means of labor, he failed to see the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 232.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 235.

ability of capitalist society to ideologically reunite capital and labor at the level of the national political community through borrowing the rhetoric of love, welfare, duty, and giving from pre-modern community formations.⁷⁰ In light of these arguments by Chatterjee, I want to emphasize the neoliberal policies that target the family and the community as discussed above, and argue that the revival of civil society organizations does not eradicate the ambiguousness of the distinction made between the civil society and the state since the national state inherently links the civil society (the nation) and the state in the public sphere, where the homogenized forms of a national culture were forged, making it the only legitimate form of the national community.⁷¹

Women and Welfare: Women's Agency in Welfare Politics

In this section, I will discuss the role of women in the creation of the welfare state, by referring to some articles about the influence of women in the creation of the welfare system in the case of the United States. For my research, although I discuss the welfare policies towards the poor as an issue under the concern of CSOs (Civil Society Organizations), the following discussions about welfare as an issue under the concern of states are useful as well, since there are no clear cut boundaries between the CSOs' and the nation states' ideologies of pursuing welfare policies. As I address women's philanthropy towards the poor, the review of feminist literature about women's agency in welfare issues is helpful in analyzing the relation between women and philanthropy.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 236.

In the article *The Welfare State and Women: Structure, Agency, and Diversity*, Joya Misra and Frances Akins review the feminist literature about the welfare state and women in Europe and the U.S., and refer to the discussions in this field respectively in terms of three aspects.⁷² They first refer to the arguments of scholars that focused on the welfare state as a patriarchal structure that constrains women's choices, determines their needs, and perpetuates their dependence. A welfare state is defined by feminist scholars not just as a set of services, but also as "a set of ideas about society, about the family, and, not the least importantly, about women who have a centrally important role within the family, as its linch pin."⁷³

In this regard, Misra and Akins state that welfare programs support a social policy which rests on the assumption that families are composed of a father/breadwinner who works for a wage and mother/wife who provides unpaid domestic work and is responsible for the care of children.⁷⁴ They give examples from social policies in early twentieth century England that emphasize the importance of motherhood in the home for the improvement of national consciousness among young generations. Hence, welfare policies are regarded by some scholars as reinforcing gender inequalities since welfare policies support a family wage system that defines the man as a breadwinner and the woman as an unemployed domestic worker, and suggests that women's marriage to working men as the solution to alleviate women's poverty.⁷⁵

⁷²Joya Misra and Frances Akins, "The Welfare State and Women: Structure, Agency, and Diversity," *Social Politics* (Fall 1998): pp. 259-285.

⁷³ Quoted in Misra and Akins, p. 263.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.264.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Misra and Akins, on the other hand, assert that some scholars challenge assumptions of such arguments above by emphasizing the role of women's agency in the construction of the system itself. Hence, in this regard they attend to the recent works by feminist scholars that focus on women's role in the formation and perpetuation of the welfare state. Keeping in mind the limitations and dependency the welfare state imposes on women, some feminist scholars have emphasized the influence women have had on the formation of the welfare state by referring to works documenting women's political activism and influence in the making of the welfare system.

Thus, in this review of feminist scholars' work on women's agency, Misra and Akins focus on the "women" rather than on gender relations to emphasize the many roles of women as actors.⁷⁶ In their discussion of women's agency in the making of the welfare state, feminist scholars assert that women were active in charitable foundations and working toward eliminating poverty even before the state began taking over welfare-related duties. Likewise, women who are dissatisfied with the progress of private charities towards the needy have long petitioned the state to intervene for the alleviation of the conditions of the poor by requesting protective policies for workers, mother's pensions, and equal pay legislation. "These women, from a range of backgrounds (upper and middle class feminists to working class social Catholics), used the skills and knowledge they had developed in administering charity funds...and united around specific welfare issues."⁷⁷ They argue that although the welfare state has posed many structural constraints on women, powerful women and women's organizations pushed for change and affected the development

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.262.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 269.

of the welfare state, which also acted as an arena that at times improved individual women's lives and the conditions of society as a whole.⁷⁸

In light of these discussions around the structure of the welfare state and women's agency, Misra and Akin propose a third way for the discussion. They propose that centering the analysis of the welfare state on the relationship of the patriarchal structure of the welfare state to women's agency oversimplifies the analysis and neglects the diversity of women's experiences and interests. They argue that women have inhabited more complex positions in welfare politics—women may be agents in welfare state transformation, yet at the same time be involved in creating policies that constrain the lives of other groups of women. Thus, paying attention to the *diversity* of women's experiences would show that structure is a complex phenomenon that has varying effects on women and their agency based on a variety of statuses, including class and race/ethnicity.⁷⁹

In relation to this argument, they refer to the relation between racism and early feminism in terms of emphasizing women's roles as "mothers of the race" or as "moral teachers of children." Additionally, they refer to studies that claim that social policy was founded on the ideal of promoting morality and virtue in working class and poor women. Thus, "class became a moral issue, to be resolved by the individual through education and transformation, rather than an economic, social, or racial issue to be dealt with by society."⁸⁰ Other studies to which Misra and Akins refer are important as well, as they show that there are many divisions based on cultural context, class, gender, family structure, and race that impact the effect of the state as

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 271.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 260.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 273.

well as impact the state. Hence, assuming a monolithic state that treats the members of a state in similar ways would be inadequate.⁸¹

Similar to these discussions, I would like to turn to Linda Gordon's writings on women and welfare. In her article, *What Does Welfare Regulate?*, where she discusses the recent historical development of the U.S. welfare state, its crisis in the 1960s, and the roots of the welfare-rights upsurge of the 1960s and 1970s, Gordon asserts that U.S. welfare is constructed in two streams: one as "entitlement" and the other as "charity," "dole."⁸² She states that this distinction is vital to understanding the politics of welfare and it is highly correlated with gender difference.⁸³ The primary welfare stream, entitlement, provides a payment that is owed to the client; it is not means-tested—it is routinized in its payments and it does not require the poor to prove their deservingness. It includes unemployment compensation, workmen's compensation, and "Social Security." The secondary welfare stream is administered not as a citizenship right but as a form of charity; it includes widows' and mothers' pensions, and AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). Applicants must continuously prove their deservingness and meet certain moral standards to get this charity.⁸⁴

As discussed by Zillah Eisenstein, the welfare state replaces a measure of control over women by men, by its social control policies.⁸⁵ Unmarried women, single mothers, abandoned and divorced women have no place in the society envisioned by the welfare state as welfare state supports the reinforcement of the

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 276.

⁸² Linda Gordon, "What Does Welfare Regulate?" *Social Research* 55, no. 4 (1988): p. 611.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 612.

⁸⁵ Misra and Akins, p.265.

private nuclear family through systems like the family wage system which makes women dependent on their husbands.⁸⁶

Thus, the welfare state deals with women without husbands by making them dependent on the state through aids like AFDC, and its investigations of the deservingness of needy women for the state's payment demonstrate that the welfare policies reflect the state's moral and social criteria for women that prevent the state from treating all women in equal terms.

Gordon states that the ideology of the family-wage, which assumes that men should earn enough to support a wife and children, was correlated with the modern norm that economic responsibility stopped at the boundaries of the nuclear family.⁸⁷ At the same time, she reminds us of the fact that the welfare state could no longer support the family wage system since capitalist industrialism pulled masses of women, including mothers, into the paid labor force, thereby increased women's aspirations in the context of the possibility of economic independence. Therefore, Gordon claims that welfare not only replaced men as the object of women's dependence, it also subverted women's dependence on men.⁸⁸

Gordon, in her book *Single Mothers and the History of Welfare in the U.S.*, discusses the historical transformation of the meaning of welfare and its acquisition of negative connotations by referring to the welfare programs designed for the very poor like Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). She states that today "welfare" implies poverty, bad health, and fatalism, when once it meant prosperity

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 266.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 629.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

and good health.⁸⁹ Gordon's study on single mothers and the history of welfare is illuminating in the sense that she discusses the problem of single motherhood as a modern norm. By single mothers, she means all mothers alone with children, whether divorced, widowed, or never married. She refers to the modern aspect of the single motherhood problem since single mothers have long been overrepresented among the poor. In this regard, she discusses the "feminization of poverty" (due to women's likelihood of being alone with children, among the poor) as a modern concept, since in many traditional agricultural societies there were always widows, unmarried mothers, and absconding husbands, yet in these societies single mothers had kinship and community support. Thus, "the modern problem of single motherhood was defined within the last one hundred years, in the context of the decline of this patriarchal family and community system."⁹⁰ Concerns about single mothers and their children have also influenced the development of modern welfare policy. While aid to unemployed men is typically aimed at preserving the male breadwinner status, aid to single mothers is aimed at preventing its recipients from being too comfortable on their own.⁹¹

The previous discussions around women and welfare policies resemble today's welfare policies embodied in neoliberal policies that encourage the expansion of civil society's role in welfare practices to relieve the burden of the state. When we look at the studies on the role of CSOs in welfare provision in today's Turkey⁹², it is possible to see similarities between discourses of both the welfare state

⁸⁹ Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and The History of Welfare (1890-1935)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

⁹¹ Ibid.

and civil society in their definition of poverty and their distinction of “poor” and “non-poor.” In a similar way, Aydoğmuş emphasizes that the given social and political power re-defines what poverty and poverty alleviation are and answers who the deserving and undeserving poor are, and what the relations between the poor, the state and the rest of the society should be under neoliberalism.⁹³. In this respect, it would be probable to agree with Hyatt’s aforementioned argument that the discourse and practices of CSOs are intimately related with the interests and actions of the state

⁹² Yasemin İpek, “Volunteers or Governors? Rethinking Civil Society in Turkey Beyond the Problematic of Democratization: The Case of TEGV” (master’s thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2006). Ümit Aydoğmuş, “Neoliberalism and Civil Welfare Provision in Turkey: The Case of Deniz Feneri Aid and Solidarity Association” (master’s thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2007).

⁹³Aydoğmuş, p. 51.

CHAPTER 3

THE SUBJECTS OF THE Ç.S.S. PROJECT

The Public Sphere and the Emergence of New Muslim Subjectivities in Turkey

In this chapter, I would like to introduce the agents of the Ç.S.S. project in order for the reader to gain an understanding of the project's creators. As the subject matter of this dissertation is the ideals and goals of a group of people involved in philanthropic activities, it is important to understand the agents of the Ç.S.S. in their social, cultural, religious, and familial context in order to understand the nature of the Ç.S.S. project and its similarities to and differences from other welfare projects.

The Muslim women carrying out the Ç.S.S. project are among the Muslim women in Turkey who wear the headscarf (or veil) who have been visible in the public sphere since the 1980s by virtue of their modern secular education. The visibility of veiled, but also modern educated women in the public sphere has been a contentious issue since their presence represents for some a deviation from the definition of a secular public sphere in the context of modern Turkey. Nilüfer Göle mentions that in the Turkish mode of modernization, women's visibility and citizenship rights have played an important role in the formation and existence of the public sphere.⁹⁴ Contrary to Western European history, where the public sphere emerged as a liberal-bourgeois sphere in which women (and the working class) were initially excluded, she states, "in Muslim contexts of modernity, the public sphere emerges as an outcome not of a liberal bourgeois ideology but of authoritarian state

⁹⁴ Nilüfer Göle, "The Gendered Nature of the Public Sphere," *Public Culture* 10, no. 1, (1997): p. 63.

modernism. Hence, both the gendered and the authoritarian nature of the public sphere...define the particularity of Turkish appropriations of modernity.”⁹⁵

The appearance of veiled women in the public sphere has disturbed the secular elites of Turkey, as they considered these women’s religious costumes, headscarves, as a threat to the universalistic and secularist conception of the public sphere. A reflection of the definition of the Turkish Republic as ”a secular state,” the public sphere—more precisely, the realms of education and politics—is constructed as a secular and universal sphere that excludes symbols signifying religious and ethnic identities.⁹⁶ By universality, the westernized ruling elites of the Turkish Republic referred to Western civilization.

In the early years of the Republic, as an outcome of attempts toward modernization and westernization, the secularist project supported by M. Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, undertook various reforms to cut ties with the Ottoman-Islamic past (such as the banning of religious shrines and the dervish orders, the adoption of the Western calendar, the replacement of traditional Ottoman headgear (fez) with the European hat, the adoption of European clothing for both women and men, the replacement of Arabic script with Latin script, the abolition of Islamic family law, and the adoption of a secular civil code of law from Switzerland in 1926. These are some of the reforms that exemplify the organization of social life and practices according to the Western norms. Through the secularization of education, law, politics and daily life practices, the Turkish modernist project attempted to impose the Western mode of living on Turkish society. In this regard, the public sphere emerged as a space for the making of new

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 63-64.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 64.

Republican elites and excluded the non-Westernized Muslim population that did not conform to the Western way of living.⁹⁷

The centralization of nationwide modern secular education under the authority of the Ministry of Education (1926) has certainly been instrumental in the creation of new Republican elites.⁹⁸ The replacement of religious education with secular education, the adoption of the Latin script, as well as the purification of the Turkish language from Persian and Arabic led to a radical break with the Ottoman-Islamic past and the Ottoman elites. Thus, the new elites of the Republic owed their existence and power to the Republic and became the “natural transmitters of the Kemalist ideology of progress.”⁹⁹

The educated women of the early Turkish Republic have become crucial representatives of westernization and secularization of daily life by socially intermixing with men in the public sphere in their European outlook. They abstained from performing religious duties, practices, at least in the public realm. Thus, they have played an important role in the modernization project of Turkey through their participation in public life as citizens and civil servants.¹⁰⁰ In this regard, the elite women of the early Republic became the transmitters of the Kemalist ideology of progress as well since they owed their existence in the public sphere to the Western-oriented reforms.

Modern Turkey witnessed the rise of Islamism during the post-1980 period which was illustrated by the visibility of Muslim women wearing headscarves in the

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 65.

⁹⁸ Nilüfer Göle, “Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites,” *Middle East Journal* 51, no.1, (Winter 1997): p. 49.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

public realms of cities such as in high schools and at universities. The rise of Islamism in the urban centers of Turkey has been a consequence of the migration of peripheral groups to urban centers, an increase in access to secular education and the opportunity for upward social mobility.¹⁰¹ The peripheral Muslim women's migration to urban centers and access to secular education (which secular and Kemalist elites had for several decades) created tension between secular and Islamist groups.

As mentioned above, the Republican elites of Turkey experienced a radical rupture with the Ottoman as well as Islamic past through their gaining access to secular education. As members of the urban middle and upper-middle classes in Turkey, they gained access to education several decades ago and empowered themselves through “cultural” and “symbolic” capital rather than financial power through the appropriation of Western values and ways of living in all spheres of life ranging from gender equality in social life to clothing styles and consumption practices.¹⁰²

The Westernized secular elites’ ignorance of local culture and traditions created a cultural gap between the urban elites and people at the periphery. Hence, these elite groups no longer provide a familiar model for the newly rising social groups to identify with. In this regard, Göle argues that “Islamism is an attempt to provide Muslims from the periphery with a new guide of conduct for their daily lives and new forms of political expression.”¹⁰³ That is to say, Islamism is used to describe contemporary social movements that are urban in nature and organized by the young

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 50-51.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 52.

urban educated male and female Muslim groups. Islamism is ideologically a criticism of traditional interpretations of Islam and a quest for an Islamic cultural model alternative to modernity.¹⁰⁴

In line with these arguments, Ayşe Saktanber strongly emphasizes that Islam's new visibility as an urban phenomenon in Turkey is a reflection of the newly emerging Islamic groups' attempt to create their middle class “*ethos*” for the formation of an alternative social order.¹⁰⁵ She implies as well that the new modern educated Islamic groups moving to the public realms of Turkey under the influence of the hegemonic culture of the state, secularism and westernism, such as universities, have difficulty identifying with this culture. Therefore, she argues, they need to create their own middle class to free themselves from the influence of hegemonic culture and thereby realize a “moral transformation” because the middle classes are believed to be able to play the “leading role in the production, dissemination, and consolidation of new models of sociability”.¹⁰⁶ Correspondingly, the contemporary Islamist movements have created their own intelligentsia to cope with the control of the state in all spheres of life by suggesting Islamic social, cultural, and political model alternatives to the secular model of the state.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Göle, “The Gendered Nature of the Public Sphere,” p. 61.

¹⁰⁵ Ayşe Saktanber, “Bir Orta Sınıf *Ethos*’unun ve Onun Günlük Pratiğinin Oluşumu: Kentsel Türkiye’de İslam’ın Yeniden Canlandırılması,” in *Mekân, Kültür, İktidar: Küreselleşen Kentlerde Yeni Kimlikler*, ed. Ayşe Öncü and Petra Weyland, trans. Leyla Şimşek and Nilgün Uygun (İstanbul:İletişim Yayıncılığı, 2005), p.197.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

The Subjects of the Ç.S.S. Project within the Framework of Contemporary Islamist Movements

The Muslim veiled women carrying out the Ç.S.S. project are among a larger group of educated Muslim women in Turkey who have been visible in the public sphere through various social activities and occupations. These women whom I have interviewed are among the agents of the rising Islamist social movements in the post-1980 period in terms of their social, cultural and economic backgrounds.¹⁰⁸ They also share commonalities in terms of their familial origins. They come from the peripheries of Turkey and are the children of middle class or lower-middle class families. They gain the opportunity for social and economic upward mobility by means of their secular education as well through marriage.

Throughout the interview process, I got the impression that the women in the Ç.S.S. project distinguish themselves from their families (both their parents and parents-in-law) regarding their religious as well as familial practices. Therefore, they reflect the recent intellectual transformation of young Muslim groups in the post-1980 period via higher education and the circulation of Islamic periodicals, newspapers, and books.

These years witnessed the increasing influence of Islamist intellectual elites in Turkey who played an important role in the formation of contemporary Islamist movements since the end of the 1960s (similar to the rise of Islamist movements in

¹⁰⁸ For a fuller discussion of the educated Muslim women's vital role in the rising and visibility of Islam in Turkey you may look at the following books: Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996). Ayşe Saktanber, *Living Islam: women, religion and the politicization of culture in Turkey* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002).

the Muslim world). As a reaction to the cultural domination of modernity, they suggested an alternative Islamic cultural model and Islamic definition of identity.¹⁰⁹ As previously mentioned, the agents of contemporary Islamist movements are among the recently urbanized and educated Muslim groups. The paradoxical and ambivalent nature of contemporary Islamist movements is their revival of the idea of pure Islam in all spheres of life and in the minds of the young groups who owe their professional identity and social activism to both modern secular education and the Islamist movements to which they belong.¹¹⁰ Through the idea of pure Islam, the agents of contemporary Islamist movements have criticized both traditional interpretations of Islam and modernity and called for a return to the original sources of Islam such as the Qur'an, the sunna and the hadith (traditions and sayings of the prophet Muhammad) in order to free Islam from the domination of cultural traditions.¹¹¹

In light of these discussions about contemporary Islamist movements both in Turkey and in the world context, I argue that the women involved in the Ç.S.S. project desire to live a pure Islamic life according to the Qur'an and the sunna as in the period of prophet Muhammad (*asr-ı saadet*). In other words, they try to make Islam, in Saktanber's terms, "a living social practice"¹¹² that shapes their social, moral, and political stance in the world for the happiness and peace in this world as well as the afterlife. Therefore, they criticize the cultural/traditional interpretations of Islam insofar as they are incompatible with the Qur'an, the sunna, and the hadith.

¹⁰⁹ Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites," p. 53.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 54.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Saktanber, p. 196.

Moreover, they define someone's piety according to her/his theoretical as well as practical loyalty to God's commands as specified in the Qur'an and sunna. Although the pious Ç.S.S. women come from a religiously conservative family background, the critical aspect in which they distinguish themselves from their families is their endeavor to live Islam consciously through reading the original sources (the Qur'an and the hadith) in order to obtain true knowledge of Islam, purified of cultural/traditional interpretations. Thus, they define their families as traditional in the sense that they live Islam according to how they traditionally learned it without seeking the sources. The following sentences from Ayşen demonstrate the women's characterization of their families:

My family is a traditional family. My mom prays five times a day and fasts during Ramadan. That is all. My dad used to tell me just not to wear décolleté. I was so free until the age of seventeen; I used to wander around freely and wear loose clothes like pants (...) I like reading very much. I have read all kinds of books until the age of seventeen. As a result of reading and searching in those years of secondary school and going to the mosque in summer breaks to learn the Qur'an, I began to pray in two years. In one of the mosques I went for the religious education, my husband was my teacher. He was a university student in those years. (...)As a result of reading the books he advised me I have decided to pray five times a day. Then, I covered my head.¹¹³

Regarding Ayşen's accounts above, it is also important to mention that Ayşen learns and lives Islam through her individual efforts rather than her family's inculcation, despite the secular elites' assumption that all veiled women cover their heads because of pressure by their families (either husbands or fathers).

¹¹³Interview with Ayşen, October 16, 2008, Istanbul.

Ailem geleneksel bir aile. Annem namazını kilar, örtülü bir annedir, orucunu tutar ama o kadar. İşte babam bize çok açık giyinmeyin sıfır giyinmeyin ama işte bu kadar yeter kızım şeklinde. Ben 17 yaşına kadar pantolonla gezmiş böyle rahat serbest dışında dolaşmış bir insandım. (...) Okumayı çok severim. Ve her türlü kitabı okudum 17 yaşına kadar. Okuyarak, araştırarak işte ortaokul yıllarda yaz tatillerinde işte giderleruya camiye çocukların. Öyle gittiğim yerde şu anki eşim hocamızdı. O zaman üniversite talebesi. (...)Onun yönlendirmesiyle okuduğum kitapların sonucunda bir iki sene de diyebilirim namaza başladım. Arkasından da kendim örtündüm. O şekilde.

Regarding Ayşen's personal experience of living Islam, it is difficult to argue that all the women in the Ç.S.S. project have identical experiences, though similarities exist. As I understand through the accounts of the women, some of the women's families have played an important role in the formation of the women's religious life. However, the women in the Ç.S.S. project are different from their families as a result of acquiring "social" and "cultural" "capital"¹¹⁴ through their access to higher secular education as well as to Islamic intellectual discussions. They participate in Islamic intellectual conversations and discuss various issues about the meaning of the worldly life and the role of the Muslim in the world. Throughout these conversational gatherings, they refer to the commentaries (*tafsir*) on the Qur'an and the life of the prophet Muhammad and his companions and read books by Islamic intellectuals on Islamic history, culture and philosophy.

The Ç.S.S. welfare project is a product of Muslim women of the educated middle class. Constituting the middle class of society¹¹⁵ through their cultural capital, they are inspired to act voluntarily for the welfare of lower classes in the society as well as children working in the streets. As previously mentioned, while some of the women in the Ç.S.S. project are housewives, some are professionals, such as dentists, doctors, or civil servants. However, they all have higher education in the sense that they are all either high school or university graduates. It should also be mentioned here that this project provides access to the public sphere, especially for the volunteers who are housewives, as the other volunteers already access the public

¹¹⁴ In his article "the Forms of Capital," Bourdieu distinguishes between three types of capital: "economic capital" is the economic resources convertible into money. "Cultural capital" is the forms of knowledge, skills, education that a person has, which give her/him a higher status in society. "Social capital" is the resources that provide social connections, group membership, and networks of influence and support.

Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 241-258.

¹¹⁵ The role of the middle classes in society will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

sphere through their professional work. Thus, through this project, the housewives who have higher education are given the opportunity to do something other than domestic work as well as the opportunity to benefit the community.

It is important to underline here that the domestic and public roles these women undertake constitute the criteria they use to distinguish themselves from their mothers and mother-in-laws. The Muslim women who serve the Ç.S.S. project desire access to public life as a result of the qualities they have acquired due to their secular education. In this respect, their experience carries contradictions to the values of their parents who traditionally prescribe women domestic roles such as being good mothers and wives and oppose their visibility in public sphere, which they consider to be the realm of men.

Yet, the modern secular education, which provides women access to secular as well as Islamic sources of knowledge, also helps them to reformulate their roles in society. Therefore, they uphold their prescribed domestic roles but also accentuate the importance of the access to public life by Muslim women. They regard the involvement of women in public life as serving the greater good of the community, which is exhibited through concrete examples in the following chapters, and consider it as an essential aspect of their social or communal responsibilities. In this respect, as Göle puts it, “Islamism unintentionally engenders the individuation of women while simultaneously restraining it. Islamism allows women access to public life, but this is an access limited to the purported good of the community, to the missionary goal.”¹¹⁶

Accordingly, it should also be emphasized here that the Ç.S.S. women do not want to participate in public life in order to gain work to obtain economic freedom or

¹¹⁶ Göle, “The Gendered Nature of the Public Sphere,” p. 73.

to pursue a professional career. They explain their participation in public life through voluntary activities with moral as well as religious concerns. Even the volunteers in the Ç.S.S. project who have professional careers, such as those who work as dentist and medical doctor, refer to the motivation for their professional life as the importance of serving the good of the community. In other words, they seem to be economically dependent on their husbands, assuming that earning a livelihood is primarily the duty of men while women are responsible for the care of children and their moral training. Thus, they undertake their public roles as servants for the welfare of community similar to the way they undertake their domestic roles as wives and mothers for the welfare of the family. One of my informants, Sevgi, describes the role of women in society through the following motto which she learned in a seminar that she attended: “The hands rocking the cradle can rock the world as well.” (*Beşiği sallayan el dünyayı sallar*).

I suppose that through this motto, Sevgi explains very well the notion of womanhood assumed by the Ç.S.S. women. They construct womanhood or femininity on the basis of emotionality which they assume to lie at the heart of the “nature” of women as they are bestowed with the role of motherhood. That’s why the women volunteers in the Ç.S.S. project argue that women are naturally very suitable for voluntary activities, as they can easily help the needy and communicate with them through their expression of compassion. Through these accounts, they emphasize the capability of women in general, though there might be exceptions, to be able to care for their children as well as work for the good of the community. In this regard, Sevgi criticizes some of today’s mothers who do not prefer to have more than one infant by stating that they extremely love and spend their time on their one child such that no more time is left to deal with societal problems or to have another

child.¹¹⁷ Through these arguments, Sevgi takes the societal roles of women so critically that she also criticizes the women's prioritizing their motherhood roles by neglecting their social responsibility.

Thus, I wish to argue that the domestic as well as public roles attributed to women place them at the center of the world in the sense that they are believed to alleviate the problems of the world if they are allowed to explore their natural potential. Moreover, when they fail to do so, they are considered to be unsuccessful in both domains.

The philanthropist women carrying out the *C.S.S.* project have access to the public sphere via civil society organizations as they are not allowed to work for governmental organizations because of their headscarves. Thus, civil society opens a space for the veiled middle class women to express themselves and realize their goals. As discussed above, the *C.S.S.* women do not accept the traditional assumption that Muslim women should stay within the borders of their private sphere without socially intermixing with men and advocate that middle class Muslim women can have access to the public sphere and serve the good of the community as well as preserving their modesty. In other words, they want to participate in public life not for individual interests but for communitarian benefits.

The women volunteers involved in the *C.S.S.* project draw attention to their husbands' role as well in the *C.S.S.* project, as they provide the financial backbone of the project. They state that through their husbands' financial support, they have been able to improve the project. In addition, they mention that if their husbands had not

¹¹⁷ In one of the meetings with the women volunteers, one of the volunteers, who recently participated in the *C.S.S.* project, asked Sevgi admiringly how she was able to manage both domestic and public (both voluntary and professional) works despite having three children. Then, she explained it like this.

tolerated some troubles in domestic works due to their activities for the Ç.S.S., they could not have been successful in this project.

In light of these statements, I want to conclude that the Ç.S.S. project's women, both the housewives and the professional women, have adopted domestic (maternal and marital) roles attributed to women in the patriarchal society very well despite their voluntary/or professional activities in the public sphere.¹¹⁸ Although they are different from their parents in some respects as a result of their intellectual improvement through secular as well as Islamic sources of knowledge, they uphold the general consensus about the division of roles between women and men as the former are considered primarily responsible for domestic works (childcare and household chores) and the latter for the livelihood of the family.

One notices that Islam is very influential in the conception of the idea of femininity and masculinity in the minds of these middle class Muslim women. Obviously, Islam has played a major role in the formation of Muslim societies' culture for centuries with its social and ethical principles organizing daily life. In this respect, the women in the Ç.S.S. project characterize the man as the head of the family and as primarily responsible for the financial and social wellbeing of his family, and the woman as responsible for the moral training of her children by referring to their understanding of Islam. Thus, they unquestionably accept their husbands as breadwinners and heads of family. Although they criticize the traditional/cultural interpretations of Islam that are not related to Islamic principles, I

¹¹⁸ According to sociological evidences, all women in Turkey continue to provide the basic tasks in familial life attributed to them by the commonly accepted norms of society; their class and status differences (whether they belong to the lower class, traditional middle class or educated middle class) does not change the roles attributed to women in general.

For a full discussion of this issue see; Deniz Kandiyoti, "Urban Change and Women's Role in Turkey: an Overview and Evaluation," in *Sex Roles, Family, and Community in Turkey*, ed. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 101-120.

argue that to some extent they acquiesce these cultural principles by assuming that it is difficult to completely purify Islam from culture. Therefore, they do not challenge their husbands or parents in some issues related to women's obligations in society, although they believe that they do not originate from Islam's definition of women's obligations.

The contemporary Islamist movements are described as political movements aiming at a complete change of society in line with Islamic principles that have a moral control over the public sphere and therefore are considered to be threats to the secularist structure of society.¹¹⁹ Conversely, the Muslim women in the Ç.S.S. project do not desire and/or imagine a political change in society that would endanger secularism although they are among the agents of rising Islamist movements through their social activism. They state that their project Ç.S.S. is a product of their inner drive to help the needy children for the welfare of society and in order to acquire God's blessing, as will be discussed in the following chapters. They do not evaluate their projects and efforts as political. Moreover, they endeavor to display their project as devoid of missionary goals such as the "islamization" of the children and their poor families.

Without doubt this attempt reflects these women's efforts to ensure people who might share some of the fears and anxieties of the Kemalist and secular elites that their project is safe, in the sense that, contrary to claims made about them, they neither intend to change the secular establishment nor impose their values and ways of living on others.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites", p. 58.

¹²⁰ The women carrying out the Ç.S.S. project are veiled as mentioned before. Yet, some of the university students who voluntarily help them in the organization of social and cultural activities for the children do not wear the headscarf. My informants mention it as diversity in the sense that the

In their personal life, the Ç.S.S. women strive to live Islam not only by applying the basic Islamic principles such as veiling for women, praying five times a day, and fasting, but also by conforming their life to Islam's ethical understanding. Yet, they consciously do not impose their individual choices on the children and their families in the Ç.S.S. project, even though Islam plays a central role in their perception of the world and their participation in such social projects.

I argue that as the activists of a welfare project, they attempt to be very professional in the sense that their aim is nothing other than improving the social and economic wellbeing of the children and their families.¹²¹ They also emphasize that they have no missionary goals such as imposing upon these poor children their political, religious, or individual choices. In this respect, they draw attention to the function of the Life Foundation (*Hayat Vakfi*) as being a civil society organization in the Western sense and thereby differentiate it from civil society organizations under the guidance of the religious communities (*cemaat*) and religious orders (*tariqat*). They insist on saying that they only work for the welfare of the needy children and respect the children's and their families' individuality. In this regard, they assume that the civil society organizations under the control of religious communities and orders restrain the individual choices of the people they care for so that they will

children do not have contact only with the covered women and thereby they are not presented one type of woman, who is veiled. Thus, they mention the existence of unveiled volunteers as diversity to relieve the anxieties of the secular groups who claim that the veiled women try to impose their way of life on the unveiled women.

¹²¹In this context, I want to mention that one of the volunteers informed me that some of the mothers in the Ç.S.S. project demand the Qur'an lessons in the summer school arranged for the children as a social and cultural activity, yet they refuse such demands and direct those mothers to the Qur'an courses opened by the state.

Similarly, they abolish the religious books, endowed by the philanthropists supporting the project, from the library prepared for the children.

conform to the expectations of the religious community. That is why they claim that they care for the needy children without any personal, religious, or political concerns.

I consider the volunteers' emphasis on civil society initiative in the Western sense and differentiating their activities from the CSOs under the guidance of religious communities (*cemaatler*) as significant arguments. Thereby, they provide an opening to question the approaches which explain the Islamist movements as mere political movements aiming at a complete change of society according to Islamic rules. Thus, these arguments demonstrate that the Muslim women in the Ç.S.S. project and their counterparts in the Life Foundation prioritize the individual over community, contrary to the general stance of religious communities and orders in Turkey. In light of these arguments, it is probable to ask what has been influential in the volunteers' prioritizing the individual over community—their modern and secular education, educational seminars they attended to obtain professionalism in civil society organizations, and/or the Islamic intellectual discussions they participate to learn the “pure Islam” lived in the prophet Muhammad’s time.

I would like to conclude this chapter by emphasizing that the women volunteers attempt professionalism for their project in order that it be acceptable in the sphere of welfare organizations. Surely, their attempt of underlining the Ç.S.S. project as a professional civil society initiative targeting the social and economic welfare of the needy rather than a religious inculcation of the children can be understood as a response to the secular and Kemalist groups' perception of the Islamic groups as a threat to their secular way of life. Despite being seen as a threat to the Westernized secular order of Turkey, the Muslim women volunteers in the Ç.S.S. project have very similar traits to the secular and Kemalist women who are active in voluntary organizations as well. As members of the middle class in means

of social, cultural, and economic status, both the secular and the Islamist women have similar lifestyles in terms of their role in the domestic sphere and appropriation of cultural roles attributed to women, such as maternity, hospitality, modesty, respect, and so forth. The forms of voluntary organizations they establish and the intellectual activities they engage in, such as seminars and lectures, also follow similar patterns, therefore “they mirror the modern intellectual life of the urban elite.”¹²²

Obviously, Islam has also created a shared culture between these two groups and influenced their domestic as well as public lives, although the secular elites defend the western-oriented progressive way of life by rejecting the Islamic heritage that has shaped their cultural patterns as well. In this regard, I argue that Islam created continuities between these two groups—the secular and the Islamist—by shaping the cultural structure of Turkish society in general. Referring to Şerif Mardin, Saktanber also explains this continuity between the secular and the Islamist groups in Turkey as the pervasiveness of Islamic “idiom” in the sense that “it covers all aspects of life in society and...is shared more equally by upper and lower classes of society....”¹²³

¹²² Ayşe Saktanber, “Becoming the ‘Other’ As a Muslim in Turkey: Turkish Women vs. Islamist Women,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 11 (Fall 1994): p. 113.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 110.

CHAPTER 4

THE BIRTH OF VOLUNTEER SUBJECTIVITY AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

In this chapter, I will discuss the birth of volunteerism as a middle-class phenomenon through observing the practices and accounts of the middle-class C.S.S. volunteers. Before analyzing the birth of volunteer subjectivity as a middle-class phenomenon, it would be proper to touch upon the issue of the middle class' relation to modernity and nationalism.

The Formation of the Middle Classes in non-European Contexts

What I want to discuss here relevant to my point are the norms and moral standards of the middle class that are created within the process of modernization which includes various interrelated aspects, such as industrialization, urbanization, print-capitalism, and nationalization. However, it should be born in mind that as there are alternative modernities to the Western/European modernity which include or claim to include local and cultural motifs, there are middle class formations alternative to the European middle class norms as well. In this respect, Chatterjee discusses the particularity of the colonized middle class in an encounter with the colonial middle class in the example of the birth of a middle class in Calcutta, India. He discusses the particularity of the colonized Calcutta middle class in its relation to the rise of

nationalism.¹²⁴ Chatterjee states that nationalism created a new public sphere where it sought to overcome the subordination of the colonized middle class. This was realized through the eradication of all signs of colonial difference and their replacement with signs of local culture.¹²⁵ In this respect, as Çağlar Keyder also notes, a relational bond between modernity and nationalism is emphasized in the process of constructing the nation-state in the context of the Third-World.¹²⁶ It is through the ideology of nationalism, which emphasizes the preservation of indigenous culture and appropriates the legal-institutional forms of modernity imported from the West, that modernization has been welcomed by the people of the non-European world.¹²⁷

In light of these arguments, what seems to me important in the case of my informants is their concern for the preservation of the cultural and ethical values belonging to the society when they deal with the problems of the families with whom they work. That is why they are doubtful about the benefits of Turkey's access to the European Union, as this would pave the way for the degeneration of the cultural and ethical values of "our society", such as the degeneration of family solidarity and the rise of egocentrism. The following arguments by Ayşe demonstrate this:

Q: What do you think about Turkey's access to the European Union?
Can access to the EU create solutions to Turkey's problems?

