

Cultural Determinants of Liminal Lives in Rural Anatolia: Patriarchal Veils Framing Infants' Destinies

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Abstract

This study focuses on my field experiences conducting the Turkey Demographic and Health Surveys, Turkey Maternal Mortality Survey, and extensive use of qualitative research on family planning and induced abortion in Turkey since 1993. During the surveys, I had the opportunity to gather substantial information about women's everyday experiences in relation to traditional practices, approaches to health and health care, as well as women's attitudes and emotional contexts. The women's narratives included heartbreaking and tragic experiences related to traditional gender norms within the families. In this paper, I examine the effect of patriarchal/gender hierarchies on the experiences of brides in relation to infant mortality data through a qualitative approach based on observations, field notes, and in-depth interviews with women. This research questions the impact of the culturally determined gender and age hierarchies within these extended families on the liminal life of infants and their mothers in Anatolia. How do these relationships determine the life courses of infants during their initial years? The concepts of "liminality" and development of "personhood" frame the theoretical grounds to further articulate bride/mother/infant visibility and invisibility within these families and the experiences of infant mortality.

Keywords: gender, infant mortality, liminality, patriarchy, personhood, qualitative research

1. Introduction

"Those who die as if they have never lived".

And whose place at our table comes after our oxen.

Nazım Hikmet, "Our Women." *Kuvayi Milliye*, 1931-1941, 7. Bab.

Postmodernism criticizes all generalizable ideas in feminism; even the "gender" and "women" categorization. Julia Kristeva argues about saving the theory from essentialism, which tends to focus primarily on the problems of middle-class women and their relationships to the men they work or live with. She defines the main challenge of anti-essentialist feminism as "substituting the cry 'we are all different' for argument" (Okin, 1994, p. 6). At this point, I agree with Jane Flax, who claims that we have to view gender as a social relation, otherwise we overlook the varieties of different women's experiences and patriarchal oppressions in particular societies. She argues that "we need to recover and write the histories of women and our activities into the accounts and stories that cultures tell about themselves", and adds that we also need to consider the so-called women's activities and the web of social relations constituted through the contexts in which they live (Flax, 1987, p. 640). Correspondingly, I intend to focus on women's activities in a rural context and the patriarchal relations they are exposed to, particularly their surrounding kinship relations. Schneider's ethnographic research in the USA proposes that for Americans, kin as a concept refers to being related by blood, in law, and in nature. Furthermore, he studies culture and its meaning and considers "what kin relationships mean to people" is an essential question (Levine, 2008). In the Anatolian lands, various patriarchal practices can be observed with regard to level of urbanization, social relations of production, level of political awareness, religiousness, and a kind of constraining and controlling power. Some rural settlements may resemble pre-industrial societies structured around shared religious beliefs, customs, moral values, and concepts. Such a social/patriarchal system can use both gender and kin relationships to its own advantage to perpetuate itself; this is an issue I will clarify in the following chapters.