A: I do not believe that the EU will create solutions to Turkey's problems. When we access to European Union, we will be more European. Everybody will live a more individual life. S/he will only

¹²⁴ Chatterjee, p. 35.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 74.

¹²⁶ Çağlar Keyder, "Whither the Project of Modernity? Turkey in the 1990s," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), p. 42.

¹²⁷ Çağlar Keyder, *ibid.*, pp.42-43.
Chatterjee, p.74.

care about herself/himself as in Europe.¹²⁸

Additionally, as the volunteers themselves state, they might modify the educational seminar programs prepared by UNESCO for poor families in such a way that they conform to their own culture and ethics. In this context, what seems to me striking here is their emphasis on cultural and ethical values that originate from their conception of Islam. They try to impose these values on the poor families; it is interesting to note however that they do not see this attempt as an ideological stance, claiming that they have no ideological and political purposes rather than humanitarian purposes such as helping the poor. This argument evidences the fact that they comprise the middle-class of society which bears the values of the national society which are believed to be the acceptable common norms, and thus empower themselves to teach these moral and cultural values to the rest of the society which is deprived of knowing them due to underdevelopment, ignorance, or poverty. It is through formal education that the societal norms are acquired and they are the outcome of the hegemonic ideological discourse of the nation-state.

In the case of Indian anti-colonial nationalism, Chatterjee states that education was meant to teach the women the “bourgeois virtues”, characteristic of the new social forms of “disciplining” such as “orderliness”, “cleanliness”, a “personal sense of responsibility”, “the practical skills of literacy”, and “the ability to run the household according to the new physical and economic conditions set by the

¹²⁸Interview with Ayşe, March 17, 2009, İstanbul.

Q: Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'ne girmesi hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz? AB'ye giriş Türkiye'nin sorunlarına bir çözüm getirebilir mi?

A: Avrupa Birliği'nin Türkiye'nin problemlerine çözüm getireceğine inanmıyorum. Avrupa Birliği'ne gireceğiz daha çok Avrupai olacağız. Herkes daha bireysel yaşayacak. Sadece kendini düşünenecek Avrupa'daki gibi.

outside world.”¹²⁹ Thus, he refers to the formation of a middle class via the formal education as a product of the nationalist modernization project of colonized India. He mentions that through this education in the nineteenth century, the Bengali middle class women distinguished themselves from the Westernized women of the wealthy families, who were degenerated by losing their cultural and moral values, as well as from the common women of the lower classes who kept their “barbarous” and “irrational” traditions.¹³⁰ In light of these arguments, it is seen that a middle class serves the creation of moral standards and norms for the national society according to the hegemonic ideological discourse of the nation-state.¹³¹

Regarding the accounts of the middle-class Ç.S.S. volunteers, it is possible to argue that they reflect the ideological discourse of the Turkish nation state in their relation with the lower classes. Their appeal to the development discourse and education as a solution to the “backwardness” of the Southeastern region and emphasis on the moral and psychological wellbeing of the heterosexual family structure for the wellbeing of the society are some of the aspects that reflect their internalization of the hegemonic discourse.¹³² Surely, the language of morality used by the women volunteers derives from their Islamic belief since the Qur'an and the hadith (which they claim to be the main sources for the formation of their Islamic thought and belief) are the main references that shape the norms in the volunteers' minds. According to these references, they determine what is appropriate to do or not in their daily life. Yet, one should bear in mind that the volunteers' appeal to the

¹²⁹ Chatterjee, p. 129.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 127.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 131.

¹³² These examples will be elaborately analyzed in the following chapters.

Islamic tradition for the determination of moral standards and norms does not contradict the moral premises of the modern Turkish nation state. I believe that this is related with the founding ideology of the Turkish nation state which combines the Sunni-Islamic tradition with secular modernization.¹³³

The modern Turkish nation state benefits from the moral principles of Sunni-Hanafi Islam while separating itself from political Islam with the principle of secularism that propagates the separation of religious and state affairs in the public sphere. Thus, as the recent scholarship on Turkish modernization underscores, Turkish secularism is not merely the separation of religion and state but the control of the former by the latter, and also a policy of creating and emphasizing a more modern, national, and rational Islam. In this regard, one may conclude that the state favors and teaches some kinds of Islamic practices and doctrines that would help it generate moral, patriotic, and loyal citizens while endeavoring to eliminate others which it defines and considers as a threat to its existence. That is why the Presidency of Religious Affairs, as one of the leading state institutions in Turkey, becomes almost indispensable for the state to generate and spread the types of Islam it considers proper. In this regard, the Islam that gains the consent of the secular state is the one which is beneficial in the sense that it provides ethical guidelines, and thus contributes to the moral formations of citizens, which is non-political and bounded to conscience in the sense that it does not ask for public or political visibility of Islam, and which does not take an oppositional stance to the state.¹³⁴

¹³³ See; Eric J. Zürcher and Niyazi Berkes for a fuller account of the history of Turkish modernization. Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004). Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

¹³⁴ I would like to thank Ayşe Polat for sharing with me her article about the Presidency of Religious Affairs in the Turkish Republic. Her article is useful for me as it demonstrates how the Presidency of Religious Affairs uses the moral discourse of Islam in its publications and thus serves the creation of loyal and moral citizens for the nation state.

In this regard, I argue that these are the moral concerns, compassionate feelings, and the religious doctrines emphasizing the virtue as well as the responsibility of helping the needy that shape the voluntary activities of the middle class Muslim women. To be more clear, I think we are witnessing the emergence of a compassionate volunteer subjectivity that uses the rhetoric of morality and love for humanity, and emphasizes that it is “without” any political, religious, or ideological purpose. This volunteer subject assumes her morality as universally acceptable, and thus grounds it as the base of her claim that she does not have any political, religious, or ideological purpose. In other words, the political, religious, or ideological are assumed to be particular formations that should not be brought into the public realm which is supposedly governed by nationally specific but also universal “humanitarian” principles.

Thus, we hear the Muslim volunteers of the Ç.S.S. highlight that they teach the children moral principles such as honesty, respect for parents, studiousness, benevolence, tolerance, etc., which are “universal” moral principles that also conform to Islamic moral principles. They benefit from the moral principles of Islam as long as they conform to the principles of the state and are universally acceptable norms, and refrain from imposing any religious doctrine on the families that could be perceived as a threat to the secular existence of the modern Turkish Republic, as discussed in the third chapter. Accordingly, it is also important to note that as the covered Muslim women volunteers represent a visible Islamic way of life in their outlook which is perceived as a threat to the secularism and modernity of the state in

Aysel Polat, “The Dilemmas of the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkish Republic (PRA),” (paper presented at the Middle East History and Theory (MEHAT) Conference, University of Chicago, Chicago, USA, May 9-10, 2008).

the hegemonic discourse, and as they aspire to take place in the public sphere to serve the society, they have various concerns about being welcomed by the society itself—that is why they constantly emphasize that their only purpose is to help the poor children and their families who are deprived of basic human needs.

Finally, I want to state that the volunteerism of women in the *Ç.S.S.* project is a result of both their Islamic understanding and modern education that empower them to work for the wellbeing of society as they comprise the educated as well as economically well-situated segment of the society.

In light of these discussions around Islam, modernity, and middle-class that shape the voluntary activities of women in the *Ç.S.S.* project, I will analyze sociologically the emotions that motivate the women toward welfare activism as I believe that they have crucially affected the birth of volunteer subjectivity.

The Birth of Volunteer Subjectivity: Witnessing Poverty

After having decided to care for children working in the streets, the women volunteers of the *Ç.S.S.* project visit children's houses in order to meet with their families. They assume that getting to know the child's family and her/his living conditions would give them an idea of how to tackle the social and economic problems the children are exposed to. In this regard, I have asked the volunteers to talk about their first meeting with the families. I wondered what they experienced when they visited the families and asked them to tell me about their feelings and ideas during and after these visits.

All of the volunteers told me that the living conditions of families were so bad that they felt very sorry for them. They came face to face with a kind of "misery"

that they had never encountered before. They tried to tell me about the misery by describing the families' living conditions. They noted that the houses in which the families live are unhygienic, cold, very small, and smelled of damp; that it is not proper for people to live in such conditions for their health. But these families had to live in such unlivable conditions as they lacked the economic facilities to make their living conditions better.

Witnessing the families' lives and their "sufferings" arouse compassionate feelings in the volunteers towards the "suffering" people which they explain as feeling conscientiously guilty and responsible towards the "sufferers" as well as grieving and pitying them when they compare their own lives with those of the families. The compassion they feel towards the sufferers of poverty firstly awakens their attempt to understand and to experience destitution by limiting their daily consumption practices, and secondly leads them into action to eliminate the "suffering" of these people.

The women volunteers, whom I have interviewed, explain their involvement in this project as a responsibility towards the needy children and their families for the welfare of society. They told me that they had taken educational seminars in the beginning of the project about how to communicate with the children working in the streets as they had "social" and "psychological" problems. Additionally, they have learned how to be a volunteer without being influenced by the misery they have witnessed. As Sevgi stated, the misery they witnessed aroused their sadness towards these people and then immediately led them into an action to ameliorate the situation. Thus, through these seminars they have learned how to cope with being emotionally affected as a consequence of their interactions with the "suffering" people:

In case of problematic situations of the families, we really felt the situations as if they were our problems. We put ourselves in their place. So to prevent this, namely, not to join ourselves into the problems of these people, we took a seminar from a psychiatrist.

Q: Were you being too much affected emotionally?

A: Yes, yes. We were being affected emotionally too much. I mean, it was not just me, there were also other friends [being in the same situation] at that time. They wanted to do something immediately [to be a cure to their problems], they wanted to give anything they could and was upset when they could not afford.¹³⁵

An Emotional Construction of Volunteerism as Modern Subjectivity

In this section, I want to return to the beginning of a narrative that one of my informants, Ayşe, told in order to discuss the role of compassionate emotions in the construction of volunteer subjectivity. Ayşe informed me that before starting this welfare project towards the children, she and other women at *Hayat* Foundation were conducting a project that was designed to combat abortion and supported babies' rights to live. She said that she took place in this project to raise mothers' consciousness towards abortion through religious discourse. After this project reached a remarkable success, it was decided to end it, and at this time they decided to start the Ç.S.S. (Don't Let the Children Wilt Away in the Streets) project for children working in the streets. She explained how and why they decided to initiate

¹³⁵ Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008, Istanbul.

Ailelerin problemleri karşısında biz kendimizi onların yanına çok fazla koyuyorduk. Onların yerine koyuyorduk. Bunu engellemek için de işte bu şeyle bu tarz problemleri olan insanlarla kendi kişiliğimizi birleştirmeme amaçlı yine bir psikiyatristten bir seminer aldık.

Q: Duygusal olarak mı çok etkileniyordunuz?

A: Evet evet. Duygusal olarak çok fazla etkileniyorduk. Yani bu sadece benim için değil, o zaman birkaç arkadaş daha vardı. Bu sefer yani o insanlara karşı hemen bir şeyler yapmak, her şeyleri önüne sermek isteği duyup, bunu yapamayınca da üzüntü duyuyorlardı.

the Ç.S.S. project after the project against abortion in terms of the social context of those years. She referred to the news in the media about the crimes committed by the street children like killing a teacher and how they were criticized for conducting a campaign against abortion, instead of caring for children who are alive, who are on the face of the earth:

We were really excited to save one life from abortion if we could persuade at least one mother. While we were working in such a concentrated way in this subject, then the issue of street children came into the agenda. A street boy had attacked a teacher, raped and killed her. In the mass media, the street children became a densely debated issue. Then, one of our friends said, look, she said: "you are engaging in unborns, you know, there are many children already born into the world, why don't you do something for them?" she criticized in such a way. Then we thought, yes. Actually the campaign on abortion had already developed; there were seminars given in different places.¹³⁶

Then, she proceeded with these sentences to explain what motivated their activism for the rehabilitation of street children or children working in the streets:

Then one day, I was with my husband [in the car] in the Vatan Avenue (...) A child/boy came, selling tissues and he hung on to the windows to sell the tissues forcefully. My husband shouted and said to him to go. Then I was so much, hmm, hurt, in behalf of the child, and started to cry. "Why are you shouting at the boy? What is his fault?" Then I continued; "it is his mother, father, state, you and me who are responsible for his being here. We are all guiltier than him. But although he is the only innocent person, he is being shouted at." That time, as I was going on talking to my husband, he felt the need to respond by asking me what I was doing for them ? Then I thought for a while, really what I can do for them? (...) At that time, I really felt, what am I doing for those children? What can I do ? Then at the foundation, some of the friends were thinking about what to do since the campaign of abortion had been over. Then, it was considered that there is not only the problem of the unborn children, here there are

¹³⁶Interview with Ayşe, May 12, 2008, Istanbul.

Yani bir anneyi bile kürtaj olmaktan vazgeçirmiş olsak bir can kurtarmış olacağız heyecanı vardı. Bu böyle çok yoğun, şey bir çalışmaya giderken o dönemde de işte sokak çocukların gündeme gelmemiştir. Bir öğretmene sokak çocuğu saldırmıştı, tecavüz etmiş, öldürmüştü filan. Medyada böyle yoğun bir şekilde sokak çocukların üzerine böyle bir şey olmuştu. Ondan sonra işte bir arkadaşımız şey demişti, ya dedi 'Doğmamış çocukların ugraşıyorsunuz? Hani dünyaya gelmiş burada o kadar çocuk var, onlar için niye bir şeyler yapmıyorsunuz?' gibi böyle bir eleştirisi olmuştu. Oradan şey yaptık ya evet dedik, ki kampanya da artık böyle bir rayına oturmuştu. Bir yerlerde böyle seminerler veriliyordu filan.

also these children [street children]. (...) Like this, it turned into a really good ambiance, and it was just after the event I had experienced, while with my husband. It turned into a debate on what we can do about the street boys with the friends. (...) Then we realized that we cannot do something about street children as women. Then, we started to focus on the children who work on the streets. They were the children with families, with mothers and fathers. By this way, we would not only save the child but maybe we would also save at least a family. This sounded much inviting to us, and we started like that. In '98, we started.¹³⁷

As these sentences demonstrate, the women decided to support children working in the streets when their campaign against abortion was ended. Witnessing the “suffering” of the children working in the streets and the news in the media about the street children raised their conscience and thereby motivated them towards the rehabilitation of the street children or the children working in the streets. Initially, they did not know the distinction between street children and children working in the streets, yet once they realized this distinction they decided to deal with children working in the streets since they have families and pose less “threat” for the women than the street children.

In her discussion of compassion in neoliberal politics, Lauren Berlant defines compassion as a social emotion that creates a “social relation between spectators and

¹³⁷ Interview with Ayşe, May 12, 2008, Istanbul.

Sonra bir gün ben eşimle Vatan Caddesi’nde (...) bir çocuk geldi mendil satıyor filan, hani bir de cama yapıştı illa zorla satmak istiyor. Eşim ona böyle şey yaptı bağırdı, git filan dedi. Ben de böyle çok şey yaptım yani çocuk adına ben kırıldım ve ağlamaya başladım. Bu çocuğun ne suçu var, niye bağıriyorsun? Ondan sonra onu buraya düşüren işte annesi, babası, devlet, sen, ben; hepimiz ondan daha suçluyuz. Ama tek suçsuz o iken ona bağırlıyor falan diye. Şimdi ben ona eşime böyle yükledim diye o da bana cevap verme ihtiyacı hisseder gibi ‘Niye yani sen ne yapıyorsun ki onlar için?’ şeyine döndü iş. Şöyledir bir düşündüm evet ben ne yapabiliyorum ki onlar için? (...) O anda böyle çok şey olmuş evet ben napiyorum bunlar için ne yapabiliyim? Sonra vakıftaki arkadaşlar işte bu kürtaj kampanyası bitmiş ne yapalım düşünceleri vardı. İşte sadece anne karnındaki çocukların değil, bu çocukların var. Böyle çok güzel bir ortam olmuştu. Yeni de böyle eşimle yaşadığım olayın üzerine. Arkadaşlarla bu sokak çocuklarınla ilgili neler yapabiliyoruz şeyi oldu. (...) Sokak çocuklarınla ilgili hanımlar olarak bir şey yapamayacağımızı fark ettik. Sonra işte sokakta çalışan çocuklara yöneldik. Ailesi olan çocukların, anneleri, babaları olan çocukların. Böylelikle çocuğun kendisiyle birlikte belki bir aileyi de kurtarmış olacaktık. Bize daha cazip geldi, bu şekilde başladık. '98’de bu şekilde başladık.

sufferers.”¹³⁸ Compassionate emotions are very central to modern subjectivities “because members of mass society witness suffering not just in concretely local spaces but in the elsewhere brought home and made intimate by sensationalist media.”¹³⁹ Thus, the pain of strangers raises the spectators’ roles as ameliorative actors for the welfare of society. In this respect, I want to state that the depiction of street children as a threat for society unless they are rehabilitated and the potentiality of poor children working in the streets to be street children push the women in the C.S.S. project to voluntarily act for the poor children and their families. They take on the role of alleviating the living conditions of the sufferers of poverty socially, economically, and psychologically. By being the members of the middle class, they believe that their “social”, “cultural” and “economic” capitals¹⁴⁰ entail participating in philanthropic activities and thus helping the state for the wellbeing of society. In this regard, I want to mention here that compassion emerges as a peculiar modern issue that creates an unequal relation between “spectators” and “sufferers.”

Compassion creates a social relation since while some members of society suffer from poverty, others (spectators) witness their suffering through the media and through their voluntary actions (like visiting the houses of the poor) for the welfare of the sufferers. Compassion creates an unequal social relation because it is felt not between equals but it is “shown towards a person in distress by one who is free from it, who is, in this respect, his superior.”¹⁴¹ Garber discusses the etymology and

¹³⁸ Lauren Berlant, “Introduction: Compassion (and Withholding),” in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 1.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ I use the term of social, cultural, and economic capital by referring to Bourdieu’s definition of these forms of capital. For the explanation of the forms of capital see the footnote 114.

¹⁴¹ Marjorie Garber, “Compassion,” in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 20.

history of compassion (deriving from the Latin *com*, together, and *pati*, to suffer) and refers to the two usages of the word from the fourteenth century to the beginning of the seventeenth as describing both suffering together with one another and an emotion felt on behalf of another who suffers. Then, she refers to the usage of compassion in the second sense for today and emphasized that it “hovered between charity and condescension.”¹⁴² In this regard, it would be quite illuminating to refer to Dipesh Chakrabarty’s article.

In this article, Chakrabarty discusses the birth of the modern subject in Bengal by looking at the relation of the documentation of suffering to modernity. Thereby, he reconsiders the origins of emotions in the rational world. In this article, Chakrabarty makes a critical distinction between the act of displaying suffering and that of observing the sufferer. He asserts that while displaying suffering to elicit sympathy and assistance is a very old practice, observing suffering and documenting it is very modern. Thus, “the person who, without being an immediate sufferer himself or herself, but with the capacity to become a secondary sufferer through sympathy for a generalized picture of suffering and who documents this suffering” for “social intervention” “occupies the position of the modern subject.”¹⁴³ Chakrabarty describes the modern subject, as it is posited in Enlightenment thought, as being a “disembodied” self in the sense that it signifies a general “position available for occupation by anybody (with proper training).”¹⁴⁴ In this regard, he argues that it is the modern self who notices and documents suffering from “the

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁴³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Witness to Suffering: Domestic Cruelty and the Birth of the Modern Subject in Bengal,” in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p.52.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.51.

position of a generalized and necessarily disembodied observer.”¹⁴⁵ Hence, “the moment of the modern observation of suffering is a certain moment of self-recognition on the part of an abstract, general human being.”¹⁴⁶ In this recognition, one person who observes the suffering also recognizes the general human in the particular sufferer; hence two figures of the sufferer and the observer of suffering are mutually constituted and recognized.¹⁴⁷

The recognition of the general human in the particular sufferer arouses the observers’ compassion towards the sufferers and thereby increases the observers’ willingness to intervene for the welfare of humanity. Throughout the interviews, it comes out that my informants construct themselves as subjects sensitive to suffering in general by putting themselves in the place of the suffering people.

Referring to the arguments by Berlant and Chakrabarty, I explain the arousal of compassion towards the strangers as a modern attitude. Chakrabarty explains that recognizing the general human in the particular sufferer awakes sympathy towards her/him even if the sympathizer has no kinship/ friendship relation with the sufferer. Explaining the arousal of emotions through witnessing suffering as a modern attitude is persuasive; but not sufficient. Since I will discuss the creation of emotions in the next section in detail, what I want to mention here is the self’s attempt/or claim to sympathize/or empathize with the other on the basis of being human and feeling the same.

Through the volunteers’ narratives it is observed that the sensitivity they feel for the suffering people is shaped by various feelings as the informants’ interactions

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

with the poor families develop. When they first visit the children's families, they witness the material distress they are exposed to. Yet, as they recognize the families closely and explore the various problems in their lives, the compassion they felt initially takes on various other meanings. As a result of their relations with the families, they go through developing a complex set of emotions about them, including empathy, grief, pity, and anger. On the one hand, they feel anger towards them as they accuse them of not being eager enough to integrate into city life; on the other hand, they show empathy as they try to understand their experiences of forced migration and ethnic discrimination. In this respect, I deploy the term empathy to describe my informants' feelings towards the poor families by using Henderson's definition of empathy.

Development Discourse and the Suffering of the Kurdish Poor

In the article *Calculating Compassion*, Woodward discusses the use of sentiments like empathy and compassion in the body politic today, referring to Henderson's definition of empathy as having three basic meanings: "feeling the emotion of another, understanding the experience of that other person, and...the specific feeling of sympathy or compassion for a person, a feeling that 'can lead to action in order to help or alleviate the pain of another'."¹⁴⁸

While the informants accuse the families of not integrating into city life and not being eager enough to find work, they also empathize with them in the sense of understanding their experiences due to reasons triggered by outside factors—mainly migration and the problem of terror in the Southeastern Anatolia region. That is why

¹⁴⁸ Kathleen Woodward, "Calculating Compassion," in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 64.

they appeal to the “development” discourse as a solution to the poor families’ problems and suggest that the development of the East would resolve the migration problem, as mentioned in the following sentences:

Q: Who do you think is responsible from the poverty that these families go through here? Themselves? Or life conditions? How do you explain it?

A: Not only themselves. I saw this when I talked with mothers. They are there, indeed, most of them are not pleased with leaving their old places, homes. Especially mothers. (...) There are families who had come here by leaving everything they had behind. Yet there are also families who were in very bad conditions there, and here as well. *I thought like this when I talked (with them) at that time; if opportunities were to be offered to them there, such as working places, land, or I do not know, whatever is an opportunity, if they were given conditions that would help them make a living, continue their lives, they would prefer to live there, that is how I think.*

Especially the elderly would prefer there [to live there]. The youth might want [to live here] because of the opportunities of the city. But, even if not all but some of the opportunities of the city were to be provided there, in my opinion, everyone would stay in her/his own place, it seems to me. *That is at least a migration as huge as this one would not have occurred. I mean, an explosion like the one in recent times. Also terror is the biggest factor in the Southeast.* Because, one of the mothers told me once, for example, she said, terrorists break into your own in the evening and want food from you. If you don’t give, they harm your daughter, your son, or you. If you give, then soldiers come, and they harm you by saying that you help the terrorists. She said [to me] “what are you going to do, if you don’t come here, what are you going to do?” That is, there is no one good there. They do not want to be with the terrorists, but if they do not, then they are harmed by them. If they help the terrorists, they are harmed by the soldiers. I am leaving aside the issue of not helping due to your conscience. Even if they help because of benefits then they get hurt by the soldiers. The person is in a fix, then what s/he will do, s/he will run away, is really running away. They are going through a running away. Then, here, they are trying to live in very bad conditions. That is, they turn to be [in] very bad [conditions] here too. The kids, the youth are being in vain. Those kids become uneducated. *They drive their kids away from there so that they do not become terrorists, but then, this time, they become muggers/snatch-and-run thieves here because of uneducatedness (emphases added).*¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Ayşen, October 16, 2008, Istanbul.

Q: Peki ailelerin burada yaşadıkları sefaletin sizce sorumlu kim? Kendileri mi? Yoksa hayat koşulları mı? Siz nasıl yorumluyorsunuz?

Referring to Henderson's definition of empathy, I mention that the informants construct their narratives about the encounter with the families on the basis of feeling/or understanding their distress by putting themselves in their place.

Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that Henderson's definition of empathy works one-sidedly in the sense that it emphasizes the feeling of another's emotion by putting yourself in her/his place; yet it ignores the calling of the other to your position. In the case of my informants, I argue that they not only put themselves in place of the poor, but also call them to their own positions. In this respect, they use their norms and values, and the hegemonic discourse towards the Kurdish people while trying to understand the experiences of the poor.

Their attempt to empathize with the poor women on the basis of motherhood is a good example that demonstrates how they naturalize and universalize motherhood, through which every mother is able to understand the other mother's feelings related to her children, regardless of the social and cultural differences

A: Sadece kendileri değil. Ben annelerle konuştugumda şunu gördüm. Onlar orada, aslında çoğu yerinden ve yurdandan gelmekle memnun değil. Özellikle anneler. (...) Her şeyini bırakıp gelmiş olan aileler var. Ama orada da çok kötü durumda, burada da yine aynı şekilde olan aileler de var. *Ben şöyle düşünmüştüm o zaman konuştuğumda; eğer onlara orada imkanlar sunulsa, işte çalışma alanları v eya toprak veya ne bileyim işte ne ise imkan, hayatını geçimini sürdürürecek imkanlar sunulmuş olsa, onlar orayı tercih ederler diye düşünüyorum ben.* Özellikle de büyükler orayı tercih ederler. Gençler, şehrin imkanlarından dolayı belki isteyebilirler. Ama şehirdeki imkanların hepsi olmayabilir birazı oraya da götürülmüş olsa bence herkes yerinde kalır gibi geliyor bana. *Yani bu kadar büyük bir göç yaşanmaz en azından. Hani son zamanlardaki gibi bir patlama yaşanmaz.* Bir de terör, Güneydoğu'daki en büyük etken. Çünkü annenin bir tanesi demişti ki bana, mesela demişti akşam evini basıyor geliyor teröristler ve senden yiyecek istiyor. Yani vermediğin takdirde ya kızına, ya oğluna, ya sana zarar veriyor. Verdiğin takdirde de asker geliyor, sen onlara yandaşlık yapıyorsun diye onlar zarar veriyor. Ne yapacaksın buraya gelmeyeceksin de ne yapacaksın demişti. Yani tutar bir kimse yok yani orada. Ne teröristlerle beraber olmak istiyor, teröristlerle beraber olmak istemiyor, bu sefer onlardan zarar görüyor. Onlara yardım etse askerden zarar görüyor, hani vicdanen yardım etmeme meselesini bir kenara bırakıyorum. Hani menfaat olarak yardım etse bile bu sefer askerden zarar görüyor. Ortada kalıyor bu kimse, ne yapacak o zaman kaçıyor, resmen kaçıyor. Kaçış yaşıyorlar. İşte burada da çok kötü durumlarda yaşamaya çalışıyorlar. Yani burada da çok kötü oluyorlar. Çocuklar, gençler heba oluyor. O çocuklar eğitimsiz oluyor. *Orada terörist olmasın diye gençlerini kaçırıyorlar ama burada kapkaçı oluyorlar bu sefer eğitimsizlikten.*

among them.¹⁵⁰ Secondly, they assume that the development of the Southeastern region socially and economically would suffice to keep the poor Kurdish people in their local place. In this regard, they overlook the role of structural problems behind poverty as well as the ethnic discrimination the Kurds experience both in the East and the West, and reduce the problem of poverty to the state's inability to develop the Eastern Region.

In light of these arguments, I want to discuss the notion of "development" shortly to clarify it in the context of the development project of the Southeastern Anatolia region. In her article about the Southeastern Anatolia Project (*Güneydoğu Anadolu projesi* or *GAP*) which was initiated by the state in the 1980s, Nilay Özok discusses this issue regarding firstly the emergence of the development discourse globally.¹⁵¹ She states that the discourse of global development emerged after the World War II period when systematic development programs were prepared by "developed" countries for the "underdeveloped" parts of the world as a result of the idea that the poverty of underdeveloped countries posed a threat to the developed countries.¹⁵² According to the post-developmentalism critique, these development programs not only included techno-economic development projects for the "underdeveloped," but also entailed an effort to intervene in all social spheres. Thus, as Nilay Özok states: "With these programs, all aspects of the 'social body' became targets of direct intervention. This process refers to the 'developmentalization' of the Third World. (...)"¹⁵³ In this regard, Özok studies the Southeastern Anatolia Project

¹⁵⁰I will discuss this issue in the 6th chapter in detail.

¹⁵¹ Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, "'Social Development' As a Governmental Strategy in the Southeastern Anatolia Project," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 32, (2005): pp. 93-111.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp.93-94.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 94.

(*Güneydoğu Anadolu projesi* or *GAP*) as a social development project that is created as a governmental strategy besides military intervention to deal with the Kurdish question in the Southeastern region of Turkey.¹⁵⁴

By use of the term “social development”, Özok refers to the transformation of the *GAP* in the late 1980s from an economic development project targeting infrastructural, agricultural, and industrial investments in the region to a larger development project including various issues related to the population of the region such as settlement, immigration, population growth, education, and health.¹⁵⁵ Through this “social development” project, she states, the socio-political problems of the region that led to the birth of a military conflict between the Turkish military and the *PKK* (the Kurdistan Workers’ Party)¹⁵⁶ were depoliticized, and all the features and characteristics of the region were problematized under the labeling of the region as “backward” and “underdeveloped” which renders it subject to government intervention. As an example to the depoliticization of the regional problems, she argues that the major cause of both intra-and extra-regional migration, which is the forced evacuation of villages by the state, is deliberately not mentioned in the survey conducted for the research of the population movements in the *GAP* region (*Research on the Population Movements in the GAP Region*) by the government itself. Thus, the reasons behind the intra- and extra-regional migration were mentioned as economic problems and a “lack of political tranquility (*siyasi huzursuzluk*)” in the region.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁵⁶The armed organization uprising against the Turkish state for the equality and freedom of the Kurdish people.

In light of these discussions about the development of the Southeastern Anatolia region, I want to argue that my informants use the hegemonic discourse when they try to analyze the poor Kurdish people's problems in the Southeastern region. As in the aforementioned quotation, they regard migration as originating from economic problems as well as the military conflict between the Turkish military and the *PKK*, as mentioned in the official records. Thus, they overlook the issue of the forced evacuation of the villages in the region by the state and assume that the Kurdish people move to the big cities to save their children from participating in the *PKK*. Additionally, they believe that the Kurdish migrants would return to their lands if they received financial support to cultivate their lands and if the terror ended. Referring to the hegemonic discourse, they fail to regard the reasons behind the military conflict in the region and thus, depoliticize the poor Kurdish people's problems by labeling them simply as resulting from "backwardness", poverty, and the ethnic conflict. In this regard, as in the *GAP* project, through the *Ç.S.S.* project they try to intervene in all social spheres of the lives of the poor ranging from health, education, family planning to issues of hygiene. In this way, they attempt to integrate the poor Kurdish people into modern urban life so that they will not create a threat for the cities through their rural traditions as in the example of employing their children in the streets to provide money for the family's living.

The third meaning of Henderson's definition of empathy can also be found in my informants' accounts: I argue that as my informants encounter the poor children working in the streets, witness their material distress during visits to their houses, listen to the narratives of these kids' families about forced migration to Istanbul, and become aware of the various forms of discrimination they are subject to, they

¹⁵⁷ Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, ““Social Development” As a Governmental Strategy in the Southeastern Anatolia Project,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 32, (2005), p. 95, 101, 102.

develop compassionate emotions towards them and decide to act to alleviate their pain as much as possible.

In the following section, I will discuss how the women volunteers define their volunteerism. In the context of their understanding of volunteerism, I will bring forth some aspects that inspire women's inclusion in the philanthropy movement.

What Provokes Welfare Activism towards the Poor?

In the previous section, I have discussed the emergence of the women's volunteer movement as a struggle against poverty. In this regard, I have tried to analyze the birth of volunteer subjectivity out of the encounter with poverty by regarding the emotional discourses that construct a social relation between the spectators of poverty and the poor. I have chosen to define this movement as volunteerism by regarding the subjects' accounts and practices.

What I would like to do here is to look at how the informants themselves interpret their welfare activism towards the poor. In other words, I am curious about their own reflection upon their own volunteerism. In this section, I will analyze further the informants' own accounts that reflect their ideas, questionings, and conflicts about being volunteer subjects. In this framework, it is illuminating to ask the question, "What creates compassion for the poor?" Taking into account some scholarly works on the issue of philanthropy, suffering, and modern subjectivity, I pose the following questions: Is it merely human love that awakens compassion towards the poor, or is it love for God? What are the limits and benefits of framing this question as such? Why do the women volunteers define themselves as responsible subjects? For whom do they envision themselves as responsible? What

generates their responsibility? What do they receive through their sacrificial acts for the benefit of the needy?

Seeking out answers to these questions are important as they will both demonstrate the Muslim practicing women's differences/ or similarities in approaching the issue of philanthropy¹⁵⁸ and make this ethnographic study speak back to, engage with, the questions and presumptions of other scholarly works dealing with similar issues.

Volunteerism: Worshipping God and Responsibility for Humanity

In interviews with the women volunteers, I first asked them why they decided to participate in a voluntary activity towards the needy. They answered that their love for children pushed them into such an activity. Additionally, they emphasize their sense of responsibility motivating towards philanthropic activities. While their love for children in particular is a defining factor in their participation in the Ç.S.S. project, the sense of responsibility in general is prominent for philanthropic activism. Similar to responsibility, the informants use "duty" to explain their activism, as in Ayşe's account. Through use of the term "duty," it is strongly emphasized that their activities for the welfare of the needy people are beyond mere voluntarily undertaken

¹⁵⁸ Yasemin İpek's thesis on TEGV's volunteers gives me opportunity to compare TEGV's volunteers with the Ç.S.S. volunteers in terms of their relation with the poor and their approach to poverty. It is vital to see the similarities/or differences between the secular, modern, and Kemalist women's (such as the TEGV volunteers) and the conservative, "Islamist" women's (such as the Ç.S.S. volunteers), voluntary activities towards the poor. In this respect, I can assert that there are clear similarities between the two in the sense that both of them carry the middle class norms naturally and try to teach them the poor families; hence occupy the position of modern subject through *governmentalizing* the 'ignorant' poor.

Yasemin İpek, *Volunteers or Governors? Rethinking Civil Society in Turkey Beyond the Problematic of Democratization: The Case of TEGV* (master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2006).

acts, that it is inescapable for them to deal with society's problems:

Q: How do you define this work that you carry out? It is called "volunteerism," but how do you define what you do yourself?

A: Today, it is used to [be named as] volunteer. I would say an obligatory duty rather than being a volunteer. Duty, task, incumbent... Volunteerism has the thing [implicit notion] that the person can do it but it is also fine if s/he does not do it. But I have to do this. It is the duty assigned to me. I have to do it.

Q: Would you define what you do as volunteerism or more like a responsibility?

A: I mean I think *it is a responsibility; I mean, if I am more educated, cleverer, and financially better than most women in society, it is my responsibility. It is responsibility religiously as well as socially. I suppose volunteerism is automatically part of it. Yet, it is primarily responsibility. I see it as such because I believe that everything that a human being possesses has its own due zakat (obligatory alms)*. A doctor friend of mine told me this. "Human being should give the alms for everything s/he has; I know you give your obligatory alms but you need to give the *zakat* of your profession as profession, that is, through your profession." she had said. I am trying to do that as well, namely, I make sure that I am trying to make tooth treatment for free (emphases added).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Ayşe, March 17, 2009, Istanbul

Q: Siz bu yaptığınız işi nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz? Gönüllülük deniliyor ama siz kendinizi nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz?

A: Bugün buna alışılmış; gönüllü. Ben gönüllüden ziyade mecburi vazife olarak diyim. Vazife, görev. Görevli. Gönüllülükte hani şey var, yapsa da olur yapmasa da olur. Ama ben bunu yapmak zorundayım. Yani hani bana düşen bir vazife bu. Yapmak zorundayım.

Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008, Istanbul.

Q: Yaptığınızı gönüllülük olarak mı tanımlıyorsunuz yoksa daha ziyade bir sorumluluk mu?

A: Yani bir sorumluluk olduğunu düşünüyorum; yani ben toplumda çoğu kadına göre daha eğitimli, daha akıllı, ekonomik olarak daha yükseksem bu benim sorumluluğumdur. Hem dini olarak sorumluluğumdur hem sosyal olarak sorumluluğumdur. Gönüllülük de yani otomatikman işin içine giriyor herhalde. Ama öncelikle sorumluluktur. Ben öyle görüyorum çünkü insanın sahip olduğu her şeyinin bir zekatı olduğuna inanıyorum. Bana bunu başka bir doktor arkadaşım söylemişti. 'İnsan sahip olduğu her şeyin zekatını vermemeli, ben biliyorum sen zekat veriyorsun ama mesleğinin zekatını da meslek olarak yani mesleğinle ver.' demişti. Ben onu da yapmaya çalışıyorum, yani ücretsiz olarak dış tedavisi de yapmaya çalışıyorum mutlaka.

As it is reflected in the sentences above, the women volunteers define themselves as responsible subjects because of their social, cultural, and economic capital. They ascribe themselves the role of responsibility for people who are in an inferior position culturally, socially, and economically. This could be interpreted as a reflection of the middle class discourse that defines the middle class as the role model for the rest of society. Being in the middle of society through acquisition of education, consciousness, and economic sufficiency gives the volunteers the idea of responsibility towards the rest of society who are “in need of education” and “raising consciousness” to develop themselves socially and economically. In other words, these women do not think that economic and cultural capitals are just their individual, personal attributes but possessions over which the society has a right as well.

These women's religious beliefs lie at the heart of how they perceive their own social roles and responsibilities, including welfare activities. In other words, religion plays an important role in stimulating the women volunteers for welfare activism, or to put it differently, the women take the Qur'an and the hadith as their sources for helping the poor. They consider Islamic doctrine and ethics as binding. They explain their responsibility for the needy through a transcendental relationship between God and humanity. They think that if God values human beings so much (as revealed in certain Qur'anic verses), they must value humanity as well; and in this regard they feel themselves obliged to care about humanity's wellbeing, particularly children, as the most innocent, pure beings without sin who most deserve relief:

Q: Why do you consider what you do as a duty and a duty for whom?

A: Maybe I have an assessment like this; *the being that God most values is human being*. That is, He has created all universe for human being. You look around. *If a Creator has attributed so much value to*

this human being, it means he is really very precious. Then, I should also much value the human being. For human being, whatever I do I should do it for human being. And, among these human beings, it is children who are the most innocent and most clean [pure]. That is, when I look at the world, the face of the earth, not only the world, but at the whole universe, the most precious, the most valuable beings in the universe are children. Because they are sinless, totally clean, and innocent. To the most precious being, maybe, that is to say, whatever I do, they are always the first. I need to do something for them. This is how I look at the kids. Whatever is done for them is done for God. Things done for people indeed [mean] serving God (Emphases added).¹⁶⁰

This narration tells that the woman loves and values human being primarily because God loves human being, indeed even creates the whole universe for human being. Moreover, she thinks about this love as generating responsibility and believes that by helping people out, by removing the suffering of those most dear to God, she also serves God. In these women's perspective, their responsibility for humanity's welfare is an outcome of their responsibility to God who bestows on them various blessings. In short, the idea that serving people is serving God motivates the women volunteers for philanthropic activism. In other words, the informants identify their volunteerism as an act of worshipping God with the assumption that praying should not be only a personal act for the spiritual development of the self but also a social act for the welfare of humanity. What is important here is the fact that the volunteers claim to distinguish themselves from their coreligionists by defining praying as a

¹⁶⁰ Q: Yaptığınız işi neden vazife olarak görüporsunuz ve kime karşı bu vazife?

A: Belki de şöyle bir değerlendirmem var. *Allah-u Teala'nın en çok değer verdiği varlık insan*. Yani bütün çünkü kainatı insan için yaratmış. Şöyledir bir bakıyorsun. *Bir yaratıcı bu kadar değer verdiyse bu insana, insan gerçekten çok değerli. Benim de insana bu kadar değer vermem lazım. İnsan için, ne yapacaksam insan için bir şeyler yapmam lazım.* E bu insanların içinde de en masum en temiz olanı çocuklar. Yani hani benim şu an kainata diyim sadece yeryüzüne, dünya da değil evrene baktığım zaman evren içinde en değerli en kıymetli varlıklar çocuklar. *Çünkü günahsızlar, tertemizler, çok masumlar.* En değerli varlığa belki de yani ne yapacaksam birinci sırada her zaman onlar olmuştur. Onlar için bir şeyler yapmam gerekiyor. Çocuklara bu şekilde bakıyorum. *Onlara yapılan şey Allah'a yapılan şeydir. Halka yapılacak şey aslında Hakk'a bir hizmettir.*

social act for the welfare of humanity:

I could spend much more time at home comfortably and read many pages of Qur'an and spend more hours for prayer. What would be the result? I would have worshipped more for God (Allah). I try to worship God by serving people; maybe it is a matter of personal choice, but my choice is in this direction. To do something in the name of Him, by serving the being which He esteems.¹⁶¹

Through these arguments, the informant Ayşe also emphasizes the importance of serving people as a way of praying to God.

In light of these arguments, I construct the Muslim philanthropist women's volunteerism on two bases: volunteerism as worshipping God and volunteerism as a responsibility to God and humanity.

Referring to my informants' emphasis on their difference from other Muslims in terms of their perception of praying, I assert that the Muslim volunteers in the Ç.S.S. project presume, construct, and manifest an alternative piety which is public and visible through serving humanity rather than worshipping God in the private sphere. Referring to Lara Deeb's concept of "public piety", I use public to describe the women volunteers' form of piety. In her ethnographic study about Shi'i women in Lebanon, called *An Enchanted Modern*, Deeb uses public piety to describe Shi'i pious/or modern women's piety. Although she constructs women's piety as central to expressions and formations of public piety, she defines it more broadly than the gendered framework. She states that public piety is the public practice of faith based upon an interpretation of Islam that she terms "authentication of Islam."¹⁶² She points

¹⁶¹ Interview with Ayşe, March 17, 2009, İstanbul.

Evimde çok daha rahat rahat durup çok daha fazla sayfalarca Kur'an okuyabilir, çok daha uzun uzun namazlar da kılabilirdim. Ne olurdu Allah için, Hakk için çok daha fazla ibadet etmiş olurdum. Ben insana hizmet ederek Rabbim'e olan ibadetimi yapmaya, bu belki de bir tercih meselesi, ama benim tercihim bu şekilde, yerine getirmeye çalışıyorum. Yine O'nun değer verdiği hizmet ederek O'nun için bir şeyler yapmak.

¹⁶² Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 8.

to the values of public piety as “understanding and practicing Islam correctly, sacrificing one’s time, money, and life to help others, and supporting resistance against the Israeli occupation.”¹⁶³ Similar to the Lebanese women, the women volunteers in the Ç.S.S. project embody “public piety” as they emphasize the need to refer to the Qur’an and the life of prophet Muhammad to awake Muslims’ responsibility and sensitivity for humanity and think about worship as sacrificing time, money, and life for the welfare of humanity. That is why they define their responsibility for people as a responsibility to God. Their sense of responsibility is an individual responsibility in the sense that every individual is personally responsible to God for what s/he does in the worldly life. In this regard, they, as educated and conscious women, perceive their “cultural capital” as a means to pray to God and define it as a debt which will be paid to God through serving humanity. In this context, the obligatory pillar of Islam, *zakat*, almsgiving, is also used to explain volunteerism as a responsibility, as in the following sentences by Sevgi:

Yet, it is primarily responsibility. I see it as such because I believe that everything that a human being possesses has its own due zakat (obligatory alms). A doctor friend of mine told me this. “Human being should give the alms for everything s/he has; I know you give your obligatory alms but you need to give the zakat of your profession as profession, that is, through your profession.” she had said. I am trying to do that as well, namely, I make sure that I am trying to make tooth treatment for free (emphases added).¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008, Istanbul.
(...) Ama öncelikle sorumluluktur. Ben öyle görüyorum çünkü insanın sahip olduğu her şeyinin bir zekatı olduğuna inanıyorum. Bana bunu başka bir doktor arkadaşım söylemişti. “İnsan sahip olduğu her şeyin zekatını vermelii, ben biliyorum sen zekat veriyorsun ama mesleğinin zekatını da meslek olarak yani mesleğinle ver.” demişti. Ben onu da yapmaya çalışıyorum, yani ücretsiz olarak diş tedavisi de yapmaya çalışıyorum mutlaka.

Interplay of Emotions for Welfare Policies

Islamic belief plays an important role in stimulating the women to voluntarily act for the welfare of humanity, as I referred to above. In this respect, I want to draw attention to a specific term the women volunteers use to explain their responsibility for society, which is *Allah rızası*. *Allah rızası* is broadly used by Muslims in Turkey to express their desire to make God pleased or to acquire God's blessing through dealing with good deeds. I consider it an important concept in the sense that it signifies the conception of life by Muslims. In this conception, worldly life is considered to be a temporary one terminated at death; yet it is also regarded as intrinsically related to the abstract and presumed reality of the afterlife. What individuals undertake in this life is considered crucial towards leading to eternal happiness (in heaven) or pain (in hell) and in this respect, they regard acquiring God's blessing, expressed as *Allah rızası*, as the key for eternal happiness. I argue that imagining worldly life as such plays an important role in my informants' perception, experience, and narration of their volunteerism. The belief in the afterlife motivates them towards welfare activism since they presume that all human beings will be called upon by God to give an account of what they did in the world. The feeling of responsibility for the needy, viewed also as part of one's responsibility as well as desire for God's love, inspires these women to undertake philanthropic activities for people's wellbeing. One of my informants, Ayşe, for example, explains that the idea that she will be loved more by God, that she will be welcomed in the afterlife as a *good servant* due to what she does here, motivates her to pursue welfare activities:

I mean if I fulfill such an act of goodness, God will like me more, I mean there is something like this. I do not know, you know, *Allah rızası* (desiring God's blessing) there is something like this that will welcome me in the hereafter. I mean there is a world after this one, there is a life [the hereafter]. *I thought it would be like an investment for that life. Yet over time as I reflected on myself [my intentions], in this regard I came to realize that it was not only about it. That is, there is also human love; if both are together then you are being [you achieve to be] more self-sacrificing. I mean, if there is love for human beings in your heart triggering this, you also have the desire to please God. Maybe you are working with more self-sacrifice.* It is because there are things that you have encountered; it is a very difficult work; you neglect your own house, you are spiritually getting frayed; and also you see that there is something material from you [you materially give a lot too]. *If there was no aspect of Allah rızası (God's blessing) then it would probably not last so long.* I do not know but at times when I felt very exhausted I [presume] oh Lord, *inshaallah* (God willing) thanks to these things, in the hereafter, you would meet me with more mercy, due to these things that I do. (...) I see it like a consolation for myself, that is, I suppose it has been effective in making it [this work] last this long (emphases added).¹⁶⁵

Religious belief becomes a motivating force for the pious Muslim women's involvement in the Ç.S.S. project as the preceding discussions on the women's accounts demonstrate. However, it is also vital to take into consideration other components that prompt their participation in the Ç.S.S. project. Women seem to be quite self- reflexive about their involvement in this project in the sense that they reflect upon the causes that lead them to be part of this work as they try to make

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Ayşe, May 12, 2008, Istanbul.

Yani böyle şey iyilik yapınca işte Allah beni daha çok sevecek, yani böyle bir şey var. Allah rızası işte ne bileyim, ahirette benim ötürüme çıkacak böyle bir şey var. Yani hani bir sonraki dünya var, bir hayat var. *O hayataya bir yatrırm gibi falan düşündüm. Ama zaman içinde biraz bu noktada da kendimi tarttığım zaman sadece bu olmadığını fark ettim.* Yani biraz da insan sevgisi ikisi bir arada olunca daha özverili olmuş oluyorsunuz. Yani hani kalbinizde bir insan sevgisi varsa bunu işte tetikliyen biraz da Allah rızasını kazanma gibi bir isteğiniz olmuş oluyor. Belki biraz daha özveriyle çalışmış oluyorsunuz. Çünkü karşılaşmış olduğunuz şeyler var; çok zor bir iş, evinizi ihmal ediyorsunuz, kendiniz ruhen yıpranıyorsunuz, bir de sizden hani maddi bir şey var onu görüyorsunuz. (...) *Bu eğer Allah rızası gibi bir şey olmazsa sanki bu, bu kadar uzun sürmez gibi geliyor.* Bilemiyorum ama yani çünkü böyle çok artık yorulup şey yaptığım dönemlerde Rabbim inşallah bunların şeyle ahirette yani beni böyle daha rahmetinle karşılaşarsın, bu yaptıklarımla Senin karşısında kabul edilmiş bir amel, iyi bir kul olarak çıkabilirim. Bir teselli olarak görüyorum kendime, yani böyle uzun boylu devam ettirmekte herhalde etkisi olmuştur.

sense of their friends' indifference to the poor. As Ayse puts it:

I questioned the thing. Ok, God's most loved creature is human being. I am approaching Him like through serving human beings. If I were someone without any sensibility for Islam, I am telling this open-heartedly, my faith is something that motivates me better, enables me to persevere in this work, even despite the obstacles faced. I think this is what my faith is, but I also do not think that it is the only factor leading me, from the beginning, to such work. There is something different here. That is, suppose, I was not a person with sensibility for Islam, or did not have faith, let's say, in God, or even in the hereafter, I would still be a person, as part of my character, sensible on these kinds of issues. When I question my past, *I think that a person who was subject to a lot of love can be a person who can give love. Both my mother and my father were, out of their characters, very affectionate. (...) I mean I was raised [surrounded] with a lot of love. It means I learned how to love and I love. If I did not feel that love maybe then my heart would not be like this. No matter how faithful I am, no matter how pious I am. Because I first need to love. That love must be in the heart of the human being. This is how I look [at the issue] a bit, and I am not [mad] at people who are not part of this work as much as I used to. I mean I say, she cannot find herself [in it], what can I do? Everyone does not have to love human being as much as I do.* Not everyone has to do this. In the past, I used to question more. *I used to believe that anyone who has Islamic sensibility needs to be more sensible on these issues as well. Maybe it might not, I do not know. My first thing, I can't insistently say that I am here because I am a Muslim. Love for human beings, my thought, my faith are [all] motivating this, supporting me on this; there is something that does not distract me, there is that thing; there is wealth, thank God, I mean, the material conditions I am in right now are very comfortable, at a stage that it can distract me. My faith is limiting me. (...) If I did not have this faith, no matter how much human love I had, no matter what I had, I would be distracted. I mean in this regard my faith is supporting me. Otherwise, the thing that is first degree is human love* (emphases added).¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Ayşe, March 17, 2009, İstanbul.

Ben şeyin sorgulamasını yaptım. Tamam işte Allah'ın en çok sevdiği varlık insan. O'na, insana hizmetten falan diye böyle yaklaşıyorum. İslami hassasiyeti olmayan bir insan olsaydım, bunu açık yüreklikle söylüyorum, belki bu biraz daha motive eden, zorluklarla karşılaşduğum halde bile beni böyle bir çalışmanın içinde sebat ettiren bir şeydir inancım. İnancımın o olduğunu düşünüyorum ama baştan böyle bir çalışmanın içine iten tek güç olduğunu sanmıyorum. Farklı bir şey var burada. Yani ben hani İslami hassasiyeti olmayan, Allah inancı diyim hatta ahiret inancı olmayan bir insan olsaydım da bu konularda hassas olacak bir insandım yapı olarak. Geçmişimi sorguladığımda *çok sevgi alan insanın sevgi verebileceğini düşünüyorum. Benim annem de babam da yapı olarak çok sevecen insanlardı.* (...) Yani çok fazlaca sevgiyle büyüttülmüş öyle bir çocukluk geçirdim. Demek ki sevmeyi öğrenmişim ve ben seviyorum. Bu sevgiyi hissetmemiş olsam kalbimde belki bu şekilde olmayacaktı. Ne kadar inançlı olursam olayım ne kadar dindar olursam olayım. Çünkü önce bir sevmem lazım. O sevginin yüreğinde olması lazım insanın. Biraz öyle bakıyorum ve diğer hani bu çalışmanın içinde bu kadar da çok olamayan insanlara da çok fazla şey yapmıyorum

I argue that through these statements, Ayşe constructs human love as embedded in the human heart which needs to be explored and cultivated. In this regard, she defines the family as the locus where the child learns and/or explores her/his potentiality to love other human beings thanks to her/his parents' showing love for her/him. In other words, for Ayşe, being loved in personal, intimate relations produces love for humanity in one's heart and in that regard, religious belief is not the only ground on which love for humanity rises. Yet, as her entire quotation reveals, she also deems religion essential since it not only motivates her to believe that to serve humanity is serving God but also and more crucially it helps her not to lose control of herself, as a reminder that she will be held responsible for all she does. As Ayşe ponders about her participation in the philanthropic activities, it becomes clear that various emotions such as love for God, fear of God, and love for humanity complement and create each other and lead to her involvement. In this respect, she attributes her Muslim fellows' lack of concern for the poor to their lack of love for human beings, at least the weakness of their love for humankind in comparison to hers. On the other hand, she combines human love and a desire for God's blessing and love for God in her personal

eskisi kadar. Yani o kadar kendini bulamıyor, ne yapayım diyorum. Yani herkes benim kadar insan sevmek zorunda değil. Herkes şunu yapmak zorunda değil. Eskiden daha böyle bir sorguluyordum. İslami hassasiyeti olan her insanın bu konularda da hassas olması gerekliliğine inanıyorum. Olmayabilir de bilmiyorum. Birinci şeyim illa hani Müslüman olduğum için buradayım diyemeyeceğim. İnsan sevgisi, düşüncem inancım da bunu motive eden, bu konuda beni destekleyen, beni dağıtmayan bir şey çunkü hani şey var; varlık var, haddolsun yani şu an bulduğum maddi imkanlarım gerçekten çok rahat böyle kendimi dağıtabileceğim şeyde. İnancım beni sınırlı tutuyor. (...) Bu inancım olmasa ne kadar insan sevgisi olursa olsun, ne olursa olsun biraz dağıtabilirdim. (...) Yoksa yani mesele birinci derecedeki olan şey insan sevgisi.

experience. While she explains her human love as a result of her being loved by her family, she also refers to love for human beings in the name of God by underlining that human beings are loved, or valued most by God as seen in the preceding sections. She also seems to accept the fact that there might be other forms of expressing love for God, or trying to gain His blessing, that does not necessitate showing sympathy, or love towards humanity as seen in the example of other Muslims who do not serve the welfare of humanity.

In this context, important questions come to my mind concerning the notions of *Allah rizasi* and love for God. Since my informants often use the term *Allah rizasi*, I keep reflecting on how they conceive it. What do they mean by *Allah rizasi* exactly? Does it mean to attain His love? Does it mean to make Him positively appraise one's self? Is it the love of God or the fear of Him that motivates the desire to gain His blessing? I think the term *Allah rizasi* is a complicated one with various intricate meanings attributed to it by the believers. Based on my informants' accounts, I think it is fair to state that the desire to acquire *Allah rizasi* (God's blessing) is a result of both love and fear of God and they are considered complementary to each other. Moreover, as Ayşe puts it, the cause of human love is viewed as having two complementary sources—love for humanity as originating from one's exploring her/his heart's capacity/potentiality for love in her/his familial life and from one's belief in God.

Ayşe's ideas bring to my mind an argument Chakrabarty makes in his article on the birth of the modern subject in Bengal to which I previously referred. In this article, Chakrabarty talks about the "natural theory of sentiments" proposed by Enlightenment philosophers such as David Hume and Adam Smith, and notes that

according to this theory, the capacity for sympathy is a potential inherent in the “nature” of man.¹⁶⁷ However, since habits and customs could “blunt the natural human capacity for sympathy”, the natural human capacity for it needs to be recognized through the aid of reason. “Reason, that is, education in rational argumentation, was seen as a critical factor in helping to realize in the modern person this capacity for seeing the general.”¹⁶⁸

After referring to the problem of natural theory in terms of its attempt to fill the private, subjective side of individual with reason alone, Chakrabarty discusses where the compassion that the two nineteenth century Bengali social reformers, Rammohun Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, felt for the widow women comes from. He states that the biographers of these two men gave two answers to this question: One was the Enlightenment answer, i.e. “the role of reason in freeing vision from the blindfold of custom”, and the other was “heart” (*hriday*). It was the “heart” with which Rammohun Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar were born with that made them “compassionate.”¹⁶⁹ In this regard, Chakrabarty puts forward that the biographers of Rammohun Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar are contradictory in the sense that on the one hand they argue that Rammohun Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar acquired compassion through modern education and thus explored their natural traits, while on the other hand they claim that compassion was a gift bestowed upon the exceptional people that ordinary people could not feel.¹⁷⁰ Henceforth, Chakrabarty comes to the conclusion that compassion was considered to

¹⁶⁷ Chakrabarty, p. 52.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.57.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.60-61.

See also his discussion of the differences between the English word sympathy and Bengali word shahanubbuti in p. 59.

be generated simultaneously by the Enlightenment subject and the subject of Bengali society who possessed heart:

(...)whose sight generated sympathy or compassion? Was it the sight of the Enlightenment subject who, as a rare gift, possessed *hriday*? That we come across the answers in the same body of texts suggests the answers did not displace but supplemented each other, to constitute an intertwined strand in Bengali modernity.¹⁷¹

In the context of Ayşe's account, I argue that the reference to her family as the natural, intimate domain where she learnt to love resonates with the Enlightenment argument that human capacity for love and sympathy is natural but it needs to be brought to light and cultivated by eliminating barriers such as customs and habits. Ayşe does not deny the role of faith and religion in cultivating love for humanity, however, she underlines that without feeling love in her heart, no matter how pious or faithful she was she would not be like this, i.e. working to help the people.

I consider Ayşe's explanation about the origins of emotions that inspire her for philanthropy to be similar to Chakrabarty's discussion about the origin of compassionate emotions. As in Chakrabarty's reading of the compassionate emotions as originating from both reason and heart (*hriday*), I argue that religious belief which nurtures love and a fear of God, and the human heart create love and sympathy for human beings intertwiningly, at least in the personal experience of Ayşe. In other words, Ayşe's piety as well as love for human beings embedded in her heart creates love and sympathy for the general human, and thereby motivates her to work for the welfare of humanity.

Regarding Ayşe's accounts that imply the existence of other forms of piety that do not necessarily create love for human beings as an effect of love for God, I argue that Ayşe occupies the position of the modern subject, in Chakrabarty's terms

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 62.

discussed previously, as she recognizes the “general human being” in the “particular sufferer” when she observes her/his suffering, and thereby aspires to serve humanity’s well being from the position of a generalized and necessarily “disembodied subject.” The representation of an alternative piety, “public piety”, by Ayşe, which means to serve human is to serve God, can be understood as an indication of Ayşe’s rational and secular education which enables her to occupy the position of a generalized, “disembodied subject”, as Chakrabarty states. However, one should also keep in mind that religious belief can also encourage the pious subject to provide for humanity’s welfare as it is apparent in Islamic forms of philanthropy which advise and direct the believers to give and act for the welfare of human beings. They love human beings and justify their welfare project for children by referring to the Qur’anic verses which underline the virtue of serving humanity. That is why they use one of the Qur’anic verses in their pamphlets as a motto, although not emphasizing it as a Qur’anic verse, which underlines the virtue of saving a person’s life as equal to saving humanity.¹⁷²

In light of these discussions, I reach the conclusion that both love and fear of God embedded in religious belief and human love supplement each other and intertwiningly inspire the pious Muslim women in the Ç.S.S. project to philanthropic activities.

Related to Chakrabarty’s arguments, it is probable to reconsider Nora Şeni’s characterization of philanthropy and charity. As previously discussed, Şeni describes

¹⁷² See Appendix B for the use of Qur’anic verse as a motto of the project. This motto is excerpt from 32nd verse of Surah 5: “On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. Then although there came to them Our apostles with clear signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land.” (Emphasis added) See for the translation of the verse: <http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/QUR'AN/5.htm> (accessed April 11, 2010).

philanthropy as a product of the Enlightenment thought that creates human love and the idea of serving the progress of the human being socially and economically, while describing charity as a religious and purposeless act of giving in the name of God that does not provide the self-improvement of the human being.¹⁷³ In that regard, I see that Şeni reflects one side of Chakrabarty's argument which explains human love as originating from Enlightenment thought. On the one hand, Şeni's distinction between philanthropy and charity suits well the Islamic notion of *zakat* that considers the act of giving as a religious duty undertaken by the believer in the name of God, and in that respect, can be considered as charity. On the other hand, it is distinct from Şeni's conception of charity as a purposeless act of giving that does not intend to improve the human being since, as I discussed in the previous chapter, the Islamic notion of *zakat* intends to meet the basic needs of the recipient as well as to achieve her/his social, mental, and economic wellbeing. Thus, I argue that, the Islamic form of philanthropy/charity asks the believer to have the intention of improving the social and economic wellbeing of the recipients of *zakat*.

Towards Self-Questioning

Regarding the accounts above, it is evident that the informants first emphasize their love for children which motivates them to start this project for the poor children working in the streets. In this respect, they refer to the issue of poverty and emphasize that all Muslims should care for the poor, whether they have a particular love for humankind or not, as a necessity of their religious beliefs. Then, they

¹⁷³ Şeni, p. 123.

especially criticize their own practicing Muslim friends and argue that they should feel responsible for and have sensitivity towards the problems of society, such as poverty, as they claim to be “consciously” practicing Muslims who try to conduct their lives according to God’s commands. It is worth underlining here that these women speak from a middle and upper middle class position and call upon other middle and upper- middle class Muslims to do something for the welfare of society. In this respect, they draw attention to the wastefulness (*israf*) of wealthy Muslims and their luxurious lives. They bring up verses from the Qur'an that are highly critical of wastefulness and those that emphasize helping the poor. Likewise, they suggest re-reading the life of the prophet Muhammad in order to remind their fellow Muslims that he lived modestly and helped the needy. They assert that witnessing the lives of the poor keeps their lives in balance in the sense that they limit their expenditures to what they consider sufficient and do not spend more than that even though they can afford it. That is why they think that in addition to emphasizing the warning in the Qur'an against dissipation, if they can show the Muslims living in luxury the misery of the people they work with, they will be able to raise their conscience and consciousness. Let me demonstrate this perspective through my informant Ayşe's interpretation of the conditions of middle, upper- middle class Muslims in Turkey today:

(...) Our book says that spend the residues after your needs on the path of God. If this is the case, maybe not only remains after our needs, if [unconventional, unaccustomed] things are now becoming [being considered] needs then in this regard I do not know [but] I think we are in a very [obscure] condition. *Muslims are now being tested through wealth*, and I think they never reflect upon this.

Because there is an Islamic section that became rich in a snap; as we [well-off Muslims] explain to each other like Islamic bourgeoisie. We are being bad examples for these people [the poor] as examples. In the past, people, at least, used to think like Muslims do not spend, they do not dissipate; they are like this and that. Now it is thought, Muslims

dissipate as well [as others] once they have money in their hands; they can very well live like the rich. (...) I think I even lost my sense of confidence in myself. (...) There is a bad trend. *I hope God does not awaken us through calamities.* In this, maybe because I am a graduate of divinity school, I will do maybe something. That is we have a lot of tasks in raising the people's awareness on this issue. [like] bringing up such Qur'anic verses [on waste] (emphases added).¹⁷⁴

In this quotation, what stands out is this notion of “*varlıkla imtihan edilme*,” “being tested through wealth.” I find it remarkable that my informant takes this religious idea of worldly life being a test of human beings by God and applies it to the current socio-economic conditions of Muslims in Turkey. Through the use of “*varlıkla imtihan edilme*” she means that God is testing Muslims through wealth, i.e. whether they are spending outrageously, or being wasteful once they have a lot of money in their hands. It is striking to note that this woman is not only making a sociological observation concerning the changing socioeconomic conditions of Muslims in Turkey but is also expressing her anxieties and hesitations about this process of Muslim enrichment precisely because in her view the practices of these new rich classes contradict her basic definition of Islam.

In light of these discussions revolving around the women volunteers' self-questioning and analyzing their emotional responses to poverty and the poor people, it would be proper to refer to Sara Ahmed's analysis of emotions as she clearly

¹⁷⁴Interview with Ayşe, March 17, 2009, Istanbul.

(...) İhtiyacınızdan arta kalanı Allah yolunda harcayın diyor kitabımız. Böyleyken ihtiyacımızdan arta kalanı değil de artık olmadık şeyler ihtiyaç oluyorsa bu konuda bilmiyorum çok şey bir durumda olduğumuzu düşünüyorum. *Varlıkla bir imtihan edilme dönemi* geçiriyor şu an Müslümanlar ve bunu kesinlikle değerlendirdiklerini düşünüyorum. Çünkü bir anda zengin olan bir İslami bir kesim oldu. İslami burjuvazi falan diye aramızda konuşuyoruz. Bu insanlar için de gerçeken örnek olarak kötü bir örnek olmuş oluyoruz. İnsanlar en azından eskiden şey gibi hani Müslümanlar harcamaz, israf etmez. Müslümanlar şöyle böyle gibi bilinirdi. Şimdi baklıyor ellerine geçtiği zaman Müslümanlar da gayet güzel israf edebiliyor, gayet güzel harcayabiliyorlar, gayet güzel zengin hayatı yaşayabiliyorlar olarak görülüyor. ... Ben kendime bile güvenimi kaybettiğimi düşünüyorum. (...)Kötü bir gidişat var. *Allah musibetlerle inşallah uyandırmaz bizi.* (...)Bunda belki de ben hani bir ilahiyatçı olduğum için belki şey yapacağım. Hani bize belki halkı bu konuda bilinçlendirme noktasında çok fazla görevler düşüyor. O tür ayetleri tekrar gündeme getirmek (...)

demonstrates how emotions are constructed and lead to social, political, and nationalist movements.

In the sentences by the volunteers above, it is seen that various emotions oriented towards various objects shape their approach to the poverty problem and in this respect lead to the improvement of their welfare movement. Love, fear, and anxiety are some of the emotions encircled by religious beliefs that shape their reflection upon their philanthropy. Thus, as Sara Ahmed argues in her book¹⁷⁵, emotions are social and cultural practices that are shaped by contact with objects.¹⁷⁶ Thus, in her model of the sociality of emotions, emotions are not simply “in” the subject or the object.¹⁷⁷ Rather, it is through the work of emotions that “bodies take the shape of the very contact they have with objects and others.”¹⁷⁸ In this regard, various emotions could circulate through contact with various objects.

As in the case of love and fear of God mentioned above, different emotions like love and fear could be directed towards the same object (God) and generate individual subjects motivated for the welfare of poor people. Hence, love and fear of God are interrelated through motivating the subjects for the same purpose. One should also bear in mind that both love and fear of God also signify the fear of hell as well as the desire for heaven. In this regard, love and fear of God are embodied in the desire to gain God’s blessing (*Allah rizasi*) for eternal happiness in heaven as well as worldly happiness. It is also important to note that love and fear of God could create different objects to fear related with love and fear of God such as richness in so far as

¹⁷⁵ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 6, 9.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.,p. 6.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.,p. 1.

it causes a leaning towards the profane life.

As discussed above, the informant Ayşe interprets the “recent enrichment” of Muslims in Turkey as a new period of their being tested by God through their wealth by emphasizing that they live in luxury, waste so much, and care less for the poor. In this regard, I argue that Ayşe and the other informants are anxious about the enrichment of the Muslims in the sense that enrichment could result in leaning towards the profane life further and thus cause one to forget that worldly life is a site of investment for eternal life. In other words, it is possible to say that the women volunteers are afraid of the Muslims’ integration into global capitalism through the new wealth they have since they suppose that the more one becomes rich the more s/he could live a luxurious as well as profane life without caring so much for the needy and other people in society.

Hence, looking at the informants’ accounts, I assert that capitalism becomes the feared object as it “renders the world itself a space of potential danger, a space that is anticipated as pain or injury on the surface of the body that fears”¹⁷⁹, which signifies Ayşe’s using the term “calamity” (*musibet*) as a kind of punishment by God for the “indifferent” acts of the wealthy Muslim people towards the people in misery. In this respect, it is evident that the fear of capitalism is related to the fear of God in the sense that the richness capitalism brings out might orient the Muslims towards the world and move them away from God and His commands, thus resulting in God’s punishment of His subjects (*kul*) who have forgotten to follow His commands. Thus, the fear of capitalism is essentially an effect of the fear of God.

I want to mention that although I understand the volunteers’ anxieties about the enrichment of the Muslims as a fear of capitalism, the volunteers themselves

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 69.

cannot designate their fear as such; they are not aware of the fear indeed. They just express their anxieties about the “enrichment” of the Muslims but cannot explain these anxieties as an effect of the fear of capitalism. Thus, as Ahmed notes, “the more we don’t know what or who it is we fear the more the world becomes fearsome.”¹⁸⁰ As the informants fail to designate their feared object as capitalism which renders the world itself a worse place through the inequalities it creates, they try to cope with it through their welfare activities. In other words, without questioning the structure of capitalism as a source of poverty, they endeavor to struggle with poverty through their voluntary acts. Referring to their religious beliefs and doctrines, they try to become involved in welfare movements further and stimulate other Muslims to participate in these activities as well to struggle with poverty. How they explain the structural inequality and in this regard cope with it will be discussed elaborately in the following chapter.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

APPROACHING THE QUESTION OF POVERTY

In this chapter, I will deal with the issue of poverty by looking at the women's arguments regarding with it vis-à-vis the religious discourse. Throughout the interviews with the informants, I have tried to understand their approach to poverty and in this regard their suggestions for the elimination of poverty. In this respect, it would be appropriate to look at the meaning of poverty and the poor in the main Islamic sources (the Qur'an and the hadith), as they have a critical influence on these women's notion of poverty and the poor. I will look at the meaning of poverty and the poor in the Qur'an in its intersection with the topic of philanthropy/or charity. Since poverty as a subject extends far beyond the topic of this study, the space here allows for only a brief discussion.

Poverty in Islamic Sources

In the Qur'an (in the original Arabic language), the poor is expressed with two words—"faqir" and "miskin." Literally, the word "faqir" is used to describe someone whose backbone is broken, which is a condition that produces absolute disability and dependency.¹⁸¹ In this respect, poor (*faqir*) signifies someone who is incapable of doing something, dependent on others, and hence economically insufficient.¹⁸² *Faqir* in Arabic language has a variety of meanings. It is not only used to describe people

¹⁸¹ *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi Islam Ansiklopedisi*, no. 12, s.v. "Fakir."

¹⁸² Ibid.

in poverty, i.e. poor economic conditions. It is also used in Sufism to depict the human as in need of God who is described in the Qur'an as "al-Ghani" (the Rich, Self-sufficient, and Independent).¹⁸³ The Qur'an, the hadith, and subsequent legal writings describe the poor as people who are eligible to receive *zakat*. Besides *zakat* as an obligatory form of giving, the Qur'an and the hadith recommend believers to help the poor who are deprived of their basic needs such as shelter, food, and clothing through charitable acts like voluntary alms-giving, called *sadaqa*.

The identification of the poor in the Qur'an as both *faqir* and *miskin* refers to different degrees of poverty. Muslim jurists have different views concerning what degree of poverty *faqir* and *miskin* denote. While some argue that both concepts refer to the same degree of poverty, others argue that *faqir* is used to designate someone who has nothing and does not (or cannot) work, whereas a *miskin* is the one who does labor but who can barely make his own living.¹⁸⁴

Deserving and Undeserving Poor as Described in Islamic Sources

In the context of the categorization of the poor in the Qur'an, I would like to discuss the distinction between the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor. Throughout the ideological and historical discussions of poverty, the poor are described as deserving and undeserving poor either explicitly or implicitly. Religious precepts, social norms, economic and political concerns, as well as personal experiences shape attitudes towards the poor and divide them into these two categories as deserving and undeserving. Dividing the poor into these two categories is an important signifier of

¹⁸³ Singer, p. 157.