Gender roles and kin relationships evidently can be determined through a patrilineal descent system and its methods of socializing people by utilizing cultural symbols. However, sometimes, as Sirman (1993) suggests, it is not sufficient to analyze the lives of village women and their positions by using distinguished concepts and distinctions, such as patriarchy, production/reproduction, and public/private area, moreover, it is not even sufficient to just recognize their position. Okin (1989) also emphasizes one of the implications of public/private dichotomy: “It not only obscures intra-household inequalities of resources and power...but it also results in the failure to count a great deal of the work done by women as work...to address just distribution within the household is significant because the family is the first and arguably the most influential school of moral development”. Correspondingly, an Anatolian household is also the first environment in which its members are socialized according to the social, moral, and religious values that are embraced within it. In addition, gender roles (how to be a woman/man and how household members treat each other) are taught in the household. This school of thought, who teaches the essential moral and gender values to individuals, is so robust that for women, who have previously moved from rural to urban settings, the gender roles are preserved because all the patriarchal expectations have been secured by the religious and traditional axioms. Women’s positions evolved under specific conditions, and therefore which patriarchal oppressions they can cope with and how they re-produce some living strategies that defy patriarchal oppression should be detected. In other words, to comprehend how the patriarchal system works and how power relations are established in our target context, it becomes crucial to consider the significance of social relations and ideologies to individuals, since women’s social positions are shaped and enforced by them (Sirman, 1993). Grabolle-Çeliker also criticizes the feminist anthropological approaches, which identify a universal second-class status for women; instead, she embraces the feminist ethnographic approach focusing on a variety of issues that women have to contend with and differences in the construction of femininities and masculinities in different cultural realms. For instance, in the Kurdish village in which she studied, men and also older women are interested in the continuation of a populous patrilineage and expect young Kurdish women to be ready and healthy enough for frequent childbearing and fulfillment of their daily routines. She also describes the numerous times she was offered to listen to the narratives about female sufferings, while investigating women’s social position. The narratives she heard “referred to a lack of choice or control that they felt in their lives and the lives of other Kurdish women”. (Grabolle-Çeliker, 2013, p. 179). Similarly, while discussing Kurdish women over 30 years of age, Ertürk noted that they cannot speak Turkish, most of them have religious (*imam*) marriages, and are not aware of their legal rights, especially property and parental rights; most do not even have birth certificates, so legally, they do not exist (Ertürk, 1993). In Eastern Anatolia, political instruments such as local institutions, technical education, and all projects on modernization and development are subject to the male-dominant view of the State (İlkkaracan, 2011) but at this point, I should indicate that both the data of the national quantitative surveys conducted since 1963 and my research reveal that both women living in the rural West and the rural East have been subjected to the same political mandate, and in some villages, under very similar patriarchal bargains.

The starting point of a patriarchal bargain for a woman is becoming a bride (at a very young age), and the endpoint is becoming a mother-in-law through the birth of a son. Although, this period involves two pre-acceptances: acceptance of sub junction and acceptance of male (-line) control (Kandiyorti, 1998). Therefore, the subjects who experience this period are “the neophytes in the liminal phase of ritual, subjugated, autochthones...and all have common characteristics: a) they are persons that fall in the interstices of social structure b) are on its margins, or c) occupy its lowest rungs” (Turner, 2009, p. 125). The liminality reflects a process or practice created by gender hierarchy in domestic life and liminal entities refer to the young brides, who are betwixt and between the positions strictly designated by moral authority belonging to a male discourse.

This article aims to explore the connection between the patriarchal/gender hierarchy, in general, and liminal lives of the young brides, in particular, as well as the high infant mortality in the rural contexts, where patriarchal bargains are strictly practiced. I will explain these “sub-local contexts” in the following chapters. The final discussion will examine how such a connection puts forth a process that also turns an infant into liminal personae. Personhood is an issue that occurs when the subjects are treated as if they are physically invisible, a situation which will be highlighted by the narratives in the last chapter.

However, to begin with, there will be some benefit in reviewing the long-term downward trend in infant mortality rates (IMRs) in Turkey: In the early 20th century, the Demographic Transition Theory (DTT) posited that every population on the earth would experience a transition from high fertility and mortality rates to low fertility and mortality rates, through their overview of cultural diversity on the earth. At the beginning of the 21st century, typically with the support of UN Organizations, international conferences and national projects were organized and demographers interested in high infant and child mortality rates in less developed and developing

countries discussed new health projects that would help local health departments reduce these rates. At that moment, Turkey was one of the fastest growing countries with both high fertility and IMRs: According to the last report titled “Demographic Transition in Turkey”, published by Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies in 2010, in the mid-1960s, the IMR was 163‰; in the early 1980s, it was 121‰; in the early 1990s, it was 60; and at the beginning of the 2000s, it was calculated at 29‰.