¹⁸⁴ Singer, p. 158
Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi Islam Ansiklopedisi, no. 12, s.v. "Fakir."

the attempts to draw the boundaries of a community or society through strengthening specific identities and ethical values, and excluding marginal, doubtful, and criminal groups in a society.¹⁸⁵

In the Qur'an and in various hadiths, different groups of people are emphasized as eligible to receive charity (*zakat and sadaqa*) ranging from the diseased, the elderly, orphans, and kinsmen who cannot make their own livings to the ones who barely have the means to cover their basic needs as they have devoted themselves to learn Islam for the benefit of humanity.¹⁸⁶ In this context, it is stated that since the early periods of Islamic states the non-Muslim poor were also exempt from paying taxes and could benefit from the state budgets to meet their needs.¹⁸⁷

In the Qur'an, eight groups of people are specifically mentioned as legitimate recipients of *zakat* and *sadaqa*,¹⁸⁸ yet through other verses, the hadith, and legal texts the issue of who is eligible or not to receive charity (*zakat and sadaqa*) is further interpreted. In other words, the categories of those eligible for charity are so broadly defined in the Qur'an that it allows room for subjective interpretations of the legitimate recipients.¹⁸⁹

It is obvious that the issue of poverty maintains a central place in the Qur'an. In relation to this issue, the Qur'an has provided guidance for dealing with poverty and thereby contributed to the formation of a philanthropic culture in Islamic

¹⁸⁵ Singer, p. 153, 172.

¹⁸⁶ *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi Islam Ansiklopedisi*, no. 12, s.v. "Fakir."

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ "Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to Truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of Allah and for the wayfarer: (thus is it) ordained by Allah, and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom." (Qur'an, 9:60) See for the translation of this verse; <http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/QUR'AN/9.htm> (accessed April 11, 2010).

¹⁸⁹ Singer, p. 147.

societies since the earlier times of Islam. Throughout Islamic history, Muslim philanthropy inspired by the Qur'an and the prophet Muhammad's sayings and acts (the hadith and the sunna) has taken various shapes and meanings in the social, political, local and global contexts in which it has emerged, as discussed by various scholars of Islamic charity. In this regard, the issue of categorization of the poor as "deserving" and "undeserving" could be studied not only in the context of religious precepts, but also in the context of social, political, cultural, and moral "norms" which help draw the boundaries of a society through excluding some as "undeserving" charity.

The volunteers in the Ç.S.S. project also adopt various criteria in their selection of the children and their families whom they consider to be eligible for receiving charity. Through their arguments it is possible to see the various social, political, gender and moral concerns that shape their selection of the poor. I will discuss their categorization of the families and children as deserving or undeserving poor in the 6th chapter. What I would like to do here is to talk about the Ç.S.S. philanthropists' understanding of poverty and their solutions to the issue of poverty.

Poverty: An Issue of Destiny/or Structural Inequality

As previously discussed, the Ç.S.S. volunteers I interviewed talked about their compassion towards the poor families when they witnessed the "misery" in which they lived. In this context, they stated that they had taken psychological-educational seminars for volunteerism in order to be able to cope with the emotional influences they were exposed to. Thereby, they managed to help the needy without putting themselves in their place. When I asked how they have learned to cope with the

emotional influences, Sevgi responded with these sentences:

Q: Well, what kind of courses did you take in seminars in order to cope with the emotional influences you were exposed to? Do you remember how you managed to cope with them?

A: As 10 years passed, I don't remember all of those information I have received but I think at this moment something like that; maybe because I'm a religious person [I think] indeed everyone has a written fate. So I do not have a share of her/his unhappiness directly. My part is to help her or him as much as I can. (...) It is impossible to change destiny so much. And, pitying them gives no help actually. On the contrary, we should be emotionally strong to support those [the poor] by giving them the idea that a period of human life that is very bad can change into a better situation. One also needs to teach people what to do to achieve it or at least to strive to achieve it.¹⁹⁰

As demonstrated in these sentences, destiny makes the informant feel better when she encounters misery. Witnessing the “suffering” of the poor awakens compassion in the observers and thereby constructs a relationship between the observers and the sufferers. The volunteers’ desire to eliminate immediately the distress of the people but their failure to achieve it completely led them to feel hopeless in the alleviation of the poor people’s conditions. Then, destiny appears to heal the volunteers’ desperation and sadness for the misery they witnessed and failed to alleviate entirely. Regarding these accounts, it is possible to argue that the psychological seminars the volunteers attended do not overcome the bad feelings but, as Sara Ahmed notes, lead

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008, Istanbul.

Q: Peki seminerlerde size ne gibi bir eğitim verdiler, hani duygusal olarak etkilenmemek için? Hatırlıyor musunuz, bununla nasıl baş etmeye başladınız?

A: Vallahi 10 yıl geçtiği için ben aldığım bilgileri bilmiyorum ama şu anda mesela bir şeyi düşünüyorum; yani herkesin, ben belki dindar bir insan olduğum için, yazılmış bir kaderi var. Yani onun mutsuzluğunda benim direk bir payım yok. Bana düşen ona veya onun gibi olan başkalarına ne kadar yardım edebilirsem o kadar. (...) Bir kader yani kaderi çok fazla değiştirmemiz belki imkansız. Orada bize düşen elimizden geldiği kadar yardımcı olmak. Bir de üzülmeyen onlara hiçbir faydası yok, bizim aksine daha moralli durup yani insan hayatının bir döneminde çok kötü durumdayken daha sonra daha iyi bir duruma geçebileceğinin şeyini vermek. Bir de o insanlara bunun için yapması gereken şeyi, en azından çabalamasını öğretmek.

to a different kind of relation to bad feelings.¹⁹¹ As Susie Orbach notes in her work: “Psychotherapy is not so much about turning bad feelings into good ones as about staying with and accepting the bad feelings long enough to make a personal sense of them.”¹⁹²

In light of these arguments, I can suggest that the volunteer Sevgi’s appeal to destiny signifies her entering into a different kind of relationship towards bad feelings via destiny as she learns to cope with her sadness by keeping in mind the fact that “it is almost impossible to change destiny.” In this regard, destiny opens a domain for the legitimization of inequality among people, creating the idea that inequalities or differences among people in various fields such as social and economic capital, health and education do not only originate from humans’ own actions. In other words, through the women’s accounts, it is seen that inequalities/or differences amongst people may emerge beyond the will and control of individuals and under the control of God’s absolute will (*irade*).

Hence, they believe that they have the ability to help the poor families and improve their living standards socially and economically as long as God allows them to do so. However, it is worth mentioning here that such an idea of destiny in the minds of the Muslim volunteers does not ignore the human’s will (*irade*) completely. In this regard, they emphasize human beings’ role in the creation of inequalities which victimize some people in comparison to the others. Let me demonstrate this argument with the following sentences:

Q: At the present time, in the world and in Turkey, which factors, do you think, can explain being rich or poor?

¹⁹¹ Ahmed, p. 197.

¹⁹² Quoted in Ahmed, p. 197.

A: Of course this is slightly relevant to the economy, and for me it's difficult to say much about it. First of all, we should understand what subsistence (*rızık*) means in our thought. *Subsistence and [time of] death are already decided even before we are born. It [subsistence] does not increase or decrease and also nothing can change it. (...) But there is something else; if people do act unfairly, for example if your water comes to your farm, your farm is up there and below the water flows and it must also go to the other fields where it passes by. But when you close the way of the water down here, you do not provide water for the others. So it's some knotty point of destiny. Now is it because of the fate that the water didn't reach to her/his farm or it did not reach because of the unjust acts of the person? There are such cases. In other words, when people do wrong things and act unfairly to other people, the distribution of income is distorted. I think there is a specific distribution of subsistence, but when other people become unfair and seize other people's belongings there would not be a normal distribution. Of course they [unjust people] will be questioned [for their unjust acts in the hereafter]. But in this world the victim will suffer. S/he [the victim] will get the reward (sevap) or will suffer [in the world] because of her/ his own stupidity or passivity and s/he will be responsible for it as well separately. So this subsistence or the issue of fate is somewhat different. They are also related to economic issues as I said (emphases added).¹⁹³*

As in the example of distributing the water, the informant refers to human beings' acts in the emergence of inequality. What comes out is the role of humans in the creation of inequality rather than the role of destiny. To be more precise, I think the volunteers, at least Ayşe, argue for an idea of destiny which, as normally set by God,

¹⁹³ Interview with Ayşen, January 8, 2009, Istanbul.

Q: Bugünün dünyasında insanların zengin ya da fakir olması sizce hangi etkenlerle açıklanabilir?

A: Bu biraz tabii ekonomiyle alakalı şeylerdir; o konuda benim çok fazla bir şey söylemem biraz zor. Hani bana göre tabii rızık nedir bizim düşüncemizde? *Rızık doğarken, hani ölümle rızık bellidir. Rızık ne artar ne eksilir diyebiliriz biz. Hiçbir şey de onu değiştirmez. (...) Ama söyle bir şey vardır; kollar yani birtakım haksızlıklar yaparsa mesela işte sizin tarlanıza su gelir, sizin tarlanız yukarıdadır işte su akar aşağıdaki tarlaya da gitmesi gerekir onun da öbünden geçecektir. Ama siz burada şurayı kapattığınız zaman aşağıya suyu vermezseniz bu aşağıdaki kalır. Yani şimdi biraz kader noktası çetrefilli. Şimdi bu kaderinden mi su ona gelmedi kulun yaptığı haksızlıktan mı gelmedi? Yani böyle durumlar da var. Yani kolların dahli olan kolların yanlış yaptığı haksızlık yaptığı şeylelerle diğer insanların rızkinin dağılımı bozuluyor yani. Belli bir rızık dağılımı vardır benim düşündüğümé göre fakat diğer kişi ona haksızlık yapıp da el koyduğu zaman normal bir rızık dağılımı olmuyor öbür taraftaki insan mağdur oluyor. Tabii o hesabını görecek o ayrı mesele ama bu dünyada da çeken çekecek. Ha çekecek ecrini görecek veyahut da eğer kendi akılsızlığından veya pasifliğinden çekiyorsa o da ayrı sorumlu olacak. Yani bu rızık meselesi, kader biraz farklı bir şey, bir de dediğim gibi ekonomik de.*

would not result in inequality and injustice among people. However, it is human beings who generate inequalities, suffering, and injustice among themselves. God might be tolerating such kinds of acts temporally in this world since the world is conceptualized as “the place where human beings are tested by God to be eventually rewarded or punished in the afterlife”, as discussed in detail in the previous chapter. In this respect, Sevgi argues that people who live luxuriously and spend without caring for those people who suffer from poverty will be called to give account for their irresponsible and unjust acts on the Day of Judgment since God does not approve such kinds of social injustices, as God is the Absolutely Just One:

(...) In my opinion, when there are so many people living in misery, God will call us to account [in the afterlife] and I am afraid of this.
(...) I believe that, at least, the [religiously] conscious people will be called to account further [in the afterlife].¹⁹⁴

What appears in both statements above is also the notion of an afterlife. An implicit allusion to the afterlife by mentioning taking one to account for her or his good or bad deeds and gaining reward (*ecr/sevap*) due to the inequalities s/he is exposed to in this world is an important component of the Muslim volunteers’ perception of poverty. I consider that the Muslim women volunteers’ notion of poverty is constructed through their religious beliefs. In this regard, based on their religious beliefs, they believe that only God can provide absolute justice for everyone, yet He could delay the realization of social justice for everyone for the afterlife which is the real and eternal one.

Hence, on the one hand, the volunteers do not perceive poverty as a result of structural inequality among people as they look at the world through the prism of

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008, Istanbul.
... Yani benim düşüncem şöyle; bu kadar kötü seviyede insanlar varken Allah'ın bize bunun hesabını soracağını her zaman düşünüyorum. Ve bundan korkuyorum. (...) En azından bilen insanların çok daha fazla hesap sorulacağına inanıyorum.

destiny; while on the other hand they believe that it is the Islamic form of solidarity and philanthropy which can provide equality and justice among people.

A Reflection on Poverty within the Context of Islam and Liberal Capitalism

Regarding the discussions above, I assert that the Muslim volunteers explain the issue of poverty with regards to two factors: one is destiny which is assumed to determine everyone's share in life, including wealth; and the other is human subjectivity which creates poverty through unjust, indifferent, and wasteful acts. While the former is mostly unquestioned and taken as almost impossible to change, the latter is considered to play a vital role in generating poverty as well—that is why the philanthropist women try to find solutions to poverty by eliminating and/or compensating for inequalities created by human subjects. In this regard, although they problematize poverty and emphasize human agency, they deal with poverty by remaining within the hegemonic structure of liberal capitalism while also trying to propose alternatives through a reconsideration of Islamic principles. I will analyze here the Muslim volunteers' approach to poverty and justification of their welfare activities through Žižek's concepts of ideology and fantasy.

Žižek defines ideology as a “generative matrix” which:

can designate anything from a contemplative attitude that misrecognizes its dependence on social reality to an action-orientated set of beliefs, from the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure to false ideas which legitimate a dominant political power. It seems to pop up precisely when we attempt to avoid it, while it fails to appear where one would clearly expect it to dwell.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Slavoj Žižek, “The Spectre of Ideology,” in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 1994), pp. 3-4.

The consideration of poverty as a result of destiny and human beings' unfair and indifferent acts remains ideological, in Žižek's terms, since it helps to legitimize the dominant political power by means of welfare activities that alleviate poverty.

It is important to mention here that by referring to Islam's approach to poverty, the benevolent women try to find solutions to the problems poverty causes; however, their attempt to find solutions to contemporary poverty problems through means of Islamic approaches creates contradictions in the Muslim volunteers. They consider the poverty experienced today as a new kind of poverty, even though they do not themselves name it as a new poverty. They describe this new kind of poverty as invisible and problematic which cannot be alleviated through the minimum amounts of giving that Islam dictates for its believers. Let me show this with the following sentences:

(...) It is generally assumed, you know, [by the Muslim] that the religious responsibility is done if you give the one fortieth of your savings as *zakat*. I don't believe this. In my opinion this [the rate of one fortieth] is the lowest level of *zakat*, which is the obligatory lowest level. We recently talked about *fitre* (a kind of Islamic alms given at the close of Ramadan); it's calculated now as 5 liras, 6 liras according to the cost of one's daily food needs. However, I am aware that the people in the same status [with me] will never eat food in a day that costs 5 or 6 liras. So the amount of *fitre* given to the needy is not enough. *I mean, God would not tolerate such kind of a social injustice* (emphasis added).¹⁹⁶

Q: Then you say that under the consuming patterns of today, giving the one fortieth of your property as *zakat*, giving *fitre* or *sadaqa*, giving as it is stated by the minimum amount in Islam, is not sufficient for promoting social justice?

A: Yes I think like this. For example, as in my childhood, when there

¹⁹⁶Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008.

(...) İşte şey varya bu hani kırkta birini verirsem vazifem bitmiştir diye. Ben buna inanmıyorum; bunun en alt seviye, zorunlu olan en alt seviye olduğunu düşünüyorum. Geçen şeyi konuşuyorduk; bu fitreyi de mesela işte hesaplıyorlar, beş lira altı lira bir günlük yemek diye. Ama yani benim seviyemdeki insanlar biliyorum ki hiçbir zaman günde beş liralık altı liralık yemiyor. O zaman o verilen fitre de eksik oluyor. *Yani ben böyle bir sosyal adaletsizliğe Allah'ın razi olacağına inanmıyorum.*

was a poor person, my parents used to give, for example, [my mother] used to calculate how many grams were her bracelets. *I believe that her giving one fortieth [of her property] is proper because they were middle class people, my father was a primary school teacher and while we were students, my mother had always had to sew clothes [to contribute to the family's livelihood]. I mean, I never think for them to increase [zakat] one to two fortieth. But such a rich person to pay only the one fortieth [is unacceptable], because, the remaining thirty nine is too big.* And while people are living unnecessary luxurious lives with [the remaining thirty nine], the one who is there, his kid—for example we put these kids under health control. Their growing is low, they are all with malnutrition and the heights of all are shorter than our kids. These are all due to the malnutrition. *While this is the case, I do not believe that our responsibility is over by saying that I gave the one fortieth [of my property]* (emphases added).¹⁹⁷

In light of these accounts, I suggest that the volunteers construct fantasies associated with solutions to new poverty within the hegemonic structure, liberal capitalism, in such a way that they do not consider any possible alternative to capitalism. Referring to Fredric Jameson, Žižek remarks, today “nobody seriously considers possible alternatives to capitalism any longer, (...) it seems easier to imagine the ‘end of the world’ than a far more modest change in the mode of production, as if liberal capitalism is the ‘real’ that will somehow survive even under conditions of a global

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008.

Q: O zaman bugünkü tüketim koşulları karşısında İslam’ın koyduğu işte asgari düzeyde malının kırkta birini zekat olarak vermek, fitre vermek, sadaka vermek sosyal adaleti sağlamak için yetmez diyorsunuz ?

A: Evet ben böyle düşünüyorum. Yani mesela benim çocukluğumdaki gibi bir, etrafımda o şekilde bir fakir olduğu zaman işte o zaman annemler de verirlerdi mesela bilezikleri kaç gramı geçerse diye. *O zaman ben onun kırkta birini vermesinin doğru olduğunu inanıyorum çünkü zaten yani orta seviyede orta halliler, ilkokul öğretmeniydi benim babam ve annemin hep dikiş dikmesi gerektiğini bizi okuturken. Yani onun için tamam kırkta birin ben ikiye çikmasını kesinlikle düşünmem. Ama bu kadar zengin bir insanın kırkta birle kalıp çunku öbür şey o kadar büyük ki, öbür otuz dokuz kalan pay.* Ve insanlar onunla hiç gereksiz aşırı bir lüks yaşarken orada hala normal çocuğunu, yani mesela biz bu çocukların sağlık taramalarını yaptırıyoruz. Çocukların hepsinin kemik yaşı geri, hepsinde malnutrisyon denilen beslenme bozukluğu var, hepsinin boyu bizim çocuklara göre kısa. Hepsini kötü beslenmeden. *Yani bu ortadayken daha işte ben kırkta birini verdim, şuraya verdim buraya verdim diyince sorumluluğumuzun biteceğine inanmıyorum.*

ecological catastrophe.”¹⁹⁸

In this respect, it is evident that the volunteers’ fantasies around the poverty question work in line with the dominant ideology in the sense that they imagine the society as a whole kept together by solidarity and help. This is, as Žižek remarks: “A fantasy-scenario which obfuscates the true horror of a situation—instead of a full rendering of the antagonisms which traverse our society, we indulge in the notion of society as an organic whole, kept together by forces of solidarity and co-operation.”¹⁹⁹

Reformulating the Islamic Forms of Philanthropy

The fantasies associated with the problem of poverty demonstrate the contradictions the philanthropist women confront when they try to cope with the social and economic inequalities. They assume that the Islamic form of solidarity and philanthropy suffices to provide social justice in society. However, when they confront the huge gap among income levels and life styles in different segments of the society, they try to find solutions within the system which creates inequalities and argue that the obligatory Islamic forms of giving such as *zakat* and *fitre* (alms required to be given at the close of Ramadan) are not enough to eliminate the inequalities and poverty in the society when they are pursued at the minimum amount specified in the religious sources. In this respect, they state that Muslims should give the needy as much as they spend so that they can purify their wealth.

It is worth mentioning here that the Muslim women volunteers have not

¹⁹⁸ Žižek, p. 1.

¹⁹⁹ Slavoj Žižek, “The Seven Veils of Fantasy,” in *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 6.

brought up an alternative conception of an economic and political system as Muslim intellectuals do; rather they ground their lifestyles upon Islamic faith and ethical principles. In this respect, they appeal to their friends' conscience to stimulate them to care for the poor by trying to display the misery in which they live, which is invisible to the wealthy people. Thus, they endeavor to find practical solutions to the new poverty through their charitable acts.

It is important to underline here that the women volunteers create welfare policies out of practices—the arousal of their conscience and compassionate emotions as an effect of witnessing the misery of the poor has motivated them to do something urgently for the welfare of the needy people as well as enabled them to reconsider the probable ways of coping with the inequalities in society. Although they appeal to the Islamic teachings of philanthropy to alleviate the suffering of the poor, they *re-interpret* the Islamic forms of giving such as *zakat* and *fitre* in a practical way so that they will conform to the contemporary consumption practices. In this context, referring to the proper amount of *zakat* in Islamic jurisprudence as giving one fortieth of one's property, they argue that today it is not enough to alleviate poverty by giving one fortieth since there is great disparity between the income of the poor and the rich. Let me re-quote the arguments from one of the volunteers mentioned above:

(...) But such a rich person to pay only the one fortieth [is unacceptable], because, the remaining thirty nine is too big. And while people are living unnecessary luxurious lives with [the remaining thirty nine], the one who is there, his kid—for example we put these kids under health control. Their growing is low, they are all with malnutrition and the heights of all are shorter than our kids. These are all due to the malnutrition. While this is the case, I do not believe that our responsibility is over by saying that I gave the one fortieth [of my property](emphases added).²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008, Istanbul.

(...) Ama bu kadar zengin bir insanın kırkta birle kalıp çünkü öbür şey o kadar büyük ki,

Similar to these arguments, another informant Ayşen suggests the wealthy Muslims give charity as much as they spend on themselves in order to purify their expenditures:

Today, here a latest fashion expensive jeep, a Muslim can drive it, buy it; it may be high in quality so on and so forth. But if s/he is driving it here in Turkey, leave Africa or elsewhere aside, I do not mention them anymore, just here in Istanbul or in her/his own hometown, wherever it is, s/he should give an amount equal to the price of that luxurious car for the people of her/his hometown. (...) I think that it must be like that. I mean, people are giving their *zakat* or *sadaqa*, then it is over; no it is not over, it cannot be over, it should not be over.²⁰¹

Regarding these discussions, I want to reemphasize that these Muslim volunteers endeavor to create solutions to poverty and inequality within liberal capitalism by rethinking and reformulating the Islamic tradition. Thus, as previously mentioned, referring to Žižek, they accept liberal capitalism as a “reality” without considering any alternatives to it.²⁰² It is important to mention here that the acceptance of liberal capitalism as a “reality” converges with the recent transformation of Muslims in Turkey (such as the emergence of a “Muslim bourgeoisie”) and decline of discourses about the Islamic understanding of social justice.

Related to this argument, it would be proper to draw attention to Žižek’s

öbür otuz dokuz kalan pay. Ve insanlar onunla hiç gereksiz aşırı bir lüks yaşarken orada hala normal çocuğunu, yani mesela biz bu çocukların sağlık taramalarını yapırıyoruz. Çocukların hepsinin kemik yaşı geri, hepsinde malnutrisyon denilen beslenme bozukluğu var, hepsinin boyu bizim çocuklarınma göre kısa. Hepsi kötü beslenmeden. Yani bu ortadayken daha işte ben kırkta birini verdim, şuraya verdim buraya verdim diyince sorumluluğumuzun biteceğine inanmıyorum.

²⁰¹ Interview with Ayşen, October 16, 2008, Istanbul.

Bugün burada işte son model bir lüks jip arabayla gezebilir tabii ki bir Müslüman alabilir, kalitelidir şudur budur alabilir. Ama onu kullanıyorsa, Türkiye’de yani bırakın Afrika’ya şuraya buraya gitmeyi ben oraları artık saymıyorum, hemen İstanbul’da veya kendi memleketinde kendi memleketi neresiyse kendi memleketindeki insanlara da o jip parası kadar bir şey vermesi gereklidir diye düşünüyorum. (...) Böyle olması gereklidir diye düşünüyorum. Yani insanlar zekatını veriyor, sadakasını veriyor işte tamam bitmiyor yani bitmez, bitmemesi lazımdır.

²⁰² Slavoj Žižek, “The Spectre of Ideology”, p. 1.

reflection upon the relationship between reality and ideology. Drawing upon Hegel's characterization of religion in three moments as *doctrine*, *belief*, and *ritual*, Žižek tries to arrange the multitude of notions related to the term "ideology" around these three axes: "ideology as a complex of ideas (theories, convictions, beliefs, argumentative procedures); ideology in its externality, that is, the materiality of ideology, Ideological State Apparatuses; and finally, the most elusive domain—the 'spontaneous' ideology at work at the heart of social 'reality' itself. (...)"²⁰³ In this respect, he exemplifies the case of liberalism: "Liberalism is a doctrine (developed from Locke to Hayek) materialized in rituals and apparatuses (free press, elections, market, etc.) and active in the 'spontaneous' (self-) experience of subjects as 'free individuals'."²⁰⁴ Furthermore, he reconstructs ideology around these three axes respectively as "ideology 'in-itself', ideology 'for-itself', ideology 'in and for-itself'".²⁰⁵ In the last step of reconstructing ideology, he discusses ideology in its relation to reality and argues that reality is indistinguishable from ideology.²⁰⁶ In this manner, he refers to the role of ideology in the social reproduction of society and recalls the ideology of the Protestant ethic as imposing hard work as an end in-itself at the beginnings of capitalism though it was limited to the stratum of emerging capitalists and therefore cannot be attributed the role of reproducing the entire social edifice.²⁰⁷ He proceeds by arguing that today, in late capitalism, ideology effectively penetrates every pore of the social body through the expansion of the new mass media though the weight of ideology is diminished in the sense that "individuals do

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p.14.

not act as they do primarily on account of their beliefs or ideological convictions—that is to say, the system, for the most part, bypasses ideology in its reproduction and relies rather on economic coercion, legal and state regulations, and so on.”²⁰⁸

At this point, Žižek constructs these “allegedly extra-ideological mechanisms” (such as economic, legal, and state regulations) that regulate social reproduction as “reality” and argues that reality is indistinguishable from ideology. Thus, he asserts: “All of a sudden we become aware of a for-itself of ideology at work in the very in-itself of extra-ideological actuality.”²⁰⁹ He clarifies his arguments by mentioning that “the mechanisms of economic coercion and legal regulation always ‘materialize’ some propositions or beliefs that are inherently ideological (the criminal law, for example, involves a belief in the personal responsibility of the individual or the conviction that crimes are a product of social circumstances).”²¹⁰

Referring to Žižek’s arguments about ideology and reality, I mention that the Muslim volunteers perceive liberal capitalism as a “reality” by constituting it through their beliefs and doctrines shaped by their religious beliefs as well as neoliberal discourses. In this context, they reexplore poverty as a new and problematic one, and formulate solutions to overcome it practically within the neoliberal policies. They attempt to reinterpret Islamic forms of giving in such a way that they conform to the existing practices (of Muslims today).

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

Fantasies of the Middle Class Volunteers

In light of these discussions, although I argue that the Muslim philanthropist women take liberal capitalism as a “reality” so that they no longer consider any alternative to it, I assume that they attempt to maintain a distance from it as they construct capitalism as a feared object which probably takes the Muslims away from Islamic ethical principles and precepts, as discussed previously. In this context, they problematize the “new enrichment” of Muslims in Turkey by drawing attention to the increasing wastefulness and luxury among the new rich Muslim groups which are seen as opposed to the moral principles of Islam that recommend modesty and altruism. Similar to the problematization of the enrichment of Muslims, they problematize new poverty by assuming it as a deviation from a “normal” level of poverty. Thus, I believe that the Ç.S.S. volunteers construct the new categories of poverty and richness such as new poverty and new richness and assume that these newly emerging categories threaten the moral order of society.

What is striking to note here is that the Ç.S.S. volunteers construct new categories of poverty and richness, and distinguish themselves from these categories through occupying the middle class in society economically as well as socially. In this context, they create a “*symbolic* universe” that reflects their ethics and norms, and thereby explains the categories of “new poverty and richness” through lacks and excesses. Thus, as Žižek notes, I assume every perception of a lack or surplus to be a reflection of a particular “*symbolic* universe.”²¹¹ In light of these arguments, it is proper to reach the conclusion that every symbolic universe includes fantasy in itself (such as the fantasy of morality, the fantasy of education, the fantasy of strong family

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 11.

structure, etc.); and it is through fantasy that excess and lack are articulated.²¹² I envisage fantasy here by referring to Begona Aretxaga's description of it "not as a purely illusory construction, but as a form of reality in its own right, a scene whose structure traverses the boundary between the conscious and the unconscious."²¹³

In light of these arguments, I want to conclude that it is through the fantasy of morality that the Ç.S.S. women try to maintain a distance from capitalism which creates new excessive poverty and new excessive richness but also try to act within it as they accept it as a "reality." Thus, they paradoxically struggle with poverty within capitalism and at a "distance" from it.

Confronting New Forms of Poverty: The "Real" Poverty

Witnessing the lives of poor families in their homes not only erased the Muslim benevolent women's compassionate emotions, but also enabled them to reconsider and reformulate poverty as a phenomenon. They developed the idea of a new poverty which could lead to a rebellion against God by the poor:

When I met with these families, I questioned myself and I felt guilty by considering that whether these people might rebel against God if they see [my living standards]. I mean, I am woman, she is also a woman. The only difference between us is the families we were born into.²¹⁴

In this respect, I ask Sevgi whether she believes that poverty might lead to a rebellion against God in order to understand her idea of poverty:

²¹² Begona Aretxaga, "Maddening States," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32 (2003): p. 402.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Interview with Sevgi, November 11, 2008, Istanbul.
Bu aileleri görünce kendimi böyle bir sorguladım ve suçu hissettim acaba bu insanlar beni görünce Allah'a isyan ederler mi? diye. O da bir kadın ben de bir kadın ama hani tek aramızdaki fark doğduğumuz aile.

Q: Before [volunteerism], did you ever think that the poor people might rebel against God? In your opinion, does poverty lead to a rebellion against God?

A: No. I never felt anything like this until I met with these families. I mean I never felt myself guilty about something I had because I didn't regard myself as a rich. Well, our living standards are maybe superior to middle class [living standards], yet we don't have savings; what we earn is what we spend. So I didn't feel myself guilty about the poverty of the poor. I mean a slightly better living standard that's all we have. But when I saw these families living in socially and physically hard conditions, I began to reconsider this [rebellion against God]. *Now I think these poor people might rebel against God when they witness the luxury consumption around them* (emphasis added).²¹⁵

As demonstrated in this quotation, Sevgi normally does not see poverty as a cause for rebelling against God. However, she began to reconsider the issue of poverty once she was exposed to seeing the “suffering” of the poor families she works with. Thereby, she reached the conclusion that she met with real poverty through her relationship with these families by assuming that the poor she knew until the Ç.S.S. project were not really poor in comparison to the families in the Ç.S.S. In this respect, as I previously mention, Sevgi and other informants refer to a new kind of poverty which is both invisible and problematic. It is invisible since it results from the spatial isolation between the poor and the rich—the wealthy people are not aware of those people living in misery and thus do not think of helping the needy. It is also

²¹⁵ Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008, Istanbul.

Q: Önceden fakir diye tanımladığınız insanların da Allah'a isyan edebileceğini düşünüyor muydunuz? Sizee fakirlilik Allah'a isyanı gerektirecek bir durum muydu?

A: Hayır. Ben bu aileleri görmeden hiç böyle bir şey hissetmemiştüm. Yani hiç sahip olduğum şey için suçluluk duymamıştım. Çünkü ben kendimi hani zengin olarak hiç görmüyordum. Şey olarak ortanın üstü belki seviyede yaşıyoruz ama birikimimiz yok işte kazandığımızı bu tarz bir hayat sürdürmekte şey yapıyoruz. Ve öyle bir şey olduğu için benim daha önce fakir dediğim insanlara karşı da hiç suçluluk duymuyordum. Yani onlardan az bir şey daha yüksektiyiz, işte eğitimimiz daha iyi şu bu. Ama bu kadar kötü hem fiziksel hem sosyal şartlarda yaşayan insanları duyunca, görünce yani ben bunu düşündüm. *Bilmiyorum yani bana öyle gibi geldi; bu kadar düşükün fakir olunca ve etrafı da bu kadar çok lüks görünce insanlar isyan edebilir.*

problematic since now there are huge income differences between the poor and the rich—while the former has difficulty in making ends meet, the latter can easily afford even luxuries. This is demonstrated in these sentences by Sevgi:

Indeed, I guess that I have been together with the poor since my childhood because I grew up in a small town. At that time, perhaps it was different. At that time, compared to today, the gap between rich and poor was not huge. For example, there was not much difference between the houses of the rich and the poor. (...) However, we already knew that the poor did not have savings and they owned one house or they lived in rental housing, whereas the rich owned more than one house. When the poor encountered with something unplanned, like wedding ceremony, they absolutely used to need financial support. There were some poor villages that were not suitable for agriculture. For example, my mother's family still lives in the village. They were well-off and I was then able to see more things. During his time my grandfather took care of the poor when we got the crops. For example, if necessary, money was given or if the poor did not have agricultural fields, paprikas, tomatoes, potatos used to be collected and distributed to the poor. So these people were poor, they had no money, but never knew what hunger was, or perhaps did not yearn for consumption as it wasn't fueled like today. There was not anything they aim to get actually. (...) For example, if he had another house, then what would he do with that? This is not something he yearned for. (...) I knew these kinds of things. When we arrived in Istanbul, I first came to Fatih. I stayed there for 10 years. There were people who lived in basement or ground floor, earned their living with just pension. We used to give fitre (charity) to them, if necessary we used to give zakat. Then, I realized they were not really needy

(emphases added).²¹⁶

²¹⁶ Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008, Istanbul.

Yani ben herhalde küçüklüğümden beri fakirlerle bir aradayım. Çünkü ben küçük bir ilçede büyüdüm. Bir de şimdi yaşı itibarıyle belki o zamanlar aslında daha farklıydı. Fakirlerle zenginlerin arasındaki refah seviyesi bu kadar fazla değildi. Yani zenginin eviyle fakirin evi arasında çok fazla bir şey yoktu. (...) Ama o insanların işe şeyi diyim en azından birikiminin olmadığını veya işe fazladan zenginin diyim evi aynıdır ama üç tane dört tane evi vardır, fakirin işe bir tane vardır, kirada oturuyordur. Veya işe kenarda hiçbir şeyi yoktur. Hesap edilmeyen bir şey gelse başa veya bir düğün yapılacak olsa mutlaka sağдан soldan bir desteği ihtiyacı vardır. Sonra etrafımızda işe hakikaten fakir köyler dediğimiz köyler vardır tarıma elverişli olmadığı için. Mesela benim annemin ailesi halen de köyde yaşıyor. Onların hali vakti yerindeydi ve ben o zaman daha şeyi görüyordum. Yani yazın işe ürün çok olduğu zamanlarda fakir köylerden dedem de çok kollardı. (...) Mesela işe gereklirse para verilir veya işe mutlaka para verip almasınlar diye tarlaları da yoksa biber, domates, patates toplanır, her ne varsa üründen dağıtılan bazı insanlar vardır. Yani bu insanlar fakirdi hani parası yoktu ama hiçbir zaman açlık çekmiyorlardı veya belki bu kadar tüketim körüklenmediği için hasretini de çekmiyorlardı. Yani hedefledikleri çok yüksek bir şey de yok. Mesela bir evi daha olsa onun için ne farkedecek ki? Canının çekteceği çok bir şey yok. (...) Yani bu tarz şeyler biliyorduk. İstanbul'a geldiğimizde de burada etrafımızda, işte ben Fatih'e geldim ilk 10 sene orada kaldım. Bodrumda yaşayan, giriş katlarında yaşayan, böyle kendi yağıyla kavrulan, tek emekli maaşıyla geçenin kimseler vardı. İşte bunlara fitre filan

Thus, as these sentences demonstrate, Sevgi emphasizes the huge gap between the rich and the poor in recent years and thus explains the new poverty as real poverty.

Related to this discussion around the notions of poverty and richness, I will further analyze the women's understanding of poverty and poverty alleviation. This detailed analysis, I believe, will clarify how Islamic understanding of poverty and philanthropy influences the Muslim philanthropists' approach to poverty and poverty alleviation.

What Do the Volunteers Suggest for the Alleviation of Poverty ?

Drawing the Limits of “Appropriate” Consumption

The Muslim volunteers propose solutions to overcome the misery they have seen by referring to the Islamic teachings on the issue of poverty. Referring to the Islamic idea of poverty, they criticize today's well-situated Muslims for not conforming properly with Islamic principles in their approach to the poor and poverty.

They accept the existence of richness and poverty as basic social categories, referring to a particular, though in their view general, Islamic conception of society. They argue that although in an ideal Islamic society the rich and the poor are in relation with each other, today the affluent Muslims distinguish themselves from the poor spatially as well as socially—they just communicate with the poor through their aids for them such as giving *zakat* (obligatory alms-giving) or *sadaqa* (charity).