During the 40 years since 1968, national surveys collecting data on household populations, fertility, family structure, and family planning have been repeated eight times more quinquennially; the TDHS-2008 is the ninth such survey. Turkish demographers and public health specialists have always undertaken health projects that attempt to discover main causes of the high infant and child mortality rates in Anatolia despite the absence of a reliable death registration system.

According to the TDHS-2008, the IMR was 17/1000 live births, which was higher than the IMRs of the European Union countries (the highest one being Romania with 9.4 deaths per 1000 live births) and of the Middle-East countries, with some similar Islamic and cultural values, such as Syria (15 deaths per 1000 live births), Saudi Arabia (16 per 1000 live births), and the United Arab Emirates (7 per 1000 live births) (European Commission [EUROSTAT], 2014). At present, THDS-2013 points out that the rate is 16 per 1000 live births.

The considerable differences between the IMRs of the West and East as well as between urban and rural areas (86% and 70%, respectively) are conventional (Eryurt & Koç, 2009). In 1992, Gürsoy described the tragic history of the IMR in Turkey as a *puzzle* (Gürsoy-Tezcan, 1992). She employed the quantitative and qualitative methods together and suggested that cultural processes experienced within the households significantly affected the infants’ and children’s lives as well as their socio-economic processes. Remarkably, a father’s educational level was the most influential factor on IMR, and most deaths occurred in extended families. After 18 years, Yüksel and Koç (2010) posed the question “Is IMR still a Puzzle in Turkey?” and revised Gürsoy-Tezcan’s results by using the Child Mortality Index (CMI). According to this study, early marriages resulted in more childbearing, but parents’ educational level was still a determining factor. Moreover, traditions, norms, and rituals embraced by the society, particularly how its marriages are arranged and the duration of marriage, affected child health and raised the index. For instance, if a dowry was paid to a bride’s parents before marriage, if the young woman was a member of an extended family, or if a consanguineous marriage was involved, the CMI could double (Yüksel & Koç, 2010). Thus, the results drew social scientists’ attention to patriarchal practices.

In spite of its anthropological influences, IMR has always been treated as a matter of formal demography, which has led to a shortage of information on cultural-patriarchal factors.

My previous research experiences in demography provided me with the opportunity to visit over fifty villages and numerous neighborhoods in towns and provinces within all the seven regions of Anatolia; I engaged in detailed note-taking about the points that I found particularly remarkable, but ignored by the survey questionnaires, collecting a large amount of information about traditional practices, approaches to health and health care, attitudes, and emotional situations of women. After analyzing these notes, I found that most included information about a tragic but traditionally approved relationship between the brides (*gelin*), infants (*bebek*), and older people, particularly parents-in-law. Thereafter, to confirm these preliminary patterns, I gathered qualitative data through interviews with 30 women on motherhood and becoming a bride and mother-in-law: 20 of them were brides under 30 years of age, and 10 were women over 50 years, who had been both brides and mothers-in-law. They lived in Kayışdağı and Ümraniye, districts of Istanbul, where mostly in-migrant extended-patriarchal families live. After listening to anthropologists’ and sociologists’ experiences, a thematic analysis was performed on the raw qualitative data.

As a first step, I define and discuss basic concepts that are mostly derived from the field surveys. In the following chapter, I argue how political, traditional, and religious instructions can be associated with the construction of patriarchal/gender hierarchy, and thus how the concepts of “liminality” and “personhood” emerge.

2. Contextual Framework: Basic Concepts and Approaches

Despite the remarkable West-East differences in infant mortality estimates, the process of analysis has obliged me to exclude some villages from general classifications, such as “rural” or “local,” because of their geographical, political, and cultural constructions with intense patriarchal features. At some point during data collection, there was a possibility of encountering such villages situated at the top of mountains, in silent valleys, or on plateaus, in each of the seven regions. Therefore, I described these villages as those which a) have local appearances that remain firm against social change; b) maintain a strong relationship between patriarchy and

traditions, willingly accepted by the community; c) are closed societies, in the sense that they have rarely been exposed to the impacts of urbanization and modernization; and d) have cultural codes perpetuated by a collaborative relationship among the traditions, religious rules, and political discourse as sub-local contexts. Through these four characteristics, the political and cultural apparatuses of the patriarchal discourse have the opportunity to bring forth a common mind, which always needs to be certified by religion and practically corresponds to the prospects of modern consciousness, but is not all that “modern” in a literal sense.

The minimal part of the common mind is an individual belief, which is arranged to transform an individual belief into a subjective experience, but certainly is not a religion. For Robert E. Hume, subjective experience characterizes religion, which does not consider the rituals, institutional structure, or any social condition. In contrast to Hume’s belief-centered approach, Durkheim asserts that various religious traditions allow people to divide the world into two: sacred and profane. Sacred always refers to that which is superior, powerful, forbidden to normal contact, and deserving of great respect, while profane refers to ordinary, uneventful, and practical things of everyday routine. Thus, Durkheim’s category of sacred is completely social, and sacred rites form and maintain society. For Geertz, on the other hand, religion is a pattern of symbolic activities and symbolic systems depicting the construction of physical relationships that tell people how to act within their world of experiences (Barnett, 2007). The common mind can be seen as a consequence of Hume’s, Durkheim’s, and Geertz’s definitions and accepted as a kind of moral belief system. It is governed by a mentality, and this mentality’s first job is to capture an individual belief and provide individuals the ability to turn their beliefs into individual acts and then experiences. Thus, the common mind will be perpetuated as long as the acts and experiences recur. I called this the artificial-religious mentality, and it, as a motor system, connects the “traditional,” “religious,” and “sacred,” and forces people to believe that doing something contrary to a tradition (such as ritual, custom, and moral laws) is as shameful as a sin. A common mind with such a mentality orients human relations by immediately relating traditions to a sacred book (primarily the Koran in rural Anatolia) or to religion. It is social, local, and produces contextual knowledge: It is possible to encounter innumerable customs and traditions re-produced in various sub-local contexts, which, I have to accept, render it quite cultural. But, how can this type of mentality be established in an individual’s mind so easily?

Nietzsche (1974) talks about the hidden world of human beings, referring to an inner world that, in fact, describes one’s existence. It makes individuals diffident and abstracted from the outer world, and represents an entirely modern consciousness. Besides, human beings are not gifted with a drive to transform themselves and change the status quo. The very nature of a civilized human is actually degenerate and tamed. Patriarchy, as a *modus operandi* of capitalism, entails male solidarity and female subordination, and imposes a control mechanism on women’s labor in both the private and public spheres. In other words, to tame subjects, it sets forth an extensive power for men and a set of rules for women that makes them dependent and desirably adaptable to the gender hierarchy. What mesmerizes men and makes women into slaves is the lucidity of the male-female categorization in a cultural context; in Iris Young’s words; ideas, symbols, and forms of consciousness (Young, 1974) and which I define as the mentality of the common mind.

In rural Anatolia, the mentality constructs its own habits and world of symbols to achieve its objective: It divides femininity into the statuses both positional and sexual. The *kaynana* (mother-in-law) represents the husband’s lineage. She is the oldest woman, responsible for processing the masculine control mechanism. Her position is asexualized, and she is a mentor who commands, expects, rewards, and punishes. The *görümce* (sister-in-law) serves as a co-mentor in the house, and appears to be the best role model for the inexperienced one(s), the bride(s); if she is married and close enough to the bride, she is also a good advisor about sexual issues, such as contraceptive use and tactics. The *gelin* (bride) is young, preferably fertile, respectful, and responsible for obeying the rules of the family, keeping the house clean, and safeguarding the family name and honor. In the sub-local contexts, the hierarchy is more coercive and authoritative in issues related to the sexes, gender relations, and individual desires.