Alongside these arguments, the volunteers draw attention to the luxurious

verirdik, zekat gereklirse verirdik ilk zamanlar. Ama yani sonra hakikaten anladım onların aslında ihtiyacı falan yokmuş.

consumption practices among the affluent Muslims. Yet, Ayşen as well as the other informants emphasize the difficulty of deciding what constitutes luxurious consumption and need. Although Ayşen criticizes the wealthy Muslims' tendency for luxurious consumption, she states that they should themselves decide to limit their consumption by questioning to what extent they spend for their needs and to what extent they squander:

Contemporary Muslims are in very good places particularly in case of learning and knowledge. They are also well-to-do. But is this waste; is it waste or not, is it need or not, is it luxury or not? We cannot bring any limitation for these concepts. For nobody [one can say that] this is your need, because it [need] differs from one to one. We cannot force people do something at that point as everyone should put her/his own limit. Therefore, these concepts seem quite different/ altered to me, that is to say, waste, it differs for everyone; needs, it differs for everyone. Yet, I think one should draw a field for herself/himself. That field depending on one's income, living standard, education. (...) I think in that manner and we practice [limit of consumption] it in the wrong way. At this point, I see that there is a formation of class in the Islamic life as well. I mean there are classes among the Muslims as well. It should not be but I think everybody should find solution by herself/himself for it. I don't know there is not a thing such collective sanction. In fact there is no such thing in Islam, collectively let it be like this or that, the rules are not like this.²¹⁷

As it is shown in these sentences, Ayşen interprets the polarization among the

²¹⁷ Interview with Ayşen, October 16, 2008, Istanbul.

Bugünkü Müslümanlar ilim noktasında öğrenme noktasında çok güzel yerlerdeler. İşte maddi bakımdan çok güzel yerlerdeler. Ama şu israf israf mıdır, değil midir, ihtiyaç mıdır değil midir, lüks müdür değil midir? Bu kavramların hani bunlara da bir sınırlama getiremiyoruz. Hiç kimse için bu senin ihtiyacın, çünkü herkese göre değişen şeyler olduğu için bunlar. Herkesin kendi sınırını kendisi koyması gereği için bir başkasına yaptrim uygulayamıyoruz bu noktada. O yüzden kavramlar çok değişmiş geliyor bana yani israf, israf şu anda herkese göre farklı, işte ihtiyaç ihtiyaç herkese göre çok farklı evet ama söyle bir kendi çevresinde bir alan çizmesi gerekiyor insanın diye düşünüyorum ben. O alan gelirine göre, yaşam standardına göre, eğitimine göre. (...) Ben öyle düşünüyorum, biz bunu biraz yanlış uyguluyoruz. Yani bu noktada İslami yaştantıda da bir sınıflaşma olduğunu da şu anda görüyorum, yani Müslümanlar'ın kendi arasında da bir sınıflaşma var. Yani olmaması gereklidir ama bunun çözümünü tabii herkesin yine kendisi herhalde yapacak diye düşünüyorum. Bilmiyorum öyle toplu yaptrim öyle bir şey olmuyor. Yani İslamiyet'te de böyle bir şey yok zaten; toplu söyle olacak böyle olacak kurallar falan böyle değil.

Muslims due to social and financial differences as the formation of class idea in the lives of contemporary Muslims. Then, she mentions that this is not a proper lifestyle for Muslims since the prophet Muhammad and his companions used to share a common life with all Muslims coming from different social and economic backgrounds.

As I referred to above, the Ç.S.S. volunteers criticize the well-situated Muslims' approach to poverty by arguing that they fail to understand the meaning of Islamic philanthropy correctly. They mention that the meaning of Islamic philanthropy is to enable the self-development of the poor rather than make the poor consistently dependent upon the rich's charity. In this respect, they refer to *zakat* (almsgiving) as the Islamic obligatory form of giving which alleviates and develops the life conditions of the poor through redistributing the rich's wealth. By developing the poor's life conditions, they mean to make the poor competent enough to afford her/his costs of living easily. This could be through health and educational support to qualify the poor for work as well as capital support to do business. Thus, they believe that *zakat* ultimately aims to raise the recipient of *zakat* to the level of a *zakat*-giver.

The following sentences demonstrate this point:

(...) Additionally, let's say I'll give one billion [one thousand Turkish liras) as *zakat* for instance; what I do with this one billion is, --this is the practice I see around-- I make it hundreds and give ten different persons. I think that instead of giving this in hundreds, there might be a man, a little craftsman, in economically a hard situation , may be close to bankrupt or close his shop, to give that one billion [thousand] to him. Or maybe a guy working as street vendor needs equipments for his work. Giving him two thousand to help him to establish his work. What will be? He will establish his own work, begin to work to earn and after a while he will start to give *zakat*. (...) *I think that zakat should be for the aim of achieving the development [of the poor]. That in small amounts is sadaqa you may give somewhere but it is sadaqa and it is something different. I find it incorrect to give alms (zakat) in pieces. The aid to one should be regarded as making*

one developed, not to meet the temporary need (emphases added).²¹⁸

As these sentences demonstrate, the informant refers to two kinds of Islamic philanthropy which are *zakat* (obligatory alms) and *sadaqa* (voluntary almsgiving/charity). She mentions that obligatory almsgiving (*zakat*) should serve the improvement of the poor. In this respect, these arguments reflect the idea of *zakat* as serving the enrichment of the poor, which I have previously discussed in the second chapter by referring to the writings about the issue of philanthropy in the Qur'an and the hadith.

As the quotations above demonstrate, the women volunteers seek solutions to compensate for the luxurious consumption practices. Throughout all narratives, they draw attention to the increasing consumption among affluent Muslims. In this context, they explain some of these consumptions as dissipation if they are paid for more than the amount sufficient to meet their personal needs. However, being aware of the differences among people in terms of their economic benefit, they state that it is difficult to determine the upper limit of needs and expenditures. In other words, needs may vary according to income level. In this respect, they suggest that wealthy Muslims give charity in line with their expenditures in order to lighten the economic inequalities among people.

²¹⁸Interview with Ayşen, October 16, 2008, Istanbul.

...Bir de ben diyelim ki ben bir milyar zekat verecem mesela; bu bir milyarı ne yapıyorum benim etrafımda gördüğüm uygulama bu, işte yüz yüz yüz yapıyorum 10 kişiye veriyorum. Ben şöyle düşünüyorum bunu yüz yüz yüz yapmak yerine ben bir milyarı tutup bir iş sahibi vardır, esnaftır o adam gerçekten çok zor durumdadır, batmak üzere dir dükkânını kapatmak üzeredir, tutup ona vermek bir milyar olarak vermek. Veyahut da işte işportadaki çocuk çalışıyordu, tezgah lazımdır, malzeme lazımdır tutup ona işte 2 milyar vermek. Yani işini kursun. Nolacak o işini kuracak, çalışmaya başlayacak, kazanmaya başlayacak ve bir müddet sonra o zekat vermeye başlayacak. (...) *Kalkındırmak maksadıyla olmalıdır zekatlar diye düşünüyorum. O küçük küçük olanlar sadakadır işte verirsin bir yere hani ne bileyim o sadaka farklı bir şey. Zekati bu şekilde pörçük pörçük vermeyi ben yanlış buluyorum. Kalkındırmak olarak bakmak lazım kişiye yardıma. O anı ihtiyacı görülsün diye değil.*

Although the philanthropist women fail to determine the upper limit of needs and expenditures, they achieve to determine the minimum limit of needs and expenditures, and thereby they create a normal level of poverty as a solution to new excessive poverty. Thus, it is important to reemphasize that they fail to question the source of new poverty which creates economic inequalities among people.

The “Normal” Level of Poverty

Throughout the interviews with the Muslim volunteers about the issue of poverty, it is obvious that the volunteers accept the existence of poor and rich as basic social categories in a society, referring to the Islamic idea of philanthropy. They construct the relation between the poor and the rich as social harmony rather than as class conflict as they define wealth and poverty as God's preordainment (*takdir*) for those rich and poor people. As discussed previously in Chapter 2 on Islamic philanthropy, they believe that the Islamic idea of philanthropy such as *zakat* can provide social justice among people through the redistribution of the rich's wealth among the poor if it is applied properly. In this respect, they argue that the rich could give generously to the poor when they perceive their donation as the poor's right on their wealth as it is mentioned in Islamic sources. In this perception, God is identified as the real owner of property and the rich as the trustee of this property rather than the holder, so that s/he should give to the poor in the name of God and in conformity to God's rules. Through this perspective, Ayşen states that her negative feelings towards the rich changed when she decided to adopt an Islamic way of life and left the socialist ideas she was influenced by in her high school years:

Q: You had said that after you met with Islam you left to stay away

from the rich, as it was in your high school years and the negative feelings towards the rich had been balanced. How did Islam change your view about the rich? Which factors, do you think, can explain the richness or poverty of a person?

A: When you have an Islamic point of view you cannot identify yourself as rich. *I mean there is not a separate class in Islam as richness. What is there [in Islam]? The one here does not have purchasing power and the one there has. But that person, who has, sees herself/himself as a trustee. S/he does not consider herself/himself as a possessor [of goods, money]. The rich who have money, power, property or what else, sees himself as the trustee of what s/he has, in fact s/he has to see in that way. What should s/he do? Wherever there is a person in need, "I am the trustee and I give you."* I mean in that way. In a way to transfer from hand to hand. My negative thoughts against the rich in high school years were because of the fact that the rich see herself/himself superior and dominate the lower [strata]. I was feeling antipathy because of that. But a true Muslim rich should not be like this. Actually I have learned that s/he cannot be like this after I learned the religion. So my attitude towards the rich changed. It can be discussed whether this is the case in practice or not. There is the one who can succeed and who cannot (emphases added).²¹⁹

Alongside these arguments about richness and poverty, the volunteers' particular relationship with the poor children and their families led them to reconsider poverty and clarified their understanding of poverty. As a result of the great misery they encountered, the Ç.S.S. volunteers reconsidered poverty and determined the "normal"

²¹⁹ Interview with Ayşen, January 8, 2009, Istanbul.

Q: İslamiyet ile tanışınca lise yıllarında olduğu gibi zenginlere mesafeli durmayı bıraktım, zenginlere karşı hissettiğim olumsuz duygular dengelendi demiştiniz. İslamiyet zenginlere karşı bakış açınızı nasıl değiştirdi?

A: İslami bakış açısı kazandığınızda siz zaten kendinizi zengin olarak hisseden biri gibi hissettiğinizde, kendinizi zengin olarak hissediyorsunuz ki. Yani İslamiyet'te zenginlik diye ayrı bir zümre yok. Ne var? *Buradakının alım gücü yok, buradakının var. Ama bu olan kişi zaten kendisini bir emanetçi olarak görüyor. Kendisinin olarak görmüyor. Zengin paranın, gücün, malın işte neye sahipse onun emanetçisi olarak görüyor, görmeli daha doğrusu kendisini. Ne yapması gerekiyor? Nerede ihtiyaç sahibi biri var, ben emanetçiyim sana veriyorum.* Yani bu şekilde. Elden ele gelecek şekilde. Benim lise yıllarında zenginlere karşı olan olumsuz düşüncelerim, zenginin kendini üstün görüp kendinden aşağıya tahakküm etmesi. Ondan dolayı bir antipati duyuyordum. Ama esas bir Müslüman zenginin böyle olmaması gereklidir. Yani dini öğrenince böyle olmaması gerektiğini de öğrendim. O yüzden de zenginlere karşı bakışım değişti. Pratikte oluyor mu olmuyor mu o tartışılmır tabii. Başarabilen vardır, başaramayan vardır.

level of poverty that is bearable. Among their criteria for a “normal” level of poverty are to have at least a fixed income, a place of accommodation suitable for human health, and access to educational opportunities. That’s why the women volunteers assign themselves the role of alleviating the life conditions of the poor children and their families by trying to raise them to the level of “normal” poverty. In this context, they support the families financially in order to provide for the children’s attendance at school. They strongly emphasize the children’s education and do not support the families who employ their children in the streets instead of taking them to school as they believe that education would raise the welfare level of the poor and keep the children away from the dangers of the streets. If the children are not able to continue their education after the mandatory eight-year education, the volunteers try to provide work for them even with a low income so that they can stay away from the streets and do not pose a threat to society.

It is worth mentioning here that the volunteers also propose fast and practical solutions to save the children and their families from the misery in which they live. For instance, they usually suggest that children who are able to continue their education attend the vocational schools in order to get jobs as quickly as possible and thereby begin to work to make their living. In light of these arguments, it is appropriate to quote the following sentences in order to demonstrate the volunteers’ idea of a “normal” level of poverty which is considered to be bearable:

The families we are taking care have become normally poor families even though they could not rise to the upper strata. In fact, I say that let our goal be this. *A normal poor family with normal family relations and without psychological problems...* (emphases added.)²²⁰

²²⁰ Interview with Sevgi, November 11, 2008, Istanbul.

İlgilendiğimiz aileler çok üst bir tabakaya geçemeseler bile normal bir fakir aile oldular. Zaten bizim hedefimiz bu olsun diyorum. *Normal bir aile ilişkisi olan, psikolojik problemleri olmayan normal bir fakir aile...*

I think that we do not make these people middle or upper class through our charity. They are poor again. But [a poor] who has a hope for future, I mean, in the future maybe: “I can be better or my kid attend school and gets a profession or something happens from somewhere. I see it [charity] something that can give a hope [for future] (emphases added).²²¹

As demonstrated through these sentences, the volunteers do not perceive poverty as a structural problem if it is “normalized” and thus made bearable. They consider maintaining the “normal” level of poverty as an important point since it raises the welfare of the poor and prevents them from losing their hope for life. Although the volunteers do not raise the poor to the middle or upper-middle class level, as Sevgi states, they believe that they give them the potential to improve their life conditions through increasing their hope for life.

Referring to the women’s accounts, I define their act of giving as philanthropic endowment rather than charitable acts as they try to improve the life conditions of the poor families permanently. In this respect, they reflect the definition of philanthropy as the improvement of the poor to prevent the re-emergence of suffering as it is previously discussed in the writings in Chapter 2 (such as N.Şeni and S. Hasan’s definition of philanthropy).

However, contrary to Nora Şeni’s distinction between philanthropy and charity, defining the former as a signifier of progressive, modernist, and humanist tendencies, and the latter as a kind of religious giving in the name of God²²², I argue that the Muslim volunteers aim to improve the poor’s life conditions both in the

²²¹ Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008, Istanbul.

Ben şöyle düşünüyorum; bu insanlara biz yaptığımız yardımla, onları zengin veya orta seviye yapmıyoruz. Yine fakir oluyorlar. Ama gelecektен bir ümidi olduğu yani işte ilerde ben biraz daha iyi olabilirim veya işte çocuğum okur bir meslek sahibi olur veya işte bir yerden bir şey olur diye bir ümit sahibi olabileceğim bir şey olarak görüyorum.

²²² Şeni, p. 123.

name of God and humanity through inspiration from the forms of endowment in Islamic sources. Thus, I use philanthropy to explain the women volunteers' act of endowment. In this context, I use philanthropy as a religious form of giving as it reflects the idea of providing basic human needs which are fundamental aspects of survival and functioning such as sufficient food, health, education, skills development, and so on. As Sami Hasan argues, deprivation of these basic human needs causes poverty—thus achieving such living conditions becomes the rights of the needy as opposed to just needs.²²³ In other words, the Ç.S.S. volunteers investing in fields like health and education provide people, who lack the ability to obtain these needs through their own incomes, their basic rights through the giving of the wealthy. Thereby, through their endowments the volunteers try to “normalize” the level of poverty of the Ç.S.S. poor to enable their self-improvement.

While explaining the Muslim women volunteers' welfare activities in line with the Islamic form of philanthropy, I keep in mind that they are also in line with the neoliberal policies, which aim to provide the self-management of the poor.²²⁴ Thus, the women volunteers harmonize their Islamic idea of poverty and philanthropy with the progressive, modern and neoliberal approaches to poverty and poverty alleviation.

In addition to these, I want to mention that although I prefer to use philanthropy to explain the Muslim volunteers' act of giving; I do not ignore the existence of charity as a part of Islamic philanthropy. By charity, I mean the

²²³ Sami Hasan, “Muslim Philanthropy and Social Security: Prospects, Practices, and Pitfalls,”(paper presented at the 6th ISTR Biennial Conference, Bangkok, 9-12 July 2006), p.1. Available [online]: <http://www.istr.org/conferences/bangkok/WPVolume/Hasan.Samiul.pdf>.

²²⁴ Susan Brin Hyatt, “Poverty in a ‘Post-Welfare’ Landscape: Tenant Management Policies, Self-Governance, and the Democratization of Knowledge in Great Britain,” in *Anthropology of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power*, ed. Chris Shore and Susan Wright (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 217-238.

voluntary almsgiving (*sadaqa*), taking into account the prevalence of charity in Islamic societies as it is recommended as much as *zakat* (obligatory almsgiving) in the Qur'an and the hadiths. Additionally, I mention that charitable endowments play an important role in the development of the C.S.S. project as well.

CHAPTER 6

THE POLITICS OF THE Ç.S.S., AS A CHILDREN'S WELFARE PROJECT

Children are a major focal point of welfare policies towards the poor. The perception of children as being the most vulnerable (alongside the aged) to the harsh social and economic conditions of contemporary times has led to the development of welfare projects for the well-being of poor children who are deprived of their basic needs, such as nutrition, health, education, and accommodation. Welfare policies towards needy children have been pursued either by states or civil society organizations with the assumption that children are the future of the nation. In the Turkish context, welfare policies for the improvement of children in poverty have been part of the modernization process since the nineteenth century, and are emblematic of the tendency to see children as the future of the nation/or society. In this context, Kathryn Libal discusses the politics of child welfare in early Republican Turkey by emphasizing the construction of the child as the future of the nation-state within the discourse of modernization and national progress and prosperity.²²⁵ This must be

²²⁵ Kathryn Libal, “‘The Child Question’: The Politics of Child Welfare in Early Republican Turkey” in *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*, ed. Michael Bonner, Mine Ener, Amy Singer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. 255-272.

Mine Ener also stresses the particular attention shown towards children in the philanthropic organizations developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Egypt and refers to the concerns of Egyptian elites towards the increased public presence of the urban poor, street children, infant mortality, and the poor health and hygiene of children. To address these social problems, she states, Egypt's elites formed organizations that at times crossed religious and ethnic lines. Through the development of nationalist ideas among elite groups, multiethnic and multireligious organizations emerged to improve the health conditions and morals of the poor children through education, vocational training and health care initiatives. Thus, the idea of saving children for the future of the Egyptian nation was common among the Egypt's elites and crossed religious and ethnic divides. Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence (1800-1952)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 99-133.

understood in relation to the development of the idea of the nation and its interconnectedness with Islamic culture.

In this chapter, I will discuss the politics of the Ç.S.S. project as a children's welfare project. In this regard, I will touch upon the social and political concerns and the discursive practices of the volunteers in this project. As the question of children cannot be considered independently from the family, I will refer to the volunteers' ideas about family as well.

Firstly, I will briefly discuss the concept of childhood and the meanings attached to it in Islamic culture as it significantly contributes to the Muslim Ç.S.S. volunteers' ideas about childhood along with their conception of family. Secondly, I will discuss the issue of philanthropy not simply as a matter of humane sensitivity in an encounter with the vulnerability of certain people—as in the previous chapters; but also as a matter of politics related to the social, moral, and political concerns of the volunteers. In this regard, I will analyze the philanthropist women's relations with the poor families as it would reveal their various concerns and approaches towards the poor families. Then, I will particularly elaborate on the social, cultural, and ethnic differences between the volunteers and the families they help.

A General Approach to Childhood in Islam

Childhood in Islam is considered a particular period which is distinct from adulthood.²²⁶ In the Qur'an and the hadith, childhood is defined as a biological phase

²²⁶ In *Centuries of Childhood*, Philippe Ariès talks about the history of childhood from the medieval age to the modern age in the context of Europe, and argues that childhood was not a particular period in the medieval age of Europe. For Ariès, the discovery of childhood at the beginning of modern times was a revival of the idea of childhood as a particular period. In Neolithic and Hellenistic times there

that ends with the onset of adolescence physically as well as psychologically. The child is defined as an innocent being and her/his parents are held primarily responsible for her/his care and education.²²⁷ It is at the onset of puberty that childhood ends and responsibility (*mükellefiyet*) as an adult begins. Henceforth, according to Islamic jurisprudence, the child becomes adolescent and is responsible for all her/his worldly as well as religiously acts.²²⁸

It is important to note that the transition from childhood to adulthood in Islam is not considered to be just a biological process.²²⁹ There are different stages in the period between birth and adolescence which emphasize the discipline and education of children for her/his further improvement according to social, moral, and religious values in Islam. For instance, until the age of seven, children are not subject to discipline and education since they are not seen as mature enough to learn and adopt religious and proper moral behavioral manners. However, between the ages of seven and fifteen, children have begun to be subjugated to education, discipline and punishment for their social and moral improvement.²³⁰

was a difference and transition between the world of children and that of adults, which the Middle Ages lacked.

Similarly, Avner Giladi in his article about the concepts of childhood in medieval Islam refers to the particularity of childhood in Islamic culture and claims that Islamic civilization owes much of knowledge about physical and psychological development of children to the Hellenistic heritage, yet by translating and interweaving pediatric as well as pedagogical works into its own religious writings, Islam made them part of Islamic culture.

For a full discussion of these points see; Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 128, 412.

Avner Giladi, "Concepts of Childhood and Attitudes Towards Children in Medieval Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 32 (1989), p. 152.

²²⁷ Mine Tan, "Çocukluk: Dün ve Bugün" in *Toplumsal Tarihte Çocuk*, ed. Bekir Onur (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1994), p. 14.

²²⁸ İbrahim Canan, *İslam'da Çocuk Hakları* (İstanbul: Yeni Asya Yayınları, 1981), p. 72.

²²⁹ İbrahim Canan mentions that if children do not reach puberty biologically in its natural process, girls become adolescents at seventeen and boys become adolescents and therefore responsible at eighteen years old. *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Tan, p. 14.

Henceforth, it is possible to state that in Islam the child is regarded as a future adult who is to be invested in for the moral, social, and religious wellbeing of society as well as for her/his acquirement of eternal happiness. In mainstream Islamic discourse, the family is seen as the primary social unit for the nurturing and education of children. Within this family unit, either extended as in past societies or nuclear as today, each child is believed to receive a sense of identity, affection, discipline, role models, and economic and social support. The parents are understood to be primarily responsible for rearing their children.²³¹ It is assumed that there is a division of labor between partners in such a way that the mother is seen as the primary instructor (at least until the age of seven) and care-giver of the child while the father is given the role of providing sustenance for his family and supporting his wife in childcare. A mother's primary role is to educate her children in addition to nurturing them; as such, she has a right to demand a housemaid for help with the housework. Mothers are to use all their energy for the healthy development of their children, which can be achieved through the demonstration of compassion and care, since compassion is regarded as the "natural" asset of mothers, i.e. emotions which are instinctively or naturally experienced.²³² Additionally, parental responsibility towards children is regarded as the rights children hold over their parents because the parents are responsible for the moral, religious, social, and economic improvement of their children all of which serve their eternal happiness as well as the welfare of society.²³³

²³¹ Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, "Childhood in the Muslim Middle East" in *Children in the Muslim Middle East*, ed. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), p. 5, 8.

²³² Canan, p. 73.

²³³ Ibid, p. 82. See also; *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Islam Ansiklopedisi*, no. 8, s.v. "Çocuk."

Childhood Perception in the Ç.S.S. Project

The Ç.S.S. project is designed for the welfare of needy children. In other words, in the Ç.S.S. project, poor families are helped for the sake of their children. In this respect, it is important to pay attention to the Ç.S.S. volunteers' perception of childhood, as it reveals the reasons behind their activities towards the poor children.

Throughout the interviews I conducted, it was apparent that the Ç.S.S. volunteers' idea of childhood is constructed on the basis of innocence and vulnerability. This idea of innocence derives from the Islamic idea of childhood as well as the Enlightenment conceptions.²³⁴ As noted above, according to Islamic beliefs, the child is considered to be born innocent and bear intrinsic values which are good for the welfare of humanity. However, children can lose their innocence if their parents fail to bring them up in such a manner in which that intrinsic innocence remains purified from the violence and ugliness that surrounds the children.

In this respect, I should also underline that the Ç.S.S. is a welfare project which does not target all children but particularly those working in the streets. The organization aims to save children from the streets and emphasizes that children "lose" their innocence in the streets, since, in addition to being exposed to various dangers, children working in the streets are also less dependent on their families both

²³⁴ The origin of this idea of the innocent child goes back to the Enlightenment as well, especially the philosophy of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who emphasized the natural goodness and innocence of children, an innocence that becomes corrupted through false education that is against the nature of the human being. Rousseau sought to banish all consideration of original sin and makes mention of the idolization of the intrinsic values children bring to bear on the world. Thus, rather than simply emphasizing childhood innocence, Rousseau more significantly opened up the question of the child's particularity. In his work, *Emile*, the child was promoted to the status of a person, that is, a specific class of being with needs, desires, and even rights. This personification found in Rousseau's writing paves the way for our contemporary concern about children as individuals. For a full discussion of these points see Allison James, Chris Jenks and Alan Prout, *Theorizing Childhood* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007) p. 13 & Mine Tan, p. 11.

socially and economically—they have a kind of “limitless freedom.” Referring to the innocence of children, the Ç.S.S. volunteers stress the preservation of the intrinsic qualities of children which are inherent to the human being, such as innocence and natural goodness. For the preservation of such intrinsic qualities, they suggest showing the children affection and providing an appropriate education and discipline, which the children in the streets are lacking. Through these aims, the volunteers believe that they are investing in the wellbeing of society, since children are society’s future. As demonstrated in the following sentences, the volunteers believe that saving a child from the streets and thus preventing her/him from becoming a street child is a great success even if the child fails to rise to a higher economic or social status:

That is, to us, “what’s a child?” His graduation from the eighth school grade, even if he cannot graduate from a vocational high school, or a new pair of shoes in his feet in a day of Eid, or if he starts dreaming about future. (...) All of these are very concrete outcomes for us. But people ask for more, they want to see very obvious achievements. Like S’s success in attending medical school. That is, think about it, a child who had never worn a firsthand cloth in a day of Eid, wears it. Don’t you think that this is enough to do well in this activity [this welfare project]? That’s, even if he is not able to pass the university exam. Because, that is a child, I mean success is something related a bit to have a background for it. (...) It’s enough for me to know that in that day that child do not to work in streets. Namely, we will support his family, I mean, we will buy his clothes, and we will also provide a little financial aid. Then, this child would not work in the streets. (...) To us, it was a great unreachable dream to see a child to have a job, to graduate from a vocational high school. It was just an effort if we could that. That is, the university, above all the medical schools were the things we even could not dream of. This much success, for my part, at that moment I also did not expect it.²³⁵

²³⁵ Interview with Ayşe, April 11, 2008, Istanbul.

Yani bize göre yani bir çocuk nedir, hani meslek lisesi bile olmasa 8. sınıfı bitirebilmesi bile veya artık yani bir bayramda işte ayağına yeni ayakkabı giyebilmesi, artık ileriye yönelik böyle hayaller kurabilmeye başlaması; bunlar çok somut neticeler bize göre. Ama insanlar biraz daha böyle, daha böyle göze batan somut şeyler istiyorlar. İşte S.’nın tipi kazanması gibi. Yani düşünün hiçbir bayramda bir sıfır elbise giymemiş bir çocuk, elbise giyiyor. Yani bu yeterli değil mi bu çalışmayı yapabilmiş olmak için. Yani hani illa da üniversiteyi kazanmasa da. O çocuk çünkü hani başarı biraz da temelden gelen bir şey. ...Bana göre o gün o çocuğun sokakta çalışmaması yeterli bir şey. Yani biz o çocuğun ailesine destek olacağız, işte çocuğun kıyafetlerini alacağız, biraz maddi destek de olacağız. Sonra çocuk sokakta çalışmayacak. Yeterliydi yani çalışmaması bile yeterli bir şeydi benim için. ...Bir

In a similar manner, Sevgi (referring to Ayşe) mentions that it is a great success to save children from the streets since, in this way, the children are prevented from becoming a potential threat to society as in the case of street children who could easily end up committing murder by sniffing glue or paint thinner:

Ayşe, for instance, states that at the foundation, the child gets at least some attention which s/he has never experienced. At least, this child does not sniff glue and slaughter afterwards. Because s/he is loved, her/his compassionate emotions improve.²³⁶

What is notable in these sentences is the idea that through receiving affection and compassion from the “compassionate” volunteers, the children working in the streets re-explore their potential for love and goodness. Hence, through this love (which they “lack” in their familial life), the children become good human beings no matter whether they become doctors, teachers or simple employees—the important matter is to raise a good human being who preserves her/his innocence and natural goodness and who is content with her/himself. In this respect, it is important to note that the Ç.S.S. volunteers see love as something to be learned and/or explored as it is potentially inherent in any human being.

As previously discussed in Chapter 4, in the case of Ayşe’s attributing her love of children to her receiving love in her own familial life, this resonates with the Enlightenment idea of exploring a person’s inherent natural traits, such as love, innocence and goodness, which are brought out in her/him through a rightful

çocuğun meslek lisesini bitirip eline mesleğini alması çok büyük, uçuk bir hayaldi bize göre. Hani bunu yaptırabilir miyiz gayretiydi. Yani böyle üniversite, hele tıp düşünemediğimiz bir seydi. Bu kadar başarıyı şahsen o dönemde hani ben de düşünmüyordum.

²³⁶ Interview with Sevgi, November 17, 2008, Istanbul.

Ayşe diyor ki; mesela o çocuk hayatında hiç görmediği ilgiyi vakıfta en azından birkaç kez de olsa görüyor. En azından bu çocuk sonradan tiner çekip, girtlak kesmez. Bir sevgi görüyor ve acıma duygusu gelişiyor.

education. In this respect, parents who display their affection towards their children are educating them through teaching them their potentiality for love.

In addition to this form of education, disciplining children according to social, cultural, and moral values is also understood by the volunteers to be vital for the healthy development of children. By assigning themselves the role of educating children according to their social, cultural and moral values, the C.S.S. volunteers define the families of these children who are “normally” responsible for raising their children as incapable of teaching these values to them since, in their opinions; these families themselves lack these values. In this context, the volunteers fail to ask themselves whose values they are referring to, since they typically assume these values to be universal and universally adopted. I will discuss this issue later in the context of the volunteers’ relationship with the children and their families. What I want to mention here is the volunteers’ perception of the poor children as “lacking” in care, love and compassion from their parents. For instance, according to the volunteers, employing children is a sign of the parents’ lack of care for their own children. In this respect, they on the one hand claim that the children are not cared for and loved by their parents as it should “normally” be; on the other hand, they argue that the families have a different way of expressing love to their children, and thereby explain the families’ different way of relating to their children as resulting from the families’ cultural difference. The following sentences from Nurten demonstrate this point:

Q: You mentioned that the understanding of love is different in these families. Can you please explain that?

A: I mean it’s not like our understanding. As I told, it’s like they both love and take care of them and at the same time they let them to work. I mean they allow them to sell handkerchief in the streets. It’s not like our understanding of “love.” It’s different. Do they love their child?

Yes, they do. (...) They all love their children very, very much. But, as I told, when we go their homes, these children hug us, they embrace us closely, and they don't want to leave us. (...) So, I mean, these children want to feed their hunger for love. I think they have a lack of physical contact. We feel that from the way they hug and kiss us.

Q: Do you mean, the parents do not express their love to their children?

A: No, it's not like that. I mean they do not know how to do that due to their traditions, customs. If you do not know something, you also cannot know how to transmit it. You can only convey what you get from your families, not more. As I told, I think, these people do as their way. It's something owned from their culture which they brought from the Southeastern Anatolia. No one had shown their love to them, thus this is also their way of love for their children. (...) Those parents love their children, so do the children. (...) Moreover, there are so many things about these families, how can I tell that? Their villages were burned and destroyed; due to the problem of terrorism most of them escaped from the region and migrated here. For example, one of our families came here after their village had completely been fired. These people did so much to afford living, also in their villages.

(...) Thus, those people have a different point of view for love, you cannot expect them to show care for their children for hours. (...) We are, of course, a bit different, for example my family, they have been abroad, also the education level is different. *The level of education is also very important as cultural differences. The more education you have, the better approach in child rearing you get. I do not say that you would bring up your child in a better way, but I still believe that s/he will be brought up differently.* Since we started the seminars for the families, people have changed in their way of approaching their child, their understanding of "help." For example, they have learned that families need to go to the schools to deal with their children's lessons, or for example the children fail at class, but they do not know why (emphases added).²³⁷

²³⁷ Interview with Nurten, October 14, 2008, Istanbul.

Q: Ailelerde sevgi anlayışı daha farklı dediniz; biraz daha açabilir misiniz?

A: Bizim anlayışımız gibi değil yani. Dediğim gibi çocukların hem sevip hem gözetip hem de çalışmalarına izin vermemeleri gibi. Sokakta mendil satmalarına izin vermemeleri gibi.. Bizim sevgi anlayışımız gibi değil, farklı. Seviyorlar mı, evet seviyorlar. Onda herhangi bir problem yok, hepsi çocukların çok çok seviyorlar. Ama çok böyle dediğim gibi işte evlere gittiğimizde çocuklar böyle boynumuza atılıyorlar, ayrılmıyorlar. (...) Ama neticede çocuklar o sevgi açlığını doyurmak istiyorlar. Daha çok şey bunlarda temas eksikliği olduğunu düşünüyorum, boynumuza sarılıp sıkıp da öpmeleri hala daha yine o eksiklik seziliyor.

Q: Yani anne babalar çocuklara sevgilerini göstermiyor mu?

A: Göstermiyor değil. Dediğim gibi şimdi gelenek görenek görmemişler. Görmediğiniz bir şeyi karşı tarafa gösteremeyizsiniz. Siz ailenizden ne gördüyseniz ancak onu aktarabilirsiniz. Bunlar da işte dediğim gibi o kesimde Güneydoğu Anadolu kültürünün de verdiği bir şey olarak düşünüyorum ben.

The sentences above demonstrate the volunteer Nurten's attribution of kissing and caressing the children—important signs of love which the children's parents fail to demonstrate—to a cultural difference. Moreover, I believe that these sentences reflect the construction of the poor Kurdish families in the minds of the volunteers from two aspects. On the one hand, the volunteers try to empathize with them by mentioning their so-called cultural difference and the social, ethnic and economic difficulties to which they are exposed; while on the other hand, they call upon them to their own position (the urban and the modern) through educational seminars for the improvement of familial relationships.

Hence, as discussed previously, the volunteers try to educate and modernize poor rural families and their children so that these families can adopt the parental and childhood roles which modernity imposes on them. The children's attendance at school and their parents' affectionate care for them are some of the roles modern way of life imposes on us for socially and economically upward mobility.²³⁸

Teaching the children and their families these roles would finally lead to improvement in the welfare of society as a whole, as children who do not work in the

Görmemişler, görmedikleri için de çocuklara yansımaları bu şekilde oluyor. (...) Anne baba da çocukların seviyor, çocuklar da anne babalarını seviyor. (...) Bir de bu aileler o kadar çok şey yapmışlar ki, işte nasıl diyim köyleri yakılmış yıkılmış, terör sorunu olduğu için birçoğu kaçmış gelmiş. Mesela bir ailemizin koca bir köyü yakılmış ondan sonra buraya gelmiş. Bu insanlar ekmeğin peşinde o kadar çok koşturmuşlar ki, aynı şekilde köylerinde de. (...) Bu insanların sevgiye bakış açısı farklı, bunlardan bekleyemezsin çocuklarınyla saatlerce ilgilenmelerini. (...) Bizler tabii ki biraz daha farklı mesela benim ailem işte ne bileyim yurt dışına çıkmış, bir de işte eğitim seviyesi biraz daha farklı olduğu için, kültürel farklılıklar olduğu kadar eğitim seviyesi de çok önemli. Ne kadar çok eğitim seviyesi gelişmişse çocuklara bakış açısı, bu çok daha iyi yetiştirir manasında söylemiyorum ama yine de farklı yetiştireceğini düşünüyorum. Bu aile seminerleri başladığında çocukların sevgi bağı, yardım konusunda çok farklı hale geldiler. Mesela çocukların okullarına gidip ailelerin ilgilenmeleri gerektiğini, mesela çocuk zayıf getiriyor ama neden getirdiğini bilmiyorlar.