As is well known, Foucault describes the body as a physical manifestation on which the metaphysical contents of rules, hierarchies, and culture are enacted and realized. Disciplined and subjugated bodies create a “discursive practice” or a body of knowledge and behavior that defines what is normal, acceptable, deviant, and so on (Foucault, 1991; Rabinow, 1991). Accordingly, reading a male-controlled discourse through the body is possible. For instance, generally women are taught to retreat from the world, which is full of men, who believe that their bodies are extensions of the outer world. This makes it easier to understand comprehend the meanings of feminine and masculine subjectivity, which are both phenomenological and cultural (Haber, 1996). In Anatolia, in almost all regions with strong loyalty to the local and traditional, understanding the special meaning of being a woman or man is possible by observing the reflections of the gender hierarchy and domestic roles.

With a similar interest, this study concentrates on observing and explaining such reflections over the young brides embedded in the deepest point of patriarchy:

- The bride got up and destroyed the village.
- The bride at the threshold, the baby boy in the cradle.
- The mother-in-law is a golden veil over her daughter-in-law.

We frequently come across this saying describing the relationship between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law, and sometimes about her influence on brides' indoor activities, but rarely about their outdoor activities. The sarcasm mirrored by the sayings, at large, results from the unending conflict and competition between the two women, who are most likely confined by tradition to living together within an extended patriarchal family. These two women also share a love for the same man, as son and husband, respectively. Brides living in villages corresponding to this sub-cultural context are mostly silent, withdrawn, and unresponsive. They have never been allowed to express their individuality or sexuality within a domestic area completely identified with the items belonging to the man's (husband) lineage.

Therefore, in this study, Victor Turner's concept of "liminality" he defines as "I hold it to designate also the condition of a person as determined by his culturally recognized degree of maturation as when one speaks of the married or single state or the state of infancy. State...refers to any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized" (Turner, 1987, p. 4) is assigned to the stage of bridehood (*gelinlik*), considered as an inter structural situation: It's hierarchically exists between virgin and mother-in-law status. The concept of "patriarchal veils" describes a kind of personhood attributed to the brides and, as a process, the subjectification of their bodies a second time, which I call the construction of "liminal-parallel subjectivity", referring to the creation of an additional subjectivity, including a new, different, long but temporary, and more limited woman-life.

The patriarchal/hierarchical structure of Anatolian families situates the bride's parents-in-laws at the center of decision making. The son/husband follows these hierarchies and never questions his parents' authority. The patrilineal family structure prioritizes the extended family, and the brides are responsible for being caretakers for the entire household's needs. Even when a bride has a newborn baby, she is required to clean the house, prepare the family meals, and fulfill her role as the bride of the household. Mothers-in-law deny support during the bride's pregnancy and also thereafter. Such a situation puts the bride on a liminal stage; the unborn or newborn is unintentionally incorporated in this stage, since the baby is not yet perceived as a person. One of the stories reported by Gürsoy describes a baby who died after intense crying in his cradle; the mother-in-law did not allow the bride to go to his room and nurse him until she had finished cleaning the house (Gürsoy, 2001).

Therefore, it should be noted that following a path from the bride's liminality to the infant's is crucial to understanding how the politically and culturally approved power of masculine dominance perpetuates the forms of rural/local womanhood, how it *strings along* women in a kinship network that has a kind of hierarchical deprivation system—thus how it endorses the patriarchy to perpetuate itself—and how strongly it forces them to disregard their own lives and, sometimes but unintentionally, their children's, as well.