²³⁸ Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı mentions that as a result of urbanization, modernization, and social economic development, the child no longer shares the burden of economic responsibility with her/his parents as in the case of rural areas. Additionally, she argues, in urban and economically developed societies, while the economic dependency on the child decreases, the emotional dependency on the child continues and her/his psychological value increases.

Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, "Türkiye'de Değişen Aile ve Çocuğun Değeri" in *Toplumsal Tarihte Çocuk*, ed. Bekir Onur (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1994), p. 35.

streets and attend school would no longer pose a significant threat to society. Family and school would become the basic units which would enable the healthy development of children for the future of society, by teaching affection and discipline. This is why the volunteers justify their welfare project's concentration on children working in the streets and their families, rather than on street children without families.

The Categorization of Suffering Children: Children Working In the Streets vs. Street Children

The Ç.S.S. project is a welfare project aimed at the rehabilitation of children working in the streets although it was first designed with the purpose of rehabilitating street children, as previously mentioned. The various concerns about street children have led the women volunteers in the Ç.S.S. to working children in the streets. The criteria set up by UNICEF that distinguishes "street children" from "children working in the streets"²³⁹ have been influential in the Ç.S.S. volunteers' decision to focus on working children and their families. The argument that street children are formerly children working in the streets has led them to care for working children in order to prevent their becoming street children who have lost their families and live in the streets.

The classification of children as street children vs. children working in the streets can be interpreted as a categorization of children as more or less deserving of help. Throughout the interviews, it is apparent that gender creates a gap between the volunteers and the needy children. The volunteers explain their care for the working

²³⁹ This classification by UNICEF is emphasized in the Ç.S.S. pamphlets. See APPENDIX A.

children rather than street children as a gendered security issue—they state that street children are in such bad psychological condition that they might pose a danger to the volunteers, and refer to an event in which a woman was raped and killed by a street child. Additionally, they note that street children need professional, medical, and psychological help, as they have many problems including, for example, addiction to sniffing glue. In other words, the volunteers see themselves as unqualified to effectively solve the street children's problems. Thus, the volunteers do not ignore the rehabilitation of street children, yet for practical reasons they prefer to care for the children working in the streets. Whatever their reasons, this preference places the street children in the category of the undeserving poor.

In the context of the *Ç.S.S.* welfare project, various factors influence the volunteers' decision regarding whom to help. In other words, the benevolent women also have criteria in choosing the children working in the streets—some working children and their families can still fall into the category of the undeserving poor if they do not conform to the criteria in the *Ç.S.S.* welfare project.

The main criterion for success in the involvement of the poor working children in the *Ç.S.S.* welfare project is the child's quitting work and attending school, and her/his parents' employment through the support of the *Ç.S.S.* volunteers. In addition, the volunteers consider the parents', especially the mothers', willingness to communicate and cooperate for their child's welfare an important criterion. For that reason, they make visits to the families to decide whether they are appropriate for inclusion in the project.²⁴⁰

The benevolent women's social, political, and moral concerns as well as their personal fears also influence the selection of the children and their families to be

²⁴⁰ See APPENDIX A.

included in the project. In this respect, I believe that it is important to examine the extent to which the perception of children as innocent and vulnerable human beings affects the volunteers' understanding of whom is most deserving of their help. That is, we should consider whether innocence and vulnerability can override all other social, moral, and political concerns and enable the relief of all needy children without need for any categorization. Thus, it would be apparent that the volunteers' understanding of humanity would not be sufficient to help the needy, or at least all the needy. It is also essential to see what influences this notion of humanity in the minds of the volunteers—a normative notion of humanity that determines the boundaries for helping the needy.

Child Labor, the Family Question, and Gender Issues

In this section, I will touch upon the relationship between the benevolent women and the poor families. Analyzing the volunteers' account of their relationships with the poor children and their families is crucial to understanding the image of the poor families that occupies the minds of the women volunteers. Such an analysis allows me to examine the kinds of discourses the volunteers use in their approach to the problems of the poor.

The families in the *C.S.S.* project experience various problems related to poverty, migration, and racial discrimination. Among the main problems the families face are unemployment and casual or low-paid jobs. The philanthropists in the *C.S.S.* project mainly focus on this issue to prevent children from being sent out to work by their parents. The volunteers criticize the families for letting their children work, and attribute this attitude to the cultural traits of the families who are mostly Kurds.

The volunteers insist that for the Kurds, it is culturally not shameful to make their children work, since in their view, they consider children as laborers who should be helping their parents in doing work. They make this argument by referring to the Kurdish people's rural life in their homelands—in rural life, as people are concerned with farming and animal breeding, the division of labor among the family members is common and conforms to the rural lifestyle. However, the informants argue, this kind of labor cannot be maintained in city life, and the families' attempt to maintain it through employing their children is a result of their inability to integrate into city life as well as their peculiar perception of children. As I have observed through the interviews²⁴¹ and other informal accounts in the field, the Ç.S.S. volunteers believe that these families have a different idea of childhood than them—they do not display their affection to the children as much as the volunteers do and they view children as adults, thus giving them responsibilities such as working to provide food.

As previously mentioned, the Ç.S.S. volunteers know the difficulties the Kurdish families face due to ethnic discrimination as well as poverty, yet this awareness is not always reflected in their approach to the families' problems. For instance, child labor is perceived as peculiar to the Kurdish people and is not considered so much in the context of social, economic and political changes in Turkey as well as the global world.²⁴² Yet, it should be born in mind that child labor

²⁴¹ See again quotation from Nurten above.

²⁴² You may look at the articles about child labor in the Middle East as well as the European world to see the commonness of child labor as a result of the economic difficulties capitalism has brought out. For a full discussion of these points see Aicha Belarbi, "The Child as Economic Investment: Preliminary Reflections," in *Children in the Muslim Middle East*, trans. Moncef, ed. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), pp.230-234 & Wafaa Lahlou & Eftetan O. Farrag, "Working Children in Cairo: Case Studies," in *Children in the Muslim Middle East*, ed. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), pp. 239-249 & Allison James, Chris Jenks and Alan Prout, p.109, 121.

is in general a part of the extended patriarchal family life in the rural in the Middle Eastern societies before colonialism dismembered this type of family.²⁴³ So it cannot be assumed to be peculiar to the Kurdish family structure.

Related to this issue is the blame placed on fathers for being “lazy,” unemployed and “indifferent” to their families’ problems. My informants strongly emphasize that most of these families have various social, economic and psychological problems, yet the informants also insist that the families can cope with these problems (with the support of the volunteers) if the mothers are capable and hardworking enough. In this context, they give examples from families who have managed to overcome their social and economic problems through the mothers’ cooperation with the Ç.S.S. volunteers. When they are asked why the fathers are mostly seen as lazy and idle, they explain it as such:

Q: While you’re talking about families, you told, if the mothers were conscious, you could progress much easily with your financial support, but ninety percent of the fathers you told, are idle, useless. I want to learn your opinion, do you see those fathers as useless just because they do not work or what do you think, why those fathers are all “worthless?”

A: We do not have a close touch to the fathers. *That is, my words now will be a presumption, but there are some moral and psychological problems in most of those fathers. Because if the fathers worked properly, they would not be in this much low level [of life standard]* (emphases added).

Q: You mentioned that you could get further with a family when the mother was clever and competent even if she was not educated. How do you do that with only “a mother” if fathers are problem-ridden?

A: *Well, maybe, it is because they are all Southeastern Anatolian; it is a characteristic of their culture. Indeed, it is the fact that in our all society mothers are the ones who take the responsibility for the family.* Even if we just take a family sample from our circle, in which both of the parents have high level education, [we see that] the father only works or may be sometimes participate in social works of CSOs.

²⁴³ Aicha Belarbi, pp.231-232.

But he would not have time to spend for his children. Every time it is like that. Even if both of the parents work, when baby-sitter have one-day off, it is always the mother who would take the child along with her to the office. Fathers never do that. That is, this is a matter of our society. In this case, the level of education is less, moreover in the Eastern culture the women are expected to do everything. Fathers are just the fathers. That is, they are just authority. For example, when the man is unemployed and the woman works, she gives all she earned to her husband as soon as she gets the money. *This is so structural in our society. But also it is because of the low level of education. Such structure is more essential in the Eastern culture. It is worse there* (emphases added).²⁴⁴

As these sentences demonstrate, the mother is seen as the key figure in the family who contributes to the continuation of family life through successfully managing her tasks. Among these tasks are the primary responsibility for the children and various chores related to the household, as well as caring for other family members. Emphasizing the mother's role in the family, the informant draws attention to the unjust division of labor among partners in family life, yet she does not seem to problematize this unfairness. She attributes the fathers' irresponsibility towards their

²⁴⁴ Interview with Sevgi, November 20, 2008, Istanbul.

Q: Ailelerden bahsederken anneler becerikliyse, bilinçliyse o aile ile “bizim” maddi desteğimizle de mesafe katedebiliyoruz ama babaların yüzde doksanı işe yaramaz zaten demiştiniz. Şunu sormak istiyorum; babalar sırıçalışmadıkları için mi işe yaramaz diye tanımlıyorsunuz? Ya da bu ailelerde babalar neden hep “işe yaramaz?”

A: Babaları bizim çok yakından tanıma şeyimiz olmadı. *Yani şimdı söylediklerim biraz zan olacak ama o babaların çoğunda ahlaki, psikolojik bir şeyle var. Çünkü babalar çalışsa bu kadar çok düşük seviyede olmazlar.*

Q: Anne dediniz cahil olsa bile becerikliyse o aile ile yol katedebiliyoruz. Babalar ‘sorunluyken’anne ile tek başına nasıl yol alınıbiliyor?

A: *Bence şey olarak belki o, genelde hep Güneydoğululara, o kültürün şeyi. Zaten bizim toplumumuzda da çoğu zaman ailenin yükünü anne taşıyor.* Yani şimdı bizim çevremizde ekonomik durumu iyi, annenin babanın eğitimli olduğu bir aileyi bile alsanız, baba işine gider gelir, işte birazcık da bir sivil toplum kuruluşu filan varsa derneklerde gider, toplantılara gider. Çocuklarıyla bile çok uğraşmaya vakti yoktur. Her zaman öyle olur. Anne baba çalışıyor bile olsa işte diyelim çocuğun bakıcısı gelmedi, anne yüzde doksan dokuz çocuğu götürür işe, baba hiçbir zaman götürmez. Yani bizim toplumumuzun şeyi bu. Burada eğitim seviyesi daha da düşük, bir de Doğu kültürü işte kadın her şeyi yapması gereklidir. Babalar işte baba. Yani sadece otorite. Mesela adam işsizdir kadın çalışır gidip parayı direk kocasına verir. *Toplumumuzun yapısı bu ama tabii oralarda eğitim seviyesi düşük olduğu için, Doğu kültürü filan daha fazla etkili bu yapı, orası daha kötü.*

families to their “culture” (Kurdish/ or the Eastern Anatolia culture) which she assumes to be oppressive towards women.

In light of these discussions, I would argue that the volunteers perceive the lives of the poor families in the Ç.S.S. project as a distinction between the West and the East which has been constructed in their minds. In the minds of the volunteers, I believe, the East not only symbolizes a geographical region (as in the case of Turkey—the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia region), but also symbolizes a specific culture, i.e., “the Kurdish culture.” In other words, as Stuart Hall argues in *The West and the Rest*, “the West” is a historical, not a geographical construct. By “western,” he states, we mean the type of society “that is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern.”²⁴⁵ He also underlines that such societies arose at a particular historical period, which came after the Middle Ages and the break-up of feudalism. “They were the result of a specific set of historical processes—economic, political, social, and cultural. Nowadays, any society, wherever it exists on a geographical map, which shares these characteristics, can be said to belong to “the West.”²⁴⁶ What is important for this matter is Hall’s statement that “the West” is also an idea, a concept²⁴⁷ that produces a discursive knowledge of the rest of the world. It produces discursive knowledge through categorizing societies as “western”—that is, urban and developed, and “non-western”—that is rural and under-developed.²⁴⁸ Thereby, the idea of “the West” provides a model of comparison that evaluates the extent of different societies’ development standards.

²⁴⁵ Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” in *Formations of Modernity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (Cambridge: Polity Press in Association with the Open University, 1992), p. 277.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

In the context of the Ç.S.S. project, it is evident that the volunteers evaluate the poor families according to their own “Western,” urban, educated, and modern positions. In this usage of “Western,” I also refer to the Ç.S.S. volunteers’ origin of homeland in the sense that they are from Western and Central Anatolia.²⁴⁹ Thereby, as I observe, they are foreign to the Eastern Anatolia Region geographically as well as culturally and talk about the Eastern Ç.S.S. families through the imagined perception of the “East.” Thus, they attribute the “laziness” of fathers as well as the oppression of mothers among the Ç.S.S. families mostly to their Eastern culture and argue that education would serve to eliminate the effects of this “backward” culture. In this regard, they also use the development discourse to offer solutions to the problems of the poor families as discussed in the preceding chapter.

Although the oppression of women and the unequal division of labor between men and women in familial life are attributed by and large to the “Eastern” culture, the informant Sevgi mentions that the women’s disadvantaged position in family and social life through the undertaking of more responsibility is also related to the structure of Turkish society in general. Yet, education and economic improvement could play a role in easing the burden on women.

What is apparent through this argument is the discourse of education which is believed to free people from traditional roles and to end injustice among them through the enlightenment of minds and souls. That is why the education of the families (mothers) and the children occupies such a central role in the Ç.S.S. project. Although education is believed to change the traditional roles women and men play, the perpetuation of the women’s disadvantaged position in contrast to men even

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ The volunteers I interviewed are from Afyon, Bursa, Denizli, Eskişehir, and Kayseri.

among the educated class in society cannot be explained by the volunteers. In other words, they fail to see this situation as a result of the patriarchal structure and seem to accept their disadvantaged positions. Hence, as it is mentioned throughout the various discussions about gender roles in different spheres, the family becomes the private sphere where patriarchy is re-produced and thereby leads to the continuation of gender inequalities.²⁵⁰

Regarding these arguments, I want to draw attention to the various approaches that emphasize the relationship between nationalism and the (nuclear) family.²⁵¹ Through these approaches, nationalism is discussed as not just a “political ideology” but also “a discursive practice that is constitutive of institutions,” (such as the family), “subjectivity, and everyday life.”²⁵² Although these approaches emphasize the importance of women and the family for nationalist projects, Nükhet Sirman argues, they do not pay enough attention to the relation between power and gender. Sirman states that “at best they conceive of power as somehow external to gender, imposed upon it through political means.”²⁵³ Yet, one has to look at “the process of the production of subjectivities that are gendered and national at the same time” to see “how the nation and power are inscribed in the subject.”²⁵⁴ In this regard, the “new woman” and the “new family” are not seen as simple categories produced by the state; “they are themselves productive of new configurations of

²⁵⁰ Aksu Bora, *Kadınların Sınıfı: ücretli ev emeği ve kadın öznelliğinin inşası*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılıarı, 2005), p. 40.

²⁵¹ For a full discussion of these approaches, see; Nükhet Sirman, “The making of familial citizenship in Turkey,” in *Citizenship in a Global World: European Questions and Turkish Experiences*, ed. E. Fuat Keyman and Ahmet İçduygu (London: Routledge, 2005).

²⁵² Ibid., p. 154.

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 152.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

power and desire.”²⁵⁵

I would argue that this conforms to Aksu Bora’s reading of Judith Butler’s definition of gender. In her emphasis on performance, Butler defines gender as values and behavior patterns which are not simply internalized but are also inscribed by the sovereign power in the subject through her/his conscious approval.²⁵⁶ These analyses about the relation between gender, power, and the family are helpful in understanding my informants’ internalization of the gender roles imposed upon them despite their awareness of women’s (both the poor/ignorant and affluent/ educated) unequal position in society. Despite an awareness of the fact that education does not liberate the women from their unequal position (both in the family and in the public), as it is expressed through the informants’ personal experiences, the emphasis on education for the progress of the woman and the family signifies the acceptance of gender roles and the cultural and familial practices which are constructed through technologies of power as the subjects themselves desire the power positions offered by these practices.²⁵⁷

In the context of the relationship between the woman and the family, in which the former is assumed to be the main actor for the continuation of the latter, I want to discuss my informants’ strong emphasis on the employment of poor mothers in order to provide for their basic needs and therefore prevent the labor of their

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Bora, p. 43.

²⁵⁷ Chatterjee’s analysis of life stories and social positions in India lets us to see this perspective in the context of the operation of nationalism as a discursive practice through micro-power spheres such as the family institution, gender and cultural practices. Studying the life stories of people “who have somehow fallen foul of the new gender identities, he is able to describe the violence involved in assuming the identities of the new gender order, as well as the violence reserved for those who cannot.” Thus, postcolonial gendered identities are linked to both the desire for power and “the processes through which the individual becomes constituted through the new technologies of power.” Sirman, p. 154.

children. In this respect, one of the informants, Ayşen, claims that through this project they also teach the families (women) the ethical value of working and explains their not working again through the discourse of education:

Not only we deal with the children, but also we take care of the mothers. Sometimes we have one-to-one conversations, we talk to them as we talk to our friends. (...) They get benefit from these conversations, they get their share. Once, a mother said: "I had no intention to send my child to school, I caused him to be a shoeshine boy. But, now I want him to go school and I do cleaning works." That is, now she is conscious, that is, when you display care for these people, they change. That is, again, I think *a lack of education*. There are examples from my own district, Eminönü region: "Women do not work at our tradition." they say. A man came from his hometown, says: "It is a shame, women do not work." They say working is a shame but they let their women to wait in lines to get favors. (...) But this woman is uneducated. If she knew the fact that the real shame is begging for aid of other people, she would not do that. That is, in our project, we do that (emphasis added).²⁵⁸

In these sentences, the volunteers advise the mothers to work if their husbands do not or even if they do, so that their children will not work and will be able to attend school for a better future. What is important here is the calling of the women to work not for themselves but for their children. As these women are from the lower class and are uneducated, they are destined to perform low-paid and casual labor such as cleaning and cooking. These are the house chores which are supposed to be the natural tasks of women next to child-raising. Thus, nothing changes in the worlds of these poor women except earning some money when they work as cleaners.

Thus, the relational bond between child and mother is constructed through the

²⁵⁸Interview with Ayşen, October 16, 2008, Istanbul.

Biz sadece çocuklarınla ilgilenmiyoruz, annelerle de ilgileniyoruz. İkili konuşmalarımız oluyor, arkadaşlarımıza konuşur gibi onlarla sohbet ediyoruz. (...) O sohbetlerden onlar istifade ediyorlar, kendilerine bir şey çıkarıyorlar. Hatta bir anne öyle demişti: 'Ben çocuğumu okutmayı düşünmeyip sokakta ayakkabı boyacılığı yaptırıyorum. Ama şimdi o okusun, ben merdiven siliyorum.' diyor anne. Yani şu anda bu şurda. İlgilenilince de böyle oluyor bu insanlar, *yani yine bir eğitimsizlik herhalde*. Benim kendi bulunduğu Eminönü bölgesinde var, bizde kadın çalışmaz diyorlar mesela memleketinden gelmiş ayıptır kadın çalışmaz. Ayıptır diyor ama kuyrukarda akşamaya kadar yardım bekliyor. ...Ama bu kadın eğitimsiz; eğer buna anlatılsa öğretilese hani esas ayıbin bir başkasına el açmak olduğunu öğretilmiş olsa yani bu da yapmaz. Yani bizim projemizde bu da yapıyor.

strengthening of the family which is assumed to play a “central role” in the healthy development of child. In the context of this welfare project, the volunteers try to strengthen the family institution by rehabilitating the mothers and their children through various seminars. As a reflection of this attempt, it is mentioned in the introductory brochure of the Ç.S.S. project that the family institution in Turkey is extremely valuable, since child’s emotional, social, financial as well as physiological development starts here. Therefore, in facing the problems of the needy children such as the street and orphan children, Turkey owes much of its relatively “advantageous” position, contrary to its counterparts in the world, to its strong family institution, “despite having been exposed to some degeneration.”²⁵⁹ That’s why the executives of the Ç.S.S. project try to revive the “weak” families of the children working in the streets to enable the children’s experience of family warmth and thereby their retreating from the streets through their parents’ special care for them emotionally as well physically.

Although the volunteers emphasize the father’s role in family life as equally important to the mother’s for the child’s healthy development and explain their failure to deal with the fathers’ problems by means of practical reasons, I observe that they believe they can reach their goal of saving children if they are able to communicate with the mothers and gain their support. Thus as I mentioned above, the mother is seen as the main actor in the family who provides for the continuation of family life and the wellbeing of her children.

The construction of a relation between women and familial life is also

²⁵⁹ Namely, it is believed that Turkey has not experienced the problems of children without families as much as the other countries experience; in other words, it has been apparent that the Turkish society in general cares about the preservation of the family institution for the wellbeing of society and thereby takes the responsibility of the children without families voluntarily via the CSOs which reflect the foundation (*waqf*) tradition in the Ottoman-Turkish history and culture.
See APPENDIX A.

traceable through the Ç.S.S. volunteers' idea of motherhood. In this regard, I believe that the volunteers construct a similarity between themselves and the mothers on the basis of motherhood, even as they emphasize the so-called "cultural differences" of these Kurdish families that influence their approach to the children. They imagine a universal and natural motherhood through which every mother can understand other mothers' experiences and sufferings related with their children, regardless of the social and cultural differences among them. In this way, motherhood emerges as the key concept that creates empathy on the part of the Ç.S.S. volunteers towards the "suffering" women. In this respect, the volunteer Ayşen states that she puts herself in place of the "suffering" mothers and understands/feels their distress by empathizing with them on the basis of motherhood. She describes a universal motherhood in the sense that every mother is very sensitive towards her child regardless of her education level:

Q: What were your feelings when you met the families? Can you give some details?

A: First, when I thought about our own situation, I understood that we regard very small things as huge problems. The first thing I thought, we're in much better conditions compared to these people. (...) Then, I began to think what I could do for them. Because, at final point she is also a woman, she has also children. I mean, you are also a woman, you have got children. She lives in Istanbul as you live. That is, why will they live like that? For example, *the hardest things for a mother are the needs of their children, especially their feeding. The priority of a mother is this. Of course all mothers, regardless of their educational level, care to feed their children. It's the same for the university graduate or an illiterate mother. At this part, if a mom has difficulty to find something to feed her children, if she cannot afford to put something on their table to eat, it is something like you're lack in motherhood. Well, I'm still, even now when my children are adults. To put something for feeding, it's very natural for a mother, a duty, like a characteristic of the motherhood. I thought those women, I felt sad to see how big the difficulty they had to face with. (...) Maybe it's because I have also children. Motherhood makes a difference, you view world from this window. Firstly, you look as a mother. At least, it's like that for me. For any event I heard, for example a battle, I first*

feel the worry and the sadness the mother feels within that event
(emphases added).²⁶⁰

As indicated in these sentences, the informant argues that motherhood generates a sensitive view of the world that those who are not mothers cannot feel as much as those who are mothers. Therefore, the volunteers can empathize with these “suffering” mothers who come from a different social and cultural background. Through these sentences, it is also clear that the roles assigned to mothers, such as caring for the children, are taken for granted as natural tasks of mothers to which every mother naturally aspires. In this regard, the family is assumed to be the “natural” sphere of the woman in which she cares for her children as her “natural” duty.

In light of these arguments, it is possible to say that through imposing on the poor women the idea of working for the family, the volunteers try to maintain family unity by making the children more dependent on their parents socially and economically. They seek solutions to the families’ problems within the sphere of

²⁶⁰ Interview with Ayşen, January 8, 2009, Istanbul.

Q: Aileleri görünce hissettiğiniz duygular nelerdi? Biraz daha açabilir misiniz?

A: İlk önce kendi durumumuzu düşününce çok ufak tefek eksiklikleri bile büyük eksiklikler olarak gördüğümüzü düşündüm. İlk aklıma gelen onlardan çok daha iyi durumda olduğum. ... Daha sonrasında da tam olarak ne yapabilirim çünkü o da nihayetinde bir hanım, onun da çocukları var. İşte siz de bir hanımsınız çocukların var, o da İstanbul'da yaşıyor, siz de İstanbul'da yaşıyorsunuz. Yani niçin onlar öyle yaşasınlar? Mesela bir anne için en zor şeyin çocukların ihtiyaçları noktasında, özellikle beslenmeleri noktasında. İlk önce annenin şeyi odur. Yani bir anne, eğitim almasın bütün anneler çocuğunun karnını doyurma noktasında çok hassastırlar. Yani bunu üniversite mezunu da böyledir, hiçbir şey bilmeyen bir insan da böyledir. Bu noktada zorlanıyorsa bir anne, beslenmesine koyacak şeyleri bulmakta zorlanıyorsa, akşam çocukların evlerine geldiğinde önlerine çıkaracak bir şey bulmakta zorlanıyorsa, yani sanki bu bir annelik bir eksikliği gibi. Yani ben şu anda bile, işte koskoca çocukların var. Sofra hazırlamak, yani o çok doğal bir vazife, annelik duygusunun uzantısı gibi bir şey. Onları düşündüm, çok zor şartlarda olduklarına üzüntü duydum. ... Bir de belki kendi çocukların olduğu için öyle düşünüyorum. Anne olmanın farkı var, dünyaya hemen o şekilde bakıyorsun. Anne olarak bakıyorsun ilk önce. Yani ben kendi adıma öyle bakıyorum. Bir yerde duyduğun bir hadisede, savaşta vs. bir annenin o halde duyacağı üzüntü, sıkıntı bunları hissediyorsun hemen.

family. For instance, they teach the mothers the “true” ways of communication with their husbands and children, and, in group therapies, draw their attention to the fact that they are not the only ones who face many problems in life. Thus, they relieve the poor women’s pain in the face of the difficulties they are exposed to and also lead to the continuation of women’s unequal position in the family.

In the context of the welfare policies developed for the families’ rehabilitation, I want to draw attention to the dual form of the strategy applied in the seminars for the mothers. I define it as a dual form since I observed that, on the one hand, the volunteers attempt to find practical solutions to the existing problems; while on the other hand, they aim to change the mentality of the mothers in such a way as to be influential in preventing the emergence of problems. For instance, in one of the seminars I observed, the lecturer, who is a social worker, referred to the discrimination in the families between the boys and the girls, and told the mothers not to discriminate between their children in favor of the sons by stating that it is this privileged behavior of parents shown to the sons which leads to the oppression of women in family as well as society.

Limits of Deserving Help

In this section, I describe a conversation I heard at the *Hayat* Foundation when I went to conduct an interview with one of the volunteers, Ayşe. While I was waiting for the interview, I noticed that Ayşe was talking with the secretary about a dispute that had taken place between the children in the Ç.S.S. project when they came to participate in the club activities on the weekend. Afterwards, Ayşe came to the room for the interview and told me about this discussion between the children in a smiling

manner. As she explained, two groups of children (who are both Kurdish) quarreled over the issue of municipality elections—when some of them were praising the Democratic Society Party (*DTP*), others accused them of being the *PKK* partisans.²⁶¹ In this context, I asked what they do when they encounter disputes about political issues as in this case. Ayşe told me that they do not touch on political issues as they are organized only for the welfare of suffering people. I try to understand then to what extent the political, social, and moral concerns influence the welfare activities towards the poor despite the claims that this is a welfare project designed for the needy children regardless of any social, political, moral, and/or ethnic differences:

Q: Do you have any social, political, ethnic, and/or moral criteria in choosing the poor families for the project? Did you feel anxious about the possible political and ethnic differences between you and the families?

A: Indeed, there is something; we try to be loyal to the things specified in the project. The child working in the streets is economically in low condition and therefore has to work in the streets. Our priority [in choosing the poor children for the project] is the child's being fatherless or her/his father's inability to work [due to health problems]. This is the priority and it is the only condition specified in the project. When this is the condition, whether the child is a *DTP* partisan, or I do not know, Kurdish, or Turkish, in the end s/he is the child we met on the street. Typically they turn out to be Kurdish and we receive a lot of criticism on this issue. That is, in terms of taking care of the children of the Kurds. But what can we do? Those are the kids on the streets. That is to say, we do not particularly go after the Kurdish children. In fact, sometimes in order to equalize the number of the Turkish and Kurdish families in the project, we have some families from the Central Anatolia Region, for instance. Although we make some efforts in this regard, all of the families we meet are Kurdish. What can we do? *In fact, we do not meet only with the families of the children with whom we cannot cope. Among the families we went so far there were not many of them that we gave up*

²⁶¹ The Democratic Society Party is a political party of the Kurds in the Turkish Parliament that demands the improvement of the Kurdish people's rights who have been oppressed in the history of the Turkish Republic through restrictions such as the forbiddance on speaking Kurdish in the public sphere.

PKK (the Kurdistan Workers' Party) is an armed organization that claims to work for the freedom of the Kurdish people while it is considered as a terror organization by the Turkish State and has been in conflict with the Turkish army for more than 20 years.

by thinking that we can't take care of them. Mostly, the children of, we say, Gypsy; we do not meet with those children and their families as those children want shamelessly everything so much. Maybe that is why we don't encounter such families. We do not make family visits to such families. You look at the children, talk with them, and then say "let's not meet with this family." Because we can't cope with them. That is, those are kids that would not "be" any more. You understand it when you meet with the child. No matter how much you try you cannot do anything with that family. (...) No matter what you do they will make their kids work. (...) Those kids are mostly the children of the Gypsies. My friends volunteer in the project describe the children they decided to involve in the project as suffering/ or victim but also intelligent children who could be successful if they are to be supported (emphases added).²⁶²

I would like to consider these sentences in light of two concepts which define the children: *yurtik* (shameless) and *mazlum* (suffering, victim). These are important concepts as they reflect the limits of the Ç.S.S. project concerning the needy children. Regarding the whole narrative of the Ç.S.S. welfare project through the project pamphlets and the volunteers' accounts, it is clear that the project is grounded in an assumption of the child's vulnerability and innocence.

In this respect, it is useful to refer to Judith Butler's idea of vulnerability and its recognition. In her article named "*Violence, Mourning, Politics*," Butler argues

²⁶² Interview with Ayşe, March 17, 2009, İstanbul.

Q: İlgilendiğiniz aileleri seçerken ahlaki, sosyal, politik, etnik birtakım kriterleriniz oldu mu? Ailelerle aranızdaki olası siyasi ve etnik farklılıklar açısından kaygılar yaşadınız mı?

A: Yani şimdi şey var biz projede belirtilen şeylere çok bağlı kalmaya çalışıyoruz. Sokakta çalışan çocuk ekonomik durumu düşük ve sokakta çalışmak durumunda kalmış. Önceliğimiz babanın olmaması veya çalışacak durumda olmaması. Ama bu öncelik. Şimdi tek şart bu var. Bu şart olunca yani bakıyorsunuz çocuk ister DTP'li olsun ister ne bileyim Kurt olsun Türk olsun yani sonuçta sokakta tanıştığımız çocuk. Genelde de Kurt oluyor, bu konuda çok eleştiri alıyoruz. Yani hani Kurtler'in çocuklarına bakıyorsunuz diye. Ama o çocuklar sokakta ne yapabiliriz ki? Yani özellikle Kurt olan çocuklara gitmiyoruz. Hatta bazen eşitlensin Kurt Türk aile sayısı diye mesela Orta Anadolu'dan birkaç ailemiz var, bu konuda gayret gösteriyoruz ama her tanıştığımız aile Kurt çikıyor. Ne yapabiliriz? Sadece yani çok başademeyeceğimiz çocukların aileleriyle zaten tanışmıyoruz. (...) Genelde şeylerin çocukların, çingene diyoruzya bazen böyle çok *yurtik* isteyen şey çocukların oluyor o çocukların ailelerine zaten gitmiyoruz. Zaten bakıyorsun çocukların konuşuyorsun bu aileyle biz tanışmayaşım diyorsun. Başademeyeceğimiz için. Yani o artık olmayacak çocuklar. Anlıyorsun çocukla tanıştığın zaman. Ne kadar uğraşsan da bu aileyle bir şey yapamazsun. (...) Ne yaparsan yap o çocuğunu çalıştırır. (...) O çocuklar genelde de çingene çocukların olmuş oluyor. Arkadaşlar genelde böyle adresini aldıkları çocuklar konuşurken biraz zaten *mazlum* aslında destek olunursa işte hani zeki çocuk başarılı olacağını düşündüğüm çocuk diyip falan gelip bize bahsediyorlar.

that vulnerability is not prior to recognition and is not taken for granted; rather it is reconstituted at the moment it is recognized. As she states, “when we say that every infant is surely vulnerable, that is clearly true, but it is true, in part, precisely because our utterance enacts the very recognition of vulnerability and so shows the importance of recognition itself for sustaining vulnerability.”²⁶³

Thus when vulnerability is recognized, that recognition has the power to change the meaning and structure of the vulnerability itself; in other words, vulnerability is reconstituted through variable norms of recognition. While discussing a “common” bodily vulnerability, Butler refers to its role as one precondition for humanization. In this sense, she mentions that humanization takes place differently through variable norms of recognition and argues that vulnerability is fundamentally dependent on existing norms of recognition if it is to be attributed to any human subject.²⁶⁴

I consider Butler’s arguments illuminating in understanding the Ç.S.S. volunteers’ various concerns towards the poor children and their families. Regarding the accounts of the informant in the quotation above, it is possible to argue that the child’s vulnerability is reconstituted through its recognition. The description of children as “shameless” (*yırtık*) and “suffering/victim” (*mazlum*) exemplifies the reconstitution of vulnerability at the moment it is recognized, in the sense that “*mazlum*” children are assumed to be vulnerable while “*yırtık*” children are believed to be no longer vulnerable for various reasons. In this regard, the characterization of children as “*yırtık*” and “*mazlum*” is explained with reference to the children’s family structure as well as their ethnic identity. Thus, the “*yırtık*” children are not involved

²⁶³ Judith Butler, “Violence, Mourning, Politics,” *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 4, no. 1 (2003), p. 30.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

in the Ç.S.S. project as their “shamelessness” originates from their family structure which is believed to reject the way the volunteers help and educate the children, and which would probably exploit the volunteers’ aid for their own ends.

In light of these arguments, it is apparent that the vulnerability that is assumed to be inherent in every child is unrecognizable in the case of “*yırtık*” children. This exemplifies Butler’s argument that variable norms of recognition are influential in the reconstitution and recognition of vulnerability if it is to be attributed to any human subject. In the context of the Ç.S.S. project, I assume that ethnic identity mostly determines the recognition norms that reconstitute the vulnerability of the children and their families. For instance, the volunteers state that they are sometimes criticized for caring for the poor Kurdish children with the assumption that they will threaten the unity of the Turkish Republican nation-state in the future if they are supported financially. Despite these critiques, they mention, they maintain their support for the Kurdish children as well as the others since the main criterion for their decision to help is the child’s obligation to work in the streets where they are subject to various dangers. Yet, they do not care for the Gypsy children, as Ayşe mentions, since these children, by being “*yırtık*,” are deemed not to fit to the norms of the Ç.S.S. volunteers who insist on maintaining their own norms and therefore are not recognized as vulnerable children deserving help.

Volunteers as Agents of the Political Culture

Whatever the ethnic identity of children, I assume that the marginalized social identities in society such as the Gypsies and Kurds are recognized as human beings deserving help if they appropriate the commonly accepted norms in the society by

leaving their own norms. Among these “norms,” I could enumerate are the maintenance of a heterosexual family structure for the child’s healthy development, integration into city life, the child’s attendance at school, and the maintenance of national unity through the adoption of sovereign culture in the public realm. The women volunteers embody these existing norms as they are among the members of the middle class that determines the values of society. The following sentences by the informant, Ayşe serve as an example:

Q: You mention that some families support PKK. Have you ever observed any tension among the children or among their parents due to this support? What do you think about this sympathy?

A: *The children themselves are against it. For example, they speak Kurdish. Although other children also understand Kurdish, they believe that if Turkish is the language of here, then you should speak in Turkish. “What if a non-Kurdish speaker thinks that you swear at him. That is why you should speak Turkish.” But, the owner of this claim was also a child who had spoken Kurdish when he first joined us, here. They learn it by time. “Yes, here it is time to speak [Turkish].” I mean we have never obliged them to speak Turkish, we have never warned them, but it happened naturally. I mean it is an outcome of their own discussions. (...) we never address that.. We say to the ones who complain for that, “they may think like that, they have just joined us. By time, they will learn that such kinds of things [such as Politics] are not talked here.” We do not get stuck on it. We ask to be tolerant toward them. We say, “that may be, it is their preference.” Politics has never been in our agenda and surely it should not be.* Otherwise, trust upon us would be weakened (emphases added).²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Interview with Ayşe, March 17, 2009, İstanbul.

Q: PKK’yı destekleyen ailelerimiz var dediniz. Bundan dolayı çocuklar ya da aileler arası bir çatışma oldu mu ya da sizin bu sempati karşısında düşünceniz ne oldu?

A: Çocuklar kendileri zaten karşı çıkmıyorlar. Mesela Kürtçe konuşuyorlar; diğer çocuklar Kürtçe anladığı halde burada Türkçe konuşuluyorsa Türkçe konuşmanız gereklidirler. Kürtçe bilmeyenler ne bilebilir sizin küfretmediğinizi onun için Türkçe konuşmanız gereklidirler. Fakat bu cevabı veren çocuk da buraya ilk geldiği zaman Kürtçe konuşan bir çocuktu. Onun için zaman içinde bunu öğrenmiş oluyorlar. Evet burada artık şey konuşmamız gereklidir. Hani bunu da biz illa Türkçe konuşacağınız diye hiçbir zaman uyarıda bulunmadığımız halde doğal sürecinde olan bir olay. Yani çocukların kendi aralarındaki konuşmalarla olan şeyler. (...) Biz bir şey demiyoruz. İşte şikayet eden çocukların için de, oyle düşünebilir daha yeni aramıza katıldı. Zaman içinde bu tür şeylerin (siyaset) burada konuşulmamasını öğrenecek. Anlayış gösteren filan o şekilde şey yapıyoruz. Olabilir kendi tercihi diyoruz. (...) Siyaset hiç girmeden gündemimize girmemeli de zaten. Yoksa güven sarsılır.

As it is apparent in these sentences, the volunteer expresses with satisfaction some of the Kurdish children's opposition to speaking Kurdish while they are together with other people (in public), who cannot understand Kurdish, although she says that they do not interfere with children regarding political issues. In this account, I assume that the building of the Life Foundation where children and their mothers assemble for didactic purposes is constructed as a public sphere which becomes the arena of "state-centered" political culture (as Butler defines it)²⁶⁶ constituted by the nationalist elites. In other words, I argue that the building of a civil society organization, that is, the Life Foundation, seems to serve as an institution representing the hegemonic ideology of the nation state. Thus, it obscures the distinction between the civil society and the state in the sense that the civil society works in harmony with the state.

Similar to this argument, I assume that my informant reproduces the private/public distinction of the Turkish state by designating the Life Foundation as a public realm that encourages the speaking of Turkish, which, in line with the official state ideology, restrains other ethno-linguistic cultures to the private realm. Henceforth, the Kurdish child's speaking her/his native language in the private domain (for instance in her/his house) is not considered an inappropriate behavior while her/his speaking Turkish in public is welcomed with the assumption that this conforms to the political/national culture adopted by the majority.

What seems to me striking here is the imagining of this private/public distinction in the mind of a woman wearing the headscarf. It is striking in the context of the Turkish modernization which constructs and imagines the public sphere as a

²⁶⁶ By the term "state-centered" political culture, Butler refers to the formation of individual subjectivities through the cultural norms created by state.
Butler, pp.31-32.

site for the implementation of a secular and progressive way of life and in this regard confines the religious practices to the private sphere. The covered Muslim women, who share the public sphere with the secular women through their access to higher education, are seen as a threat to the secular regime of modern Turkey by the secularists, since their headscarves are interpreted as the symbol of political Islam when seen in the public sphere, as also mentioned in Chapter 3.²⁶⁷

In this respect, I argue, through implying the “norm” of speaking Turkish in the public sphere, my covered informant ironically serves the sovereign political ideology which views her visibility in the public through her Islamic dress (i.e., the wearing of the headscarf) as a challenge to the “norms” of the secular public sphere.²⁶⁸ Thus, one could suggest reading this contradiction through Foucauldian notions of subject and power, and argue that the subjectivity of the individual is not independent from power and embodies the notions of political power.²⁶⁹ Similar to this argument, I suggest, Butler states that the “subject” does not always signify an individual but a model for agency and intelligibility—one that is very often based on notions of sovereign power. Thus, she defines individuals as social beings who are

²⁶⁷ For a detailed analysis of the tensions between the seculars and “Islamists” in the context of Turkey as a result of the new visibility of veiled educated women in the public which is constructed as a site for secular performances, see Nilüfer Göle, “Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1(2002), pp. 173-190.

²⁶⁸ In Muslim contexts of modernity, the public sphere is represented through women’s emancipation from all traditional-religious constraints upon them. See Nilüfer Göle, “The Gendered Nature of the Public Sphere,” p. 65.

²⁶⁹ Foucault analyzes the formation of subjectivity in the modern state, regarding its relation to the power in the state. He states that the subjectivity of the modern individual is constructed within power which is enacted by the state through the exercises of it in various institutions. In this respect, he mentions the novelty of power in the modern state in the sense that it is both an individualizing and a totalizing form of power. He explains the individualizing tactic of power in modern state in terms of its spread through multiple institutions. Thus, he pays attention to the fact that the modern state does not act upon individuals independent of them. It shapes and integrates individuals through the exercises of power in various institutions like those of the family, medicine, psychiatry, and education. Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Tokyo: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), p. 215, 224.

socially constituted with existing cultural norms: “...we are social; we are comported toward a ‘you’; we are outside ourselves, constituted in cultural norms that precede and exceed us, given over to a set of cultural norms and a field of power that condition us fundamentally.”²⁷⁰

Related to this issue, I want to mention that the volunteers attempt to reformulate the discourses they use in the educational seminars for the mothers and the children in line with their cultural norms. They approach the families’ problems through the language provided by modern psychology as well as pedagogy. Then they organize educational seminars offered by the psychologists and social workers, and benefit from the pedagogic information developed by commonly respected institutions such as UNICEF. However, they reformulate these data so that they will comply with their culture and family values.²⁷¹ Thus, the volunteers reflect the moral, social, and cultural ideas that condition them when dealing with the families’ problems; yet they assume these ideas as normally accepted ideas in the context of Turkish society.

In this chapter, firstly I have tried to present the Muslim volunteers’ perception of childhood from a cultural perspective. Then, I tried to analyze the politics of the Ç.S.S. welfare project regarding the volunteers’ categorization of children and their ideas about the children’s families. I wish to conclude this chapter by underlining some issues which I tried to touch upon throughout the chapter as I

²⁷⁰ Butler, p. 32.

²⁷¹ One of the volunteers Betul who works in Zeytinburnu Municipality’s Women Coordination Center gave the mothers of the children in the Ç.S.S. project a six-week educational seminar about child development and motherhood which is suggested by UNICEF. As she asserts, this seminar has been prepared especially for Turkey as it has been taught in Public Education Centers. In this regard, it complies with Turkish moral values yet in some points where it does not conform with commonly accepted values in the society, they could modify the content according to the social and cultural “norms” in the society. For example, she mentions the necessity of undertaking different roles by women and men in society according to their nature and states that in this education program by the UNICEF women are defined as being in every sphere of the society equally with men.

see them as important to understanding the volunteers' approach to the poor Kurdish families.

Throughout this chapter, it is observable that the fathers, the "shameless" as well as the street children are seen as troublesome subjects for this project. The volunteers do not communicate with the fathers with some reasons. On the one hand they state that they do not communicate with the fathers as the fathers refuse to participate in the seminars, programs designed for them despite the volunteers' attempt to deal with their problems. On the other hand, they describe the fathers as troublesome, such as being "aggressive" and "psychologically abnormal." Therefore, the women assert that they have to be more alert when they have any contact with them. The volunteers' refusal to care for the street children is related to gendered security issues as well as professionalism, as previously mentioned. As women, the volunteers identify themselves as physically weak in order to deal with the problems of street children. Additionally, they place emphasis on their need for professional and medical support. They do not see themselves as qualified enough to deal with the problems of the street children. Similarly, they refuse to care for the Gypsy children who are also defined as "shameless" by stating that they have also to be cared for professionally, as their family structure is very distinct from the society's "norms" and values, and the women will probably have difficulty in dealing with their problems. In their approach to the Gypsy children, they do not reject their innocence inherent in their nature but argue that this innocence is lost because of the ethical values and culture "peculiar" to the Gypsies. Thus, they suggest the Gypsy children should take professional support.

Whatever the reasons behind the volunteers' preference to care for the children working in the streets, it is apparent that social, moral, and political

concerns influence the *C.S.S.* volunteers' decision regarding whom to help. Thus, despite the perception of children as innocent and vulnerable beings who most deserve help, social, political, and moral concerns override humane sensitivity towards these innocent beings.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This present study has analyzed the role of pious Muslim women in philanthropic organizations under Turkey's current social, political, and economic conditions. I have examined the activities of a group of educated Muslim women who carry out a welfare project in Istanbul for poor children working in the streets and their families. While outlining the role of the philanthropic tradition in Islamic culture in general, this thesis has endeavored to demonstrate how contemporary Muslim middle classes, or Islamic groups, approach poverty and tackle its alleviation.

Discussing the role of the middle classes in the modernization and nationalization process, I have explicated how the middle classes in Turkey empower themselves in civil society organizations (CSOs) for the social, cultural, and economic improvement of society by concentrating on welfare projects such as the Ç.S.S. welfare project, named *Don't Let the Children Wilt Away in the Streets*.

This study on the activities of the Ç.S.S. volunteers focused on the relationship between piety, philanthropy, and the middle class in the context of Turkish modernity and Islamic culture. The execution of the Ç.S.S. welfare project by a group of educated and pious Muslim women pushed me to frame my study with these concepts. Surely, the increasing role of the new middle classes from within Islamic groups in the philanthropic organizations has brought the question of their particularity in approaching the issue of poverty and philanthropy. In other words, regarding the middle and upper-middle class Muslim women's participation in the CSOs for welfare activities, this study has been an attempt at understanding the role

of religious and modern dynamics in their approach to poverty, poverty alleviation, and philanthropy in contemporary Turkey.

In this regard, while examining how the middle class empowers itself in CSOs through voluntarily undertaken acts, I focused on the agency of the middle class in organizing activities for the welfare of society. Thereby, I underlined the emergence of a new kind of subjectivity, which is called volunteer subjectivity, as a result of the restructuring of CSOs, once the neoliberal states have mostly pulled out of welfare activities and left them to the hands of CSOs. I approached the topic of volunteer subjectivity in this thesis vis-à-vis the question of how piety, modernity, and emotionality intertwiningly form it. The focus of this study, in this regard, has been what the volunteerism means in the case of Ç.S.S., which factors create or shape it, and how the volunteers account for their activities. As I explored the historical and sociological readings on the issue of volunteerism in philanthropic and welfare activities, I made a sociological analysis of emotions and demonstrated the vital role emotions play in the formation of a philanthropic culture as well as the production of politics today.

Based on an emotional-discursive analysis of the philanthropist women in the Ç.S.S. project, this thesis concentrated on three intertwined issues related to the philanthropic activities of the volunteer subjects. The first issue is compassionate volunteer subjectivity that emerges as a result of witnessing the misery of the poor. The second one is emotions such as compassion and love that stimulate the volunteer subjects to act for the alleviation of poverty. In this respect, I elaborated on the role of emotions in the formation of a philanthropic tradition by referring to the studies that emphasize philanthropy as a modern kind of giving that originates from human love as intended in the literal meaning of the term philanthropy. Yet, I also brought

up studies that emphasize the Islamic form of philanthropy as being undertaken for both the love of God and the love of humanity in the name of God, and then throughout the thesis, analyzed how my informants think about these notions.

Finally, the third issue concerns the philanthropist women's taking responsibility for the needy through their voluntary acts. This responsibility originates from the awakening of emotions due to witnessing the misery of the poor, and thereby leads to action for the welfare of the poor. I have explicated this responsibility in two senses; one is responsibility to God as a result of being devout and the other is responsibility to humanity as a result of being part of the middle class of society that bears the norms and values of society which are learned through the modern and secular education.

Within this framework of inquiry, I reached the conclusion that compassionate volunteer subjectivity is both modern and pious. I argue that although the compassion of the affluent towards the unfamiliar poor is a modern attitude that originates from recognizing the “general human” in the particular “sufferer” (as Chakrabarty and Berlant discuss), it is also related to the domain of religion which recommends loving, caring, and showing mercy for the suffering people in the name of God. As manifested in the personal experiences of the Ç.S.S. volunteers, human love and God’s love supplement each other and prompt these women to voluntarily take action for the wellbeing of people.

I agree with Saktanber’s argument that “faith” (*iman*) has a crucial role in the formation of an Islamic middle class.²⁷² The faith in God and in the afterlife establishes the dynamics of the social and the individual practices of the Ç.S.S. Muslim volunteers. The Ç.S.S. women perceive the world through the prism of

²⁷² Saktanber, “Bir Orta Sınıf *Ethos* ’unun ve Onun Günlük Pratiğinin Oluşumu”, pp. 203-207.

religion which, in their opinion, defines the worldly life as a site for investment in the afterlife. They aspire to obtain eternal happiness through undertaking good and valuable deeds in the world, which include first and foremost working for the wellbeing of humanity. The volunteers define their volunteerism as a thankfulness to God and worshipping God, which I explained as “public piety” (in Lara Deeb’s terms); since, for them, serving people in public is a better means to acquire God’s blessing (*Allah rizasi*) than praying God in one’s private realm. Thus, I argue that different aspects of religious belief or faith (*inanç* or *iman*), which ranges from love and fear of God to belief in the hereafter, play an essential role in the formation of volunteer subjectivity among middle class Muslim women and distinguish them from other middle and upper-middle classes whose philanthropic activities are not driven by religion.²⁷³

However, it would be wrong to think that these Muslim volunteers are totally different from other middle classes in Turkey. To the contrary, as I have tried to show throughout this work, they are very similar in various regards and, indeed, that is why I called their subjectivity as both pious and modern above. Just like the Kemalist or secular women in Turkey, the Ç.S.S. women volunteers are graduates of the secular schools; most of them have professional works; they value women’s presence in public sphere; they share the gender and family norms of the society; and so on. That is to say, they are Turkish citizens, products of the Republic. Yet, as

²⁷³ İpek in her thesis about TEGV draws attention to the TEGV’s secular volunteers’ concerns for the continuation of Kemalist modernity though, she states, “TEGV is not a CSO with the sole purpose of protecting the accomplishments of Atatürk and the Republic like CYDD” (Association for the Support of Modern Life). For the discussion of the emergence of Kemalist CSOs as a response to the increasing influence of Islamist movements in big cities and their aim at achieving a modern society through Kemalist oriented modern education see; İpek, “Volunteers or Governors?,” pp. 149- 152.

noted above, faith and piety play a vital role in the formation of their identities, practices, ideas, as well as decisions.

Henceforth, I argue that the two main axes of the *C.S.S.* project are the question of poverty and childhood, and these two axes manifest the pious and modern nature of the women volunteers' subjectivity. The volunteers combine their religious beliefs with neoliberal solutions in dealing with poverty. They legitimize their involvement in welfare activities for the poor by referring to the Islamic ethic that emphasizes the virtue and responsibility of helping the needy. While their piety forms their approach to the poverty of children, the modern discourses of development and education play a vital role as well in shaping this child welfare project.

The *C.S.S.* women accept the existence of the poor and rich as basic social categories in a society by referring to the Islamic idea of philanthropy. They construct the relationship between the poor and the rich as social harmony rather than as class conflict as they define poverty and wealth as God's preordainment (*takdir*) for the rich and the poor. In other words, they do not problematize poverty if it is made bearable through the maintenance of basic human needs (such as nutrition, accommodation, employment) which would probably raise the welfare of the poor and preserve their hope for life.

Nevertheless, as a result of witnessing the misery of the poor families (in the *C.S.S.* project), they began to problematize the conditions of "poverty" under which these families live as they also began to question the "richness" of today's people almost through an intuitive feeling that makes them think that there is something wrong with these new forms of poverty and richness in the sense that they contradict the fundamental principles of Islam. In this regard, I argue that, on the one hand they

take liberal capitalism as a “reality” (in Žižek’s terms) and therefore they do not propose any alternative to it; however, on the other hand, they attempt to maintain a distance from it as they perceive capitalism as a “feared object” which is likely to draw Muslims away from Islamic ethical precepts.

In this context, they criticize the “increasing wastefulness” and “luxury” among the new rich Muslim groups since they think, they are against the moral principles of Islam that recommend modesty and altruism. They define the affluence of the rich Muslims today as “a means of their being tested by God” as they express their anxiety about the enrichment of Muslims. This richness, they believe, probably leans the Muslims towards the profane life as they no longer care about the idea of providing social justice among people, which Islamic notions of morality recommend believers to do.

In their problematization of poverty, children are particularly significant; since for them, children are most vulnerable to the harsh social and economic conditions. Besides vulnerability, they emphasize children’s innocence and state that they need care and love. Thus, they construct their welfare project on the basis of innocence and vulnerability of children as they believe that the conditions the new poverty creates influence children the most by pushing them to streets to work. For these women, streets are dangerous places that threaten the innocence of children. Therefore, they take the responsibility of supporting poor children working in the streets in order to prevent their becoming street children. They believe that the street children have lost their innocence as they lack family protection and care.

Henceforth, the women volunteers established the Ç.S.S. project for the rehabilitation of children working in the streets and their families. According to them, the wellbeing of children cannot be achieved without the wellbeing of the

family. The emphasis on family stands out since, as I argue, the women volunteers appropriate and reproduce various discourses as well as practices about the family, which are again mutually formed by their Islamic ideas and modern nation-state grounded subjectivities.

The modern nation-state does not only reveal itself in these women's choice of the family (the nuclear family) as the focal point of their activities but also conditions their relationship with the families they work with. The majority of children who are involved in the Ç.S.S. project are Kurdish children, as noted before, and therefore the women volunteers take care of the poor Kurdish families who had to leave their hometowns and migrate to Istanbul. The hegemonic discourses of the Turkish nation-state about the Kurdish people are reproduced by the Ç.S.S. volunteers in their approach to the Kurdish families. In this respect, they consider the so called Kurdish culture as the source of the "backwardness" and "ignorance" of the Kurdish families and therefore also as the reason for their poverty and employment of children.

Thus, as mentioned in this thesis, the women volunteers are particularly critical of the fathers of the children, and they talk about their laziness, irresponsibility, or psychological problems in terms of their Kurdish/Eastern culture even though they state that they do not know the fathers very well, and it would be unfair to depict all of them as such. After essentializing the Kurdish culture as such, they appeal to the modernist discourses of education and development as the means to alleviate the poverty of these Kurdish families.

Meanwhile, they also abide by the state's public and private boundaries, and appropriate the "state-centered political culture" (in Butler's terms) in the public realm which confines the other ethnic and local cultural signs to the private realm

(such as the speaking of Kurdish). In this regard, they obligate the children in the project to attend school and try to make their families, particularly the mothers, literate in Turkish. They do not criticize their speaking Kurdish among each other in the private realm but think that Turkish should be the language spoken in the public, even if it is sometimes due to practical oriented reasons, such as increasing the chances of these families for upward mobility through Turkish.

Nevertheless, the biases against the Kurds do not render the Kurdish families as those who do not deserve help in the eyes of the Ç.S. S. volunteers. The volunteers claim that they do not have any social, political, or religious concerns in selecting the poor children for the welfare project; but children's attendance at school, quitting working in the streets, the parent's taking responsibility for providing their basic needs rather than employing them, or the maintenance of the heterosexual family structure are some of the criteria that determine the volunteers' decision concerning whom to help. In fact, that is why, while the Kurdish children are welcome in the project, the Gypsy children are mostly not since the volunteers state that even when they provide financial aid to them, they continue to work and beg in the streets.

What is even more significant about the Ç.S.S. volunteers' acceptance of the Kurdish families is that they pursue it despite the criticism they receive from their friends and families. They are questioned regarding why they choose these Kurdish families but not other poor people, especially since they "might be threatening the unity of the Turkish state by supporting the terrorist activities (of *PKK*)."¹⁰ The volunteers reject such criticisms by underlining that they help these families because they know they need help the most and they do not mind whether they are Kurdish or not --- although one wonders whether they would help the families that, they know for sure, support the *PKK*.

In this respect, it is also important not to underestimate the constitutive role of religion in the relationship between the volunteers and the families. Islam provides a common language and a shared culture, which facilitate the communication between the Muslim women volunteers and the Muslim Kurdish mothers. The social and moral frameworks out of which they approach the problems of the Kurds are welcomed by the Muslim Kurdish families (especially mothers). Likewise ethical/religious conviction such as modesty; developing face-to-face, intimate relationship with the poor; and not looking down on these poor families helps the volunteers create strong ties with the Kurdish mothers. They organize picnics, assemble for tea parties at the foundation after the educational seminars, and one can tell that they really enjoy being involved in these activities.

I should also emphasize the key role headscarf plays in their relationship since the volunteers as well as the majority of the mothers involved in this project are veiled. As my informants told, the mothers of the children state that they feel themselves close to the veiled volunteers since their headscarf reminds them their traditional/rural clothing.²⁷⁴ In other words, the headscarf becomes the unifying factor between the middle class, urbanized, educated volunteers and the poor, rural, uneducated mothers. Although different style of covering reflects status differences, the veil transcends the differences between the urban volunteers and the rural mothers related to class and ethnicity.

I contend that although these women share several hegemonic ideas about the Kurds and reproduce the solutions of the “state-centered political culture” to the problems, they also maintain some distance from them. As I discussed above, they

²⁷⁴ As I observed in the field, most of the mothers of the children cover their heads. Yet, their style of covering varies. Some of them cover their heads with traditional scarves while others cover their heads with square synthetic/silk scarves like the urban veiled women in Turkey.

believe that the *PKK* is a terrorist organization, or Turkish is to be the language of the public sphere, or these families need to be civilized through the values of work ethic, education, city life, etc. Yet, they also strongly believe that the Kurdish people are subject to serious injustices including ethnic discrimination and forced migration.

The Turkish women volunteers have come to recognize that most of these families were forced to leave their hometowns while they were dragged into misery, chaos, and poverty in Istanbul. That is why the women think that the kind of life these Kurdish families live in Istanbul is not merely their own “fault.” They are aware that they cannot find jobs in Istanbul; they face discrimination for speaking Kurdish, or for not being able to speak Turkish properly, or for being potential supporters of the *PKK*, or for preserving their rural habits in the city, and so on. The more they have listened to these families’ narratives the more they have been exposed to the other side of the story, which, I argue, has enabled them to step outside of the “state-centered political culture,” even if to a limited degree.

In other words, I assert, the Ç.S.S. project has not only transformed the lives of the Kurdish children and their parents who are part of it but also the Ç.S.S. volunteers themselves. The point of my analysis in this respect is not to idealize the Ç.S.S. volunteers. To the contrary, I think, their position on the Kurdish issue is laden with ambiguities and contradictions which reproduce as well as reject the hegemonic discourses about the Kurds. Indeed, I believe, one of the foremost contributions of this study has been to show the compatible but as well as conflicting and ambiguous relationship between the modern and the pious along with the internal contradictions of the both.

Although I focused on the rise of volunteer subjectivity in this thesis, the question of how volunteer subjects themselves are transformed in their own welfare

projects or philanthropic acts deserves further research. Indeed the observations I made during my fieldwork have transformed my own ideas as well. I saw the children and their mothers many times by participating in the educational seminars, family visits, and social gatherings organized for them, and occasionally had a chance to talk with them. These meetings have led me to question my own position as a middle class, secular educated, urban woman. Until now, I used to think that I know the kinds of the problems the Kurdish people encounter in Turkey both as a social academician and as an Easterner, i.e. as someone originally from a city in the East Anatolia. Yet, my encounter with these very poor Kurdish families living in Istanbul opened my eyes to the fact that I am indeed mostly unaware of their problems. In this respect, there is no doubt that this study would have been more complete if I had had the chance to give voice to the Kurdish recipients of this project, and had listened to their life stories; though it would not only change the focus of this study but also exceed the limits of this M.A. thesis.

I have examined in this thesis the Ç.S.S. project by focusing on its founders and carriers, namely the women volunteers. I elaborated on their own identities and activities as being the products of (Turkish) modernity as well as religion, and hence talked about their subjectivity as modern and pious. Yet, I also expanded on the intricate nature of that subjectivity, namely the ambiguous, mutually supportive as well as contradictory interplay between the modern and the pious. I scrutinized the *raison d'être* of the Ç.S.S. project, that is, alleviating poverty and helping out the children who have to work in the streets, which turned out to be the veiled, Turkish Muslim women's welfare activities for the poor Kurdish Muslim families in Istanbul. While I examined the role of different emotions in the formation of this welfare project, I also came to the conclusion that the project itself, namely, the mere

exposure to the facts on the ground, the witnessing of extreme poverty as well as suffering of the Kurdish families, and the sense of responsibility that generates out of that experience not only strengthened the women volunteers' commitment but also transformed them.

APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTORY PAMPHLET OF THE Ç.S.S. PROJECT

PROJE İSMİ :

ÇOCUKLAR
SOKAKTA SOLMASIN

UYGULAYICI KURULUŞ : Hayat Sağlık ve Sosyal Hizmetler Vakfı

Hayat Sağlık ve Sosyal Hizmetler Vakfı doktor, sağlık çalışanları tarafından 19.01.1989 yılında kurulmuş, 2006 yılında kamu yararına vakıf statüsü kazanmış bir vakıftır. Sağlık alanında bilimsel arastama ve geliştirme çalışmaları, kültürel ve sosyal yardım amaçları yanında halkın sağlığının korunabilmesi için her türlü kültürel, sosyal ve iktisadi imkanı sağlayıcı tesisler kurup, hekimler ve sağlık mensupları arasında yardımlaşma ve dayanışmanın sağlanması, sağlıkla ilgili okullarda okuyan öğrencilere yardım yaparak Türkiye'nin kalkınmasına ve sosyal refahın artmasına yardımدا bulunmak amacını taşımaktadır.

PROJENİN ÖZETİ

Çocuklar Sokakta Solmasın Projesi Hayat Vakfı tarafından İstanbul'da 1998 yılından bu yana ilköğretim çağında, ailesiyle birlikte yaşayan ve sokakta çalışan/çalıştırılan çocukların sokakta çalışmaya iten nedenleri araştınp ortadan kaldırılmaya, daha ilerde sokak çocuğu olmalarını engellemeye ve bu amaçla çocukların ve ailelerini rehabilit etmeye ve maddi ve manevi destek olmaya yönelik uygulanmaktadır.

PROJENİN GEREKÇESİ

Özellikle son yıllarda birçok gelişmekte olan ülkede olduğu gibi yurdumuzda da sokakta yaşayan ve/veya çalışan çocukların sorunu kamuoyunu ve ilgili kurumları yakından ilgilendirir hale gelmiştir. Aslında onlar bir sorun değil hızlı kentleşme süreci ile oluşan gecekondulaşma, göç, ekonomik yetersizlik ve işsizliğin sonuçlandır. Ayrıca boşanmalar, sokağın özgürlüğü ve çekiciliği, aile ve çocuğun eğitimsizliği, ailelerin çocukların ihmali ve istismar etmeleri, arkadaş grupları, medyanın olumsuz yayınları, yetişkinlerin acıma duyguları ile çocuklara sokakta rastgele para ve eşya verme gibi olumsuz tutum ve davranışları da sokak çocukların olgasunda önemli rol oynamaktadır.

Sokak çocukların tanımlanmasında çocukların aileleriyle olan ilişkilerine göre ayırmaların uygun olacağı düşüncesiyle UNICEF'in de önerdiği şu sınıflama kabul görmüştür:

1. Aileleriyle sürekli ilişkisi olan çocuklar-Sokağa aday çocuklar: "**Sokakta çalışan çocuklar**"
2. Aileleriyle zaman zaman ilişki kuran çocuklar: "**Sokaktaki çocuklar**"

3.Aileleriyle hiç ilişkisi olmayan çocuklar: "Sokağın çocuklar"

Türkiye'deki konuya ilgili çalışmalarında bu çocuklar iki grup halinde sınıflandırılmaktadır:

1.Sokak Çocukları - Sokakta yaşayan çocuklar: Tüm zamanlarını sokakta geçirirler, zararlı alışkanlık ve şiddet oram çok yüksek olduğundan aileleri ile ilişkilerini tamamen koparmışlardır; bu nedenle de fiziksel ve ruhsal tüm tehlikelere açıktır. Sevgisizlik, eğitsizlik, terk edilme duygusu, güvensizlik, cinsel ve psikolojik istismarlar nedeniyle hayatı ve geleceğe yönelik yargılan ve düşünceleri farklıdır.

2.Sokakta çalışan/çalıştırılan çocuklar: Geç saatte de olsa evlerine dönen, aile geçimine katkı olsun diye çalışan ve genelde okulla bağlan süren çocuklar. Ancak yetişkin rolü üstlenip para kazandıkları halde harcama yetkisi konusunda çocuk sayıldıklarıdan çelişki yaşarlar.

Zamanla bu çelişki onları sokakta bağımsız yaşamaya iter. Ders çalışmaya zamanlan ve uygun ortamları olmadığından okula gidenlerin basan oranın düşüktür.

Bu sınıflamalarda çocukların adım adım daha tehlikeli ve normal yaşama dönümlerini zorlaştıran ortamlara sürüklüyor olmalan dikkati çekmektedir. Gerçekten de cam siliciliği, mendil satma ve benzeri işlerle sokakta olan çocuğun daha sonra şiddet, uçucu madde kullanma gibi olaylara kanıştığı ve ailesinden, evinden koptuğu görülmektedir. Çoğu zaman ailenin denetiminden uzaklaşan çocuk eğitimini yanda bırakmakta, akran gruplarından soyutlandığı gibi yetişkinlerin dünyasına da girememekte, iş ortamına da uyum sağlayamayarak aynlmakta, sokaktaki sınırsız ve sorumsuz özgürlüğü seçerek sosyal yaşamdan tamamen kopmakta ve bir süre sonra sokakta yaşamayı tercih eder hale gelmektedir.

İstanbul Valiliğinden alınan verilere göre (2004) İstanbul'da sokakta yaşayan çocuk sayısı 204, sokakta çalışan çocuk sayısı ise 2178'tir. İstanbul'da 2000 yılından 2004 yılına kadar ulaşılan sokakta yaşayan çocuk sayısı 2655, sokakta çalışan çocuk sayısı ise 5206'dır. (İo/İİİ, 160, 180 esas numaralı Meclis Araştırma Komisyonu Raporu)

Türkiye genelinde ise Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu Genel Müdürlüğü'ne bağlı 42 Çocuk ve Gençlik Merkezi tarafından 2004 yılı Haziran ayı itibarı ile 40.205 çocuğa ulaşmıştır. Bu çocukların 28.374'ü sokakta çalışan çocuklar, 11.829'u sokakta yaşayan çocuklarındır. Ulusal eylem planında bu çocukların 2005'e kadar %20'sinin, 2010'a kadar %50'sinin ve 2015'e kadar tamamının sokakta çalışmadan çekilmesi hedeflenmektedir ve bu hedefe ulaşmada SHÇEK ve sivil toplum kuruluşları sorumlu tutulmaktadır.

İstanbul sokaklarında yaşayan ve çalışan çocukların ve ailelerinin özellikleri, yaşam koşulları, sokakta yaşadıkları ve karşı karşıya kaldıkları riskler ve ileriye

yönelik bekentilerini sorgulayan araştırmalarda şu sonuçlar elde edilmiştir (Karatay A.: Beyoğlu Bölgesinde Sokakta Çalışan Çocuklar ve Aileleri. 1. İstanbul Çocuk Kurultayı Araştırmalar Kitabı İstanbul Çocuk Vakfı Yayınları:4, 2000):

Sokakta çalışan çocukların yaşılan (%70'e yakını 10-15 yaş) sokakta yaşayanlardan birkaç yaş daha küçük. Karatay'in yaptığı çalışmada %9 oranında sokakta çalışan kız çocuğu tespit edilmiş. Bu çocukların yansından fazlasının sokakta çalışan başka kardeşi var. %70'e yakınının memleketi doğu yada güneydoğu Anadolu. Annelerin %70'i okur-yazar değil ve özellikle sokakta çalışan çocukların annelerinin çalışma oram çok düşük. Anne-babanın yaşı ortalaması 40 civar. Çoğunluğu iki odalı apartman bodrum katlarında ya da gecekonduarda yaşıyorlar. Özellikle sokakta yaşayan çocukların ailelerinde zararlı alışkanlık oranı ve aile içi şiddet çok daha fazla.

Sokakta yaşayan çocukların yaklaşık dörtte üçü toplumun onların sorunlarıyla ilgilenmediğini düşünüyor ve sadece yansı kendilerine yönelik kurumlardan haberdar. Çalışan çocuklarınsa bu konularda çok fazla bilgileri yok. Sokakta yaşayan çocukların %26'sı tüm ailesini, %20'si kardeşlerim, %17'si annesini özlediğini söylüyor. Sokak çocukların %40'i tiner, %80'i sigara, %1'i ise bağımlılık yapan madde kullanıyor. Sevgi kelimesi bu çocukların yansına aile ile ilgili duygulan, güven dolu sıcak duygulan hatırlatıyor, dörtte birine ise hiçbir şey hatırlatmıyor. Yaşayanların %80'si, çalışanların ise %42'si sokakta olmaktan memnun değil. Çoğunluğu bir meslek edinmeyi ve eğitime devam etmeyi istiyor. Çocukların tamamına yakım kendi çocukların sokakta olmasını istemediklerini söylüyor. Çocukların çoğunluğu dinlenmek, meslek edinmek, ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak ve aileleriyle ilişki kurabilmek için hizmet verecek merkezleri olsun istiyorlar.

"Çocukların Sokağa Düşüren Nedenlerle Sokak Çocuklarının Sorunlarının Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Tedbirlerin Belirlenmesi" amacıyla 26.10.2004 tarihinde kurulan TBMM Araştırma Komisyonuna yapılan sunumlar ve bilgilendirmeler ile çocuklarınla ilgili problemlerin yoğun olarak yaşandığı illerde yapılan incelemeler sonucunda; sorunun sahiplenilmediği sokakta yaşayan/çalışan çocukların ilgili sağlıklı bir veri tabam bulunmadığı, problemin kaynağı olan aileye yönelik koruyucu, önleyici çalışmaların yetersiz olduğu, tespit edilmiştir.

Özellikle problemin kaynağı aile olduğuna göre, aileye yönelik koruyucu-önleyici-geliştirici çalışmalar yapılmalıdır. Hazırlanan projeler çocuklara ve ailelerine hizmet götürmeyi, çocuğu ailesiyle buluşturup aileyi kalkındırmayı, kamuoyunu bilinçlendirmeye ve duyarlı kılmaya yönelik lobi faaliyetlerini, ilgili birimler arasında ağ oluşturmayı ve insan kaynaklarını yönetmeyi hedeflemelidir. Bütün bunları gerçekleştirmede en önemli güç toplumsal katılım; yani sivil toplum kuruluşlarıdır.

2828 sayılı Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu Kanunu'nda korunmaya muhtaç çocuklara ilişkin soysal hizmetlerin ancak bu kanunla kurulan kurum tarafından yürütüleceği belirtilmektedir. Günümüzde çocuk bakımı uzmanlarının benimsediği anlayışa göre, bir kurum ne kadar iyi olursa olsun ideal çözüm degildir. Çocukların böyle yerlerde kendilerine birey gibi davranışması imkansızdır ve kendi insanı potansiyellerini, toplumsal ve duygusal becerilerini tam olarak geliştirebilmeleri çok zordur. Diğer yandan kurumlar ekonomik olaraka da verimli değildir. Alternatif yardımların da olabileceğini ve bunların ekonomik olarak daha verimli olduğunu STK'lar göstermek zorundadır. Ülkemizde bu sorunun diğer ülkelere göre çok geç ortaya çıkışmasında toplumun sorumluluk bilincinin ve dayanışmasının fazla olmasının, vakıflar ve dernekler gibi toplumsal örgütlenmelerin yaygınlığı ve işlevselliğinin katkısı büyktür.