3. Findings: Selected Narratives and Interpretations

In the sub-local Anatolian areas, the liminal stage of patriarchy has been fostered by extended patriarchal families with a strong conservatism and an artificial religious mentality, which is one of the imperative functions of the common mind. Exploring spiritual bases of the customs, traditions, and rituals and their long-lasting existence always helps decode the core characteristics of the strongly conservative social order and how it is also approved by a political discourse dignifying masculinity while downgrading femininity. In other words, a constant give and take policy amongst the ideological belief systems, traditions, and Islamic assignments sets the limits for gender relations and roles in the sub-local patriarchal contexts. Even if the patriarchy in Anatolia appears to be the preference of current political power, in fact, it has always been a function of the state ideologies, who have declared the "importance of the family" on every occasion. Eleven years of power of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) have contributed to the patriarchal experiments of Anatolian people by re-strengthening the intricate relationship between religion, morality, and locality. The conservative approach and its heavy emphasis on adopting modernism develop the apparatuses of censorship on sex and gender relations. It is a fact that Islamic-conservative tradition never lost its effect on limiting and/or controlling gender relations in rural Anatolia. Islamic self-formation and attitudes have been established on basis of the traditions, memories, and religious habitus of the past; thus, a process of re-producing and re-arranging is always in question. In other words, due to the unending Islamic performance in the public realm, religious traditions have

been re-invented (Göle, 2012). The decisive role of religious assignments in the social realm and relations has made some sociologists who embrace an Althusserian approach consider that the “dominant instance” should be the “religious practice”. However, with the reflections of Hobsbawm’s texts, all of the symbolic practices and the communication language currently spoken have been constructed by a history, and every society inevitably has a storage filled with the moral rules, advice, rituals, and folklore, where religion has always been referenced. He states that the invention of a tradition simply refers to a modifying process; producing a new tradition from an old one. Thus, invented tradition represents a set of practices normally governed by overtly and tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (Hobsbawm, 1992). Because of a similar process, many of the symbolic practices in rural Anatolia are unrelated to the well-known Islamic principles. They are so deeply engrained in local performance or repetitions with historical and cultural roots that eventually local people begin to perceive them as religious directives. Thus, an artificial religious mentality is created, which, in fact, is the underlying factor guaranteeing their long-term protection. However, such a creation is always capable of exposing gender identities to a spontaneous but very strong internalization of gender role messages. One of the selected narratives (SN) is remarkable in its illustration of the artificial religious mentality and patriarchal hierarchy related to reproduction.

SN1. Come on, go and tell the nurse to take it out of your body! If you die while it’s in you, you will never be clean and pure in the presence of Allah, its haram [not lawful according to Islam] a big sin! (Age 23, Black Sea Region, 2005)

The “it” referred to by the mother-in-law was an IUD. Ayşe told me that her husband had allowed her to use a contraceptive device, but her mother-in-law took her to the medical center by force and made the nurse take the IUD out. In this case, as in many others, the mother-in-law’s attitude towards contraceptive methods derives from beliefs, practices, and utterances inherited from members of previous generations, and perfectly represents a process of learning and internalizing, wherein old habits dominate.

SN2. In our village, a bride who is infertile or cannot give a birth to a baby boy is punished like a sinner, as if she was cursed by God. She loses all her rights in the house and is turned into a slave. The husband has to marry a new fertile woman; even if he does not want this, his family forces him to do this. (Age 19, South Eastern Anatolia, 2009)

Nazife, the bride telling this story, was newly married but not pregnant during the research. She was afraid of being “cursed”, a “sinner”, a “slave” or a woman forced to share her lover with another woman.

SN3. They told me that abortion was both harmful and a sin! So, I jumped from the roof and got rid of it! (Age 19, East Anatolia, 19, 2005)

The Koran does not forbid having an abortion and actually states it preferable to perform abortions before the fetus is 120 days old, before the soul is breathed into the fetus. Furthermore, when a pregnancy threatens the life of the mother or fetus, abortion can be performed without hesitation.