Dünya'daki örneklerinden farklı olarak yurdumuz hala avantajlı durumundadır. Aile kurumu aldığı birçok darbeye rağmen toplumun hayatında önemli bir değere sahiptir. Yine toplumun değer yargıları, insana ve çocuğa verdiği önem, gelenek ve dini inançlar başka birçok sosyal sorunun çözümünde olduğu gibi bu konuda da en kısa zamanda olumlu sonuçlar alınmasını sağlayacaktır.

Hayat Sağlık ve Sosyal Hizmetler Vakfı; senedindeki Türkiye'nin kalkınmasına ve sosyal refahın artmasına yardımda bulunmak amacıyla yönelik ve sokak çocukları sorunun çözümünde toplumsal katılım gerekliliğinin bilinciyle 1998 yılında "Çocuklar Sokakta Solmasın" ismiyle bir proje başlatmıştır ve sürdürmektedir. Bu projeye sokakta çalışan çocukların sokak çocuğu olma riski göz önüne alınarak soruna temelden bir çözüm getirmek hedeflenmiş ve havuzu dolduran musluk kapatılmaya çalışılmaktadır. Bunun içinde ilk şart çocuğun ailesi ile birlikte güvenli ve sağlıklı bir barınma ortamına kavuşturulması ve eğitiminin devamının sağlanmasıdır. Resmi kurumların yanı sıra ancak sivil toplum kuruluşları ve özellikle yüzyıllardır sosyal alanda vazgeçilmez konumunu kanıtlamış vakıflar ve bünyelerinde çalışan gönüllüler ile bu şartın sağlanabileceği gerekçesiyle bu proje planlanmış ve uygulamaya konulmuştur.

PROJENİN GENEL AMACI

Projenin genel amacı; İstanbul'da sokakta çalışan veya aileleri tarafından çalıştırılan çocukların aileleri ile birlikte rehabilite edilerek fiziksel, ruhsal ve sosyal tehlikelerden uzak, her türlü haklarının gözetildiği, güvenli ve sağlıklı bir yaşam sürdürmelerini sağlamak; sokak çocuğu olmalarını önlemektir.

PROJENİN HEDEFLERİ

Proje amacına ulaşmak için;

- I. Çocukların okullardaki eğitimlerini devam ettirip bir meslek sahibi olmalarını sağlamak.**
- II. Fiziksel ve ruhsal açıdan sağlıklı büyüp gelişmelerini, doğru ve yeterli beslenmelerini sağlamak**
- III. Duygusal gelişimlerini tamamlanmalarına, yeteneklerini ortaya çıkarmalarına ve geliştirmelerine, özgüvenlerini kazanmalarına, kendilerini ifade edebilmelerine destek olmak. Kendi imkanlarıyla ulaşamayacakları sosyal imkanlar sunmak, eğlenmelerini, spor yapmalarını sağlamak.**
- IV. Aileleri ile birlikte yaşadıkları evlerini yaşanabilir kılmak**
- V. Ailelere eğitimin önemini kavratmak, sokaktaki riskler konusunda onları bilinçlendirmek, ailelere rehberlik ve danışmanlık hizmeti vermek, ebeveynlerin ve özellikle annelerin ihtiyacı olan konularda eğitimlerini sağlamak.**

VI. Kamuoyunu konuya ilgili bilgilendirici ve bilinçlendirici çalışmalar yapmak; bu amaçla resmi kurumlar ve diğer sivil toplum kuruluşlarıyla koordineli çalışmak.

PROJENİN UYGULAMA ALANI

İstanbul ili ve ilçeleri

PROJENİN HEDEF KİTLESİ

Sokakta çalışan/çalıştırılan, aileleri ile birlikte yaşayan, ilköğretim çağındaki kız ve erkek çocuklar ve aileleri

PROJENİN SÜRESİ

Proje Kasım 1998 tarihinde başlatılmıştır, halen sürdürmektedir. Kurumsal bir kimlik kazanıncaya kadar bu şekilde yürütülmesi öngörmüştür.

PROJENİN FAALİYETLERİ

Proje kapsamında gerçekleştirilen tüm faaliyetler çalışan çocukları, kardeşlerini ve ailelerini kapsamaktadır.

I. Eğitime Destek

- Okul forması ve kırtasiye ihtiyaçlarım karşılamak
- Çocukları uygun okullara kaydım sağlamak (meslek liseleri gibi)
- Öğretmen ve okul idarecileri ile iletişime geçerek öğrenci velisi görevi üstlenmek
- Okul kurslarına kayıtlarını yaptırmak
- OKS ve ÖSS Sınavlarına hazırlanan çocukları dershaneye yazdırma
- Okul derslerine destek amacıyla özel ders alırmak
- Çocukların eğitimlerine uygun iş bulmak

II. Sağlığı ve Beslenmeye Destek

- Koruyucu hekimlik kapsamında yaşadıkları mekanın sağlıklı ve hijyenik olmasını sağlamak

- Çocukların sağlığını ve normal büyümeye-gelişmesini etkileyebileceği öngörülen durumları ve hastalıkları tesbit edip gerekli olan tedavi, bağışıklama ve rehabilitasyon programlarını uygulamak
- Sosyal güvencesi olmayan ailelere yeşil kart çıkışma konusunda rehberlik yapmak
- Sağlıklı ve yeterli beslenmeleri için gıda yardımı yapmak

III. Sosyal Destek

- Çocukların eğlenmeleri amacıyla bayram kutlamaları ve karne şenlikleri, piknikler düzenlemek
- Özel yetenekleri olan çocukların, yeteneklerine uygun eğitimler almalarına yardımcı olmak; elişi etkinlikleri, tiyatro ve müzik çalışmaları düzenlemek
- Çeşitli küçük sorumluluklar vererek, kendini ifade etme ve başarı duygusunu yaşatmak, özgüvenlerini kazandırmak
- Her türlü eğitici yayın, araç ve gereçlerle öğretimlerine; sanat etkinlikleriyle kişisel gelişimlerine katkı sağlamak. Sinema ve tiyatroya gitmek, tarihi, kültürel ve turistik geziler yapmak
- Türkçe'yi doğru kullanmalarını, düşünce ve duygularını ifade edebilmelerini sağlamak amacıyla okuma ve yazma çalışmaları yapmak
- Göç nedeniyle İstanbul'da olan ailelerin köylerine gitmelerini sağlayarak çocukların köy özlemlerini gidermek

IV. Maddi Destek

- Yazlık ve kişlik olmak üzere yılda iki kez ve bayramlarda giyecek yardımı yapmak
- Evleri kötü olan ailelerin daha iyi eve geçebilmeleri için kira yardımında bulunmak
- Ev eşyası yardımı yapmak

V. Rehberlik ve Danışmanlık

- Anne babaların okuma yazma öğrenebilmeleri konusunda destek olmak
- Anne babalara ailenin korunmasına yönelik eğitim programları düzenlemek
- Ailelerin karşılaşıkları sorumlarda danışmanlık yapmak veya ilgili kurumlara

yönlendirmek

- Anne babaların iş bulabilmeleri konusunda destek olmak

VI. Tanıtım ve Bilgilendirme

- İlgili toplantı, sempozyum ve kongrelere katılmak
- Sokaktaki çocuklar ve proje hakkında bilgilendirici doküman basmak, dağıtmak
- Yazılı ve görsel medya organlarını sokaktaki çocuklar ve proje hakkında bilgilendirmek
- Okullar, diğer sivil toplum kuruluşları gibi farklı ortamlarda projeyi tanıtmak, toplumu sokaktaki çocuklarla ilgili bilinçlendirmek,
- Projenin tanıtıldığı ve konuya ilgili bilgilerin yer aldığı bir web sayfası hazırlamak
- Sokaktaki çocuklarla ilgili çalışmalarındaki tecrübelerin paylaşıldığı, çözüm önerilerinin tartışıldığı bir sempozyum düzenlemek

METODOLOJİ

- * Özel mekan gerektirenler dışındaki tüm proje faaliyetleri Vakıf binasında gerçekleştirilmektedir.
- * Proje, Vakıf bünyesinde oluşturulan Sokakta Çalışan Çocukları Koruma Komisyonu tarafından yürütülmektedir.
- * Yapılan yardımların miktarı ve niteliği ailenin özelliğine göre farklılık gösterebilmektedir.
- * Yapılan yardımların bir kısmı aynı bağışlar veya sponsorlar tarafından karşılanmaktadır.
- * Projeye katkıda bulunmak isteyen gönüllüler ne tür yardım yapabileceklerini ve iletişim bilgilerini içeren ekteki gönüllü formunu doldurmakta, komisyon da gerek duyduğunda bu yardımları talep etmektedir.
- * Çocukların katılacağı sosyal etkinliklerde aileler tarafından bir izin formu doldurularak komisyon'a verilmektedir.
- * Ailelere yapılan ayni ve nakdi yardımlar bir tutanakla kayıt altına alınmaktadır.
- * Proje kapsamında yapılan faaliyetler 1998-2005 yılı ve 2005-2006 yılı faaliyet raporları olarak ekte sunulmuştur. Faaliyet dönemleri öğretim takvimine göre ayarlanmaktadır.

Komisyonun proje faaliyetlerini uygulama yöntemi

1. Çalışmalara başlamadan önce komisyon üyelerinin ve gönüllülerin konuya ilgili bilgilendirilmeleri ve eğitimleri

- Sokaktaki çocuklar ile ilgili araştırma sonuçlarının, istatistik verilerin incelenmesi,
değerlendirilmesi (Karatay A.: Beyoğlu Bölgesinde Sokakta Çalışan Çocuklar ve Aileleri. 1. İstanbul Çocuk Kurultayı Araştırmalar Kitabı İstanbul Çocuk Vakfı Yayınları:4, 2000)
- Hedef kitleyi içeren yaşı grubundaki çocukların fiziksel ve ruhsal gelişimleri ile ilgili eğitim (Seyhan Büyflkcoşkun, Eğitimci)

2. Komisyonun çalışma yöntemi

- Düzenli periyodik komisyon toplantıları yapılıyor.
- Her aileden sorumlu kişiler belirleniyor, bu kişiler aileleri ziyaret ediyor, annelerle görüşüyor.
- Sorumlu kişiler, komisyonu ailelerin ihtiyaçları ve sorunları hakkında bilgilendiriyor.
- Komisyonda ailelere yapılacak yardımlar tesbit ediliyor.
- Yardım alınacak kişi ve kuruluşlarla irtibat sağlanıyor.
- Özel günler ve sosyal etkinlikler için programlar hazırlanıyor, uygulama takvimleri belirleniyor.

3. Komisyonda görevli kişiler ve görev tanımları (2005-

2006 yılı) Komisyon Başkanı: Dt. Saadet Avcı

- Projenin teknik ve idari açıdan yürütülmesi, izlenmesi, bütçenin takibi gibi proje ile ilgili tüm faaliyetlerden sorumludur.
- Proje damşmam ile birlikte ilgili kurum ve kuruluşlarla iletişime geçerek koordinasyonu sağlar.
- Proje damşmam ile birlikte projenin tanıtım ve temsili konusunda yetkili ve sorumludur.

Komisyon Başkan Yardımcısı: Fatma Taşçı

- Aileler ile iletişimden sorumludur; aile sorumlularının çalışmalarını takip eder, onları yönlendirir, çözemedikleri sorunların giderilmesine yardımcı olur.
- Aile ziyaret raporlarının ve yıllık faaliyet raporunun hazırlanmasından sorumludur.

Danışman ve Tanıtım Sorumlusu: Dr. Havva Sula

- Basılı dokümanların, web sayfasının içeriğinden sorumludur.
- Karar vericilerle yapılacak olan ileriye yönelik planlarda danışmanlık yapar.
- Komisyondan aldığı bilgiler doğrultusunda proje kapsamında yeni projeler planlar,
- hazırlar.
- Çalışmayı farklı kurum ve kuruluşlar nezdinde, sempozyum, kongre gibi toplantılarda temsil eder, tanıtır.
- Çalışma sonuçlanm bilimsel yayın haline getirerek yayılanmasını ve sunulmasını sağlar.

Sağlık Sorumlusu: Dr. Gonca Sarışın

- Aile sorumlularının çözemediği sağlık sorunlarında danışmanlık ve yönlendirme yapar.
- Sağlık Taraması proje sorumlusudur. Taramanın sonuçlarına göre devam ettirilmesi gereken tedavi ve rehabilitasyon programlarını düzenler, uygulanmasını sağlar.
- Sağlıkla ilgili yardımında işbirliği yapılacak kurum ve kişileri belirleyerek iletişimini sağlar.

Eğitim Sorumlusu: Fatma Taşçı

- Aile sorumlularının çözemediği eğitim sorunlarında danışmanlık ve yönlendirme yapar.
- Eğitimle ilgili yardımında işbirliği yapılacak kurum ve kişileri belirleyerek iletişimini sağlar.
- Eğitim malzemesi yardımının temin edilmesi ve dağıtılmamasından sorumludur.
- Yaz okulu ve hafta sonu programlarının eğitim içeriğinden sorumludur.

Sosyal İşler Sorumlusu: Şenay İzgür

- Piknik, tanıtım çayı, gezi, kermes gibi etkinlıkların organizasyonundan sorumludur.
- Tüm etkinlıkların görsel olarak kaydım yapar.
- Giyecik yardımının düzenlenmesi ve dağıtılmamasından sorumludur.

Bütçe Sorumlusu: Saide Biçer

- Gönüllülerden aidatları toplar.
- Başkanla birlikte proje bütçesini yapar.
- Projenin gelir gider hesaplarını yapar.

Sekreter: Yasemin Yıldızan

- Komisyon toplantılarında gündemi ve alınan kararları içeren tutanakları hazırlar,

dosyalar.

- Faaliyetler sırasında kullanılan formlan, yardım tutanaklarını ve diğer proje dokümanlarını dosyalar.

—Belge, yayın, broşür, kitap, araştırma gibi arşiv dokümanlarını dosyalar.

—Etkinlikleri belgeleyen fotoğraf, gazete kupürü, dergi vb'ni arşivler.

- Çocuklar ve ailelerle haberleşmeyi sağlar.
- Projenin kurum içinde veya dışında tanıtılmasında gerekli görsel malzemeyi sağlar.
- Projenin yürütülmesi sırasında gerekli her türlü belgelerin yazılmasından ve kurum dışı yazışmalardan sorumludur.

Aile sorumluları

- Sorumlu olduğu aileleri belirli sıklıklarla ziyaret eder, sorunlarını ve ihtiyaçlarını belirleyerek komisyon'a sunar. Belirlenen çözümlerin uygulanmasını takip eder.
- Komisyon başkanı ve diğer sorumlularla koordineli çalışır.

Gönüllüler

- Gönüllü formunda yapabileceklerini belirttikleri katkıları sağlarlar.

4. Çocukların ve ailelerin tesbiti

- Çocuklarla tanışma
 - Sokakta çalışırken : 16 aile (% 47)
 - Okul vasıtasıyla : 5 aile (% 15)
 - Diğer kurumlar aracılığıyla : 7 aile (% 20)
 - Tanıdıkların önerisiyle : 4 aile (% 12)
 - Muhtarın önerisiyle : 1 aile (% 3)
 - Kendi müracaatları ile : 1 aile (% 3)
- İlk Aile ziyaretleri
 - Ailelerin maddi durumları, aile yapılan, ev özellikleri gözlemleniyor.
 - Ebeveynler özellikle anne iletişim kurma ve işbirliği yapılabilme açısından değerlendiriliyor.
 - Bu veriler komisyonda tartışılp ailenin proje kapsamına alınmasına karar veriliyor.
 - Aileye proje ve yapılacak destek hakkında bilgi verilip, karşılık olarak aileden çocuklanın çalıştırılmamalan ve eğitimlerine önem vermeleri talep

ediliyor.

- Her aile için ekte sunulan aile bilgi formu düzenleniyor.

- Bugüne dek 34 aile ve 62'ü (42-%68 erkek, 20-%32 kız) sokakta çalışan 182 çocuk proje kapsamına alınmıştır. Şu anda 23 aile ve 39'u (27 erkek, 12 kız) daha önce sokakta çalışan 115 çocukla çalışma devam ediyor. 11 aile eğitime önem vermemeleri, ailenin şartlarının düzeltmesi, uzağa taşınma gibi sebeplerden dolayı proje kapsamından çıkanlardır.
- Çocukların yaş ortalaması 9,8 (kız 7,8, erkek 10,8) kardeş sayısı 5,4, memleketleri (%70) doğu ve güneydoğu Anadolu, yaptıkları iş çögulukla (%50) kâğıt mendil satıcılığı. Annelerin yaş ortalaması 35, babalarının ise 39. Annelerin %85'i, babaların %48'si okuryazar değil; annelerin % 80'i, babaların %50'si çalışmıyor, %6'sı vasıflı işçi. % 85'i 2odalı, % 57'si apartman bodrum katı evlerde yaşıyorlar.
- Bugüne kadar sokakta görüşülen çocuklardan 5 tanesi aileleri burada olmadığı ve okula gitmek istemedikleri, bir tanesi okula gitmediği, bir aile de çocuğunu çalışıtmaktan vazgeçmeyeceğini söyledişi için proje kapsamına alınmadı.
- Proje kapsamına alman 34 aileden 11 tanesi şartlan proje kriterlerinin dışına çıktığı için projeden çıktı. 3 aile çocukların eğitimine önem vermedi; 2 aileden ağabeyler çalışmaya başladı, ekonomik durumları düzeltti; 2 aileden çocuklar çalışmaya devam etti, 3 aile ile irtibat koptu, 1 aile çocukların yatılı okula verdi.
- Aileler ile ilgili bilgiler ekteki tabloda sunulmuştur.

5. *Yardımlar*

- Eğitim yardımı
 - Ailede okul çağında olup okula gitmeyen çocuklar ilköğretim, lise döneminin de çocuklar uygun liselere yazıyor, meslek okullarında okuyanlar için mezuniyetlerinde ya da yaz tatillerinde iş imkânı araştırılıyor. 2005—2006 öğretim yılında 1'i Çağaloğlu Anadolu Lisesi, 7'i meslek lisesi

olmak üzere 13 lise öğrencisi, 60 ilköğretim öğrencisi, 1 üniversite öğrencisi)

- Her eğitim döneminde çocukların okul kıyafetleri, çanta ve kırtasiye masrafları karşılanıyor. (2005—2006 öğretim yılında 70 öğrenci)
- Çocukların velisi olarak okul idaresi ve öğretmeni ile iletişim halinde bulunuluyor.
- İlköğretimdeki çocuklar okul kurslarına yazdırılıyor. (2005-2006 öğretim yılında 15 öğrenci)
- OKS ve OSS hazırlanan çocuklar dershaneye gönderiliyor. (2005-2006 öğretim yılında 9 öğrenci)
- Gönüllü ya da ücretli öğretmenler tarafından vakıf binasında özel veriliyor. (2005-2006 öğretim yılında 5 öğrenci)
- Çocuklara okul dışında farklı konularda eğitimler düzenleniyor. (İlk yardım, Madde bağımlılığı, Öğrenme teknikleri, Ağız dış sağlığı...)
- Sağlık yardımı
- Mihrimah Sultan Tıp Merkezi, gönüllü hekimler ve diğer sağlık kuruluşları ile birlikte sağlık problemi olan ailelerin problemleri çözülüyor. İlaçlan bu yıla kadar Eczader'in de katkılarıyla proje tarafından karşılanıyordu. Şimdi yeşil kart ilaçları veriyor.
- 2004 yılında, çocukların sağlığını ve normal büyümeye-gelişmesini etkileyebileceği öngörülen durumları ve hastalıkları tesbit edip gerekli olan tedavi, bağışıklama ve rehabilitasyon programının uygulamayı amaçlayan "Çocuklar Sokakta Solmasın Projesi Kapsamındaki Çocuklar İçin Sağlığın Değerlendirilmesi Geliştirilmesi Sürdürülmlesi Projesi" yürütüldü. Proje sonuçları Sokaktalar III sempozyumu'nda poster bildiri olarak sunuldu. Proje metni ve sonuçları ektedir.
- Sosyal güvencesi olmayan 5 aileye yeşil kart çırpmak konusunda rehberlik yapıldı.
- İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Eminönü Kadın Sağlığı Merkezi'nde 21 annenin rahim ve meme kanseri taraması, kemik yoğunluğu ölçümleri yaptırıldı.

Gerekli
görülenler daha ileri muayeneler için hastaneye sevk edildi ve ileri
tetkikleri
yapıldı. Rahatsızlıklarla görülenlerin ilaçlan temin edildi.

— Gıda yardımı

- Ailelere her ay temel gıda maddelerini içeren gıda paketleri veriliyor. (2005-2006
yılında 17 aile)
- Ramazan aymda tüm ailelere kumanya veriliyor.
- Bağış yapılan kurbanların ve adak kurbanlanın etleri ailelere dağıtılmıyor.

- Giyecek Yardımı

- Gönüllülerin getirdiği ikinci el giyim eşyaların tekrar elden geçirilip
bedenlerine ve
cinslerine göre tasnif ediliyor.
- Her yaz ve kış mevsimi başında tüm aile fertlerine ikinci el giyim
yardımı
yapılıyor.
- Her yıl Ramazan Bayramında ailelerin tüm çocuklarına ayakkabı dâhil
olmak
bayramlık yeni giysi hediye ediliyor.
- Çocuklann, 23 Nisan Bayramı gibi sosyal etkinliklerde ve spor
etkinliklerinde
ihtiyaç duyulan kıyafetleri karşılanıyor.

- Eşya ve kira yardımı

- Genelde ailelerin ev koşulları çok kötü olduğundan daha iyi bir eve çıkmaları
için
kira desteği yapılıyor. (2005 - 2006 yılında 3 aile)
- Gönüllüler tarafından bağışlanan ikinci el eşyalar uygunluk açısından
kontrol
edilerek ihtiyacı olan ailelere gönderiliyor. Buzdolabı, çamaşır makinesi gibi
sağlık
ve hijyen açısından önemli eşyalar satın alınarak da hediye edilebiliyor.

6. Sosyal etkinlikler

- Her yıl sümestr tatilinde karne şenliği yapılıyor, çocuklara eğlence
düzenleniyor,
hediyeler veriliyor.
- Çocuklar farklı gruplar halinde yılda en az iki kere pikniğe, gezilere ve
tiyatroya
götürülüyor. (Miniatürk, Koç Müzesi, Sultanahmet Camii, Topkapı Müzesi,
Kitap
Fuarı...)

- Çocuklara Türkçe'yi düzgün konuşma ve düşüncelerini ifade edebilme, el becerilerini arttırma yetilerini geliştirmek amacıyla beyin firtınaları, hikâye okuma ve yorumlama, grup oyunları, el işi faaliyetleri içeren yaz okulları yapılıyor. 2002 ve 2003 yıllarında yapılan yaz okullarına 2204 ve 2005 yılında Vakfin tadilatı nedeniyle ara verildi. 2006 yılında yaz okulunda çocuklara hazırlanan yeni bir projenin pilot uygulaması yapılacak. Bu projede çocuklara oyunlar, tiyatrolar, şarkılar, kitaplar, güzel sözler ya da hayattan örneklerle kültürümüzde vazgeçilmez önemi olan erdemler kazandırılmaya çalışılacak. Bu yıldı yaz okulunda dürüst olmak ve saygılı olmak erdemleri işlenecek.
- Yapılan sosyal etkinliklerde oluşturulan gruplarda çocuklara görevler verilerek sorumluluk duygulan arttırmaya çalışılıyor. Yemeklerini hazırlamada, kullandıkları mekânları düzenlemeye, ulaşımda görev almaları ve küçüklerim korumaları, yapılacak işlerde fikirlerinin sorulması özgüvenlerini arttırıyor.
- Çocuklar geleceğe yönelik hayallerim ifade ederken köye özlemlerini dile getiriyorlar, köye gitmek çocuk hakkıdır diyorlar. Bu nedenle bazı çocukların aileleri ile birlikte köye gitmeleri sağlanıyor. (1999 yılında 1 aile (Soylu), 2002 yılında 1 aile (Yalçınkaya), 2003 yılında 2 aile (Kayıkçı ve Belge), 2005 yılında 1 aile (Belge)
- Diğer çocuklardan farklılık yaşamamaları düşüncesiyle uygun olan çocukların gönüllü hekimlerimiz tarafından sünnet ediliyor, sünnet düğünü düzenleniyor, hediyeler veriliyor. (2000 yılında 2si depremzede aile çocuğu olmak üzere 4 çocuk, 2004 yılında 5 çocuk)
- Proje bütçesine katkıda bulunmak ve projeyi tanıtmak amacıyla kermesler düzenleniyor. (2001, 2003, 2005 yılları)

7. Ailelere Rehberlik

- Özellikle annelere çocuklarının geleceği için onların okuryazar olmalarının önemi anlatılıyor ve okuma yazma kurslarına gitmeleri sağlanıyor. (2005—2006 yılında

3 anne, 2
yenge, 1 abla)

- Ailelere kendilerim yetişirebilmeleri için farklı konularda seminerler düzenleniyor. (Aile içi iletişim, İlk yardım, Sağlıklı beslenme, Kişisel bakım ve hijyen...)
- Annelere iş bulma konusunda yardımcı olunuyor. (7 anneye temizlik işi)
- Bazı anneler hem bu projede hem de Vakıftaki diğer çalışmalarında gönüllü olarak çalışıyor.

8. Tanıtım ve Bilgilendirme

- Projeyi tanıtmak, gönüllü katkısını artırmak ve bu konuda toplumu bilinçlendirmek için 2 broşür basıldı.
- Dergilerde tanıtıçı yazılar yayınlanıyor. (Bilim Sanat Bülteni, Diyanet Dergi, Aksiyon Dergisi, Kannca Dergisi)
- Vakıf Bülteni'nde projedeki gelişmeler aktanlıyor. Bir Vakıf bülteninin konusu çocuk olarak seçildi.
- Konuya ilgili sempozyum, kongre gibi toplantılar bildirilerle katılmıyor. (1. İstanbul Çocuk Kurultayı/Projeler Kitabı, IV Aile Şurası/Yazılı bildiri, I, II, III. Sokaktalar Sempozyumu/ 2 poster bildiri)
- Görsel ve yazılı medyada proje tanıtılıyor. (Kanal 7 Konuşukça programı, TV5 Hayatın İçinden programı, Hilal TV Bayram hazırlığı, Zaman Gazetesi...)

PROJE ÇIKTILARI/ SONUÇLAR

- 3000 adet broşür bastırıldı ve dağıtıldı, (ekte sunulmuştur)
- 2000 adet rozet yaptırlı ve dağıtıldı, (ekte sunulmuştur)
- Proje ile ilgili 3 yayın ve birçok dergide yazı yayınlandı, (ekte sunulmuştur)
- 58 çocuk sokakta çalışmayı bıraktı.
- Çocukların okul başarıları belirgin derecede yükseldi. Bir çocuk LGS'de üstün basan göstererek Çağaloğlu Anadolu Lisesine girdi (Serhat Soylu). 12 çocuk da lise öğrenimlerine devam ediyor.
- Ailesinin okula gönderemediği okul yaşı geçmiş çocukların okula gitmeleri sağlandı. (Kutad ailesi, 2 çocuk)
- 7. sınıfından alınan bir kız çocuğunun iki ay sonra okul idaresi ile görüşüp okuluna dönmesi sağlandı. Bu

çocuk 8. sınıfından mezun oldu.

- Çocuklarım Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumuna verecek olan bir aile, desteklerimizle bu girişimlerinden vazgeçirildi. (Yol ailesi, 3 çocuk)
- Aileleri tarafından okuldan alınıp çalıştırılmak üzereyken proje kapsamına alınan çocukların çalışması engellenmiş oldu.(Toraman ailesi, 2 çocuk)
- Çalışan küçük kardeşten dolayı proje kapsamına almanın bir ailede üniversiteye yeni başlamış ve maddi imkânsızlıklar yüzünden okulunu bırakma durumuna gelmiş bir genç kendisine sağlanan burs sayesinde eğitimine (3. sınıf) devam ediyor.
- Ailelerle güven ortamı oluşturuldu. Ailelere çocukların eğitim ve öğretimlerinin önemi kavratıldı. Annelerde bilinçlenme ve kendilerine güven duygularında gelişme gözleniyor. 3 anne, 2 yenge, bir abla okuma yazma kursuna gidiyor.
- 7 annenin temizlik işinde çalışmaya başlamasıyla ailelerinin ekonomik durumlarında iyileşme sağlandı.
- Çocukların davranış kalıplarında olumlu değişimler oldu.
- Bu çalışmaların en önemli neticesi olarak, ÇOCUKLAR HAYAL KURMAYA VE GELECEĞE YÖNELİK PLANLAR YAPMAYA BAŞLADILAR.

PROJE BÜTÇESİ

Proje giderleri vakfın katkısı, bağışlar, komisyon üyelerinin aidatları ve kermeslerle karşılanmaktadır. Birçok yardım aynı olarak karşılanmakta veya sponsorlar bulunmaktadır.

2005-2006 öğretim yılı için tahmini bütçe ektedir.

DEĞERLENDİRME

Proje çocuk ve ailenin yalnız maddi ihtiyaçlarını karşılayan bir yardım programı olmayıp onların barınma, beslenme, sağlık, eğitim ve sosyal ihtiyaçlarını her aile ve çocuk için farklı tarzlarda, farklı programlarla gidermektedir. Bu özelliği ile bu proje Türkiye genelinde ilk ve tekdir, bir model niteliğindedir.

"Kim bir hayat kurtarmışsa bütün insanlığı kurtarmış gibidir" inancıyla yürütülen bu proje birçok çocuğu sokaktan kurtardığı için başarılıdır. Çocukların özgüvenlerinin artması, anne babaların ailelerini güvende hissetmeleri, eğitimini önemini kavramaları, maddi destek görmeleri çocukların sokakta çalışmaya iten nedenlere karşı mücadele güçlerini arttırmıştır. Ekte sunulan yazınlarda görüldüğü gibi çocukların ve annelerin ifadeleri de bunu göstermektedir.

Projenin teknik açıdan yürütülmesinde maddi eksiklikler yüzünden maksimum verim

alınamamaktadır:

- Yapılacak yardımların yetersiz olacağı düşüncesiyle proje kapsamındaki aile sayısı arttırlamamaktadır.
- Profesyonel personel istihdam edilemediğinden web sayfasının hazırlanması, bülten çıkarılması gecikmektedir.

Diğer kuruluşlarla işbirliği şartlan gerçekleşememektedir.

- Gönüllülerle yapılan çalışmalarla devamlılığı sağlamak zordur. Yan gönüllü/yan ücretli personelle projenin yürütülmesi başarıyı artıracaktır.
- Projenin bir merkez oluşturularak kurumsallaşması zorlaşmaktadır.

SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİRLİK

Finansal sürdürülebilirlik: Projenin giderlerinin bir kısmı gönüllüler aracılığıyla karşılanıyor olsa da sürekli ve düzenli bir finansal kaynak gereklidir. Çalışmanın doğası gereği gelir elde ederek projeyi finanse etmek mümkün değildir. Ancak ulusal veya uluslararası destek fonları ile finansal sürdürülebilirlik söz konusudur.

Kurumsal sürdürülebilirlik: Hayat Vakfı senedinde ve isminde sosyal hizmetleri de içerdiginden ve kamu yararına bir vakıf olduğundan projeyi sürdürülebilir. Ancak vakıf binasının yetersiz kalması ve çocukların için ayrı bir merkez kurulması gerekliliği söz konusudur.

Politik sürdürülebilirlik: Çocuklar Sokakta Solmasın Projesi 8 yıllık uygulama sonucunda bir model konumuna gelmiştir. Devletin ve sivil toplum kuruluşlarının bu kadar uzun süreli yürüttüğü başka bir örnek yoktur. Bu nedenle proje model olarak diğer resmi ve özel kurumlara önerilebilir, elde edilen tecrübeler konuya ilgili düzenlemeler yapılırken dikkate alınabilir.

HAYAT SAĞLIK VE SOSYAL HİZMETLER VAKFI PROJENİN ADI: Çocuklar Sokakta Solmasın

PROLENİN KONUSU: Sokakta Çahsan/Çalıştınlan Çocukların Rehabilitasyonu

PROJENİN YILI: 1998-2006

ADRES: Keyçi Hatun Mah. Küçük Mühendis Sok.No:7 Haseki İSTANBUL Tel: 0212 588 25 45 Faks: 0212 632 85 79

APPENDIX B



ÇOCUKLAR SOKAKTA SOLMASIN “DON’T LET THE CHILDREN WILT AWAY IN THE STREETS” PROJECT

(2008 EYLÜL)

Hayat Sağlık ve Sosyal Hizmetler Vakfı Sokakta Çalışan Çocukları Koruma Komisyonu tarafından 1998 yılından bu yana 'Çocuklar Sokakta Solmasın' adlı bir proje yürütülmektedir.

Projenin amacı ilköğretim çağında, ailesiyle birlikte yaşayan ve sokakta çalışan çocukların sokakta çalışmaya iten nedenleri araştırıp ortadan kaldırılmaya, daha ilerde sokak çocuğu olmalarını engellemeye çalışmaktadır.

Çocuklarla sokakta veya ilgili kurum ve kişilerin önerisiyle tanışılmakta; aileden sorumlu iki gönüllü tarafından çocukların aileleri düzenli olarak ziyaret edilmekte; **gıda, giyim ve ev eşyası ihtiyaçları karşılanması; eğitim ve sağlık hizmeti desteği** verilmektedir. Sağlık hizmeti kapsamında, çocukların sağlığını ve normal büyümeye-gelişmesini etkileyebileceği öngörülen durumları ve hastalıkları tesbit edip gerekli olan tedavi, bağışıklama ve rehabilitasyon programlarını içeren "Sağlığın Değerlendirilmesi, Geliştirilmesi ve Sürdürülmlesi Projesi" uygulanmıştır. **Karne şenlikleri, geziler, piknikler, yaz okulu** gibi sosyal etkinliklerle çocuklara kendi imkânlarıyla yaşayamayacakları güzellikler sunulmaktadır. Çocuklar Sokakta Solmasın Projesinin *benzer* çalışmalardan en önemli farkı:

—Sokakta çalışan çocuğun kendisiyle birlikte kardeşlerinin ve ailesinin de desteklenmesidir. —Çocuğa ve ailesine yapılan desteğin çocuk eğitimine devam ettiği sürece veya ailenin durumu iyileşinceye dek sürmesidir.

Bugüne dek 75'i sokakta çalışan 218 çocuk ve 41 aile proje kapsamına alındı.

Çocukların yaş ortalaması 9,8 (kız 7,8 erkek 10,8) kardeş sayısı 5,4, memleketleri (%70) doğu ve güneydoğu anadolu, yaptıkları iş çoğunlukla (%50) kâğıt mendil satıcılığı. Annelerin yaş ortalaması 35, babalarının ise 39. Annelerin %85'i, babaların %48'si okuryazar değil; annelerin % 80'i, babaların %50'si çalışmıyor, %6'sı vasıflı işçi. % 85'i 2 odaklı, % 57'si apartman bodrum katı evlerde yaşıyorlar.

Tüm bu çalışmalar sırasında çocuklar sokakta çalışmayı bıraktı. Ailelere ve özellikle annelere eğitim ve öğretimin önemi kavratıldı. Çocukların okul başarıları belirgin derecede yükseldi; 3 çocuğuımız üniversiteli ve 1 çocuğuımız üniversite mezunu oldu.

3 çocuğuımız meslek lisesinden mezun olarak çalışmaya başladı. İlköğretimden mezun olan 5 çocuğu hem açık lisede okuyor, hem de çalışıyor. 8'i meslek lisesinde olmak üzere 18 çocuğu lise eğitime devam ediyor.

Projemiz 2006 Vakıf Medeniyeti Yılı Uygulanmış Sosyal İçerikli Proje Yarışmasında ilk 10'a girerek ödül almıştır.

Projenin finansmanı vakıfın katkısı, bağışlar, komisyon üyelerinin aidatları ve kermeslerle karşılanıyor.

Bundan sonra proje kapsamındaki çocuk ve çalışacak gönüllü sayısının artırılması, bu çocuklar için bir merkez kurulması ve ilgili diğer kurum ve kuruluşlarla işbirliği yapılarak hizmetin yaygınlaştırılması hedefleniyor.

"KİM BİR HAYAT KURTARMIŞSA BÜTÜN İNSANLIĞI KURTARMIŞ GİBİDİR"

Hayat Sağlık ve Sosyal Hizmetler Vakfı

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