Ortner (1972) and Lévi-Strauss (1969) suggest that if the specifically reproductive function of the family is taken into account, the family, and hence woman, is identified with “nature” (that is, pure and simple) as opposed to “culture.” Man is the epitome of culture. Because, men lack a natural origin (giving birth, nursing, child caring) for familial orientation, their activities are defined at the level of interfamilial relations. Moreover, men are the proprietors of religion, ritual, politics, and other realms of cultural thought and actions in which universalistic statements of spiritual and social synthesis are formulated (Ortner, 1972). Ortner proposes that the domestic area is a realm in which nature is transformed into culture; thereby, socialization of children is important. Continuity of a culture is possible when there always are prospective individuals who would be able to act upon the undeniable moral rules and elucidate the outer world using the varied inherent codes. Thus, a woman is seen as an agent for reproducing new individuals to sustain the culture. In Anatolia, *gelinlik* (bridehood) is the most moral and virtuous stage of becoming an agent and, undoubtedly, this agent is approved by a religious or civil marriage, sometimes both.

The dominant discourse, as Badran (2009) points out in “Feminism in Islam” has been women reconstructing and maintaining customs they have accommodated to for acquiring traditional acceptance. Likewise, in the Anatolian region, a cultural structure restricts women’s activities and defines their gender roles within a domestic area. A set of ideological practices identified by state politics, religious commands, traditions, customs, moral laws, values, preferences, and even rituals generates a particular network of interpersonal relationships. In such a network, sex roles and hierarchical positions in a family structure are strictly defined. This kind of habitus is also a product of history. The instruments of the construction of a society that relies on knowledge employed in

practice and in action are socially constructed. In other words, they are structured by the world that they structure, which has an “endless capacity to engender products—thoughts, expressions, actions—whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production” as noted by Bourdieu (2005, p. 52). Here, I should note that habitus and performativity are related, and the plurality and intensity of patriarchal practices has to be in accordance with such a relationship.

For Judith Butler, “performativity” refers to the idea that gender is not only a process but also a “set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame” (Butler, 1999, p. 12). Performativity needs to be assumed as the keyword for the construction of gender identity: The subject is not free to choose which gender s/he is going to enact. The “script” is a creation of this regulatory frame, and the subject does not have a lot of “costumes” to wear because the thing identified as gender style is already a constrained choice. Therefore, one’s gender is performatively constituted, and “who wears what” has always been predetermined by the context. If the subjects do not do what they have to do, their choice will be punished by society, so gender refers to a repetition, an imitation of one another. I am aware that Butler talks about gender identity construction and about gender as a corporeal state. Furthermore, I understand that she also means this is a way to see how society or context determines differences or similarities or equalities between “woman” and “man”, that is, while constructing gender identity, it is clear that society or context also aim to construct gender roles: “Wear this and act like a woman!” What I want to add to this point is performativity also relates to another process of conforming to gender identity. The context also provides *subsidiary* roles to rigorously identified gender role messages, such as “become a daughter-in-law”, “become a mother-in-law” and “become a head of the household”.

SN4. I was 14 and a very beautiful girl... my father chose a husband for me... He was older than me, but very rich... my mother told me that this is also the way she got married to my father and how much she loved her husband after marriage... Yeah... I loved him in time... I was young but quite good at house chores... my mother-in-law really loved me. She taught me everything I needed: how to dress outside, how to look after my husband and my children, how to keep my house in order and clean. Now, I am a mother-in-law too, and act just like her. I taught everything I knew to my daughters-in-law. (Age 80, South East Anatolia, 2012)

During the abovementioned interview, Hamide kept mentioning that she and her mother-in-law got along very well. She was completely unaware of the power exerted on her and framing her sexual identity in relation to the patrilineal rules. “Acting just like her” is the most commonly encountered expression among young brides, too, showing that the process of internalizing patriarchal principles is actually based on a series of repeated performances (roles) in a hierarchical structure. Accordingly, brides, similar to their other female relatives and counterparts, routinely and customarily help in the sustenance of patriarchal order and re-celebrate its existence, just by fulfilling their strictly defined domestic roles.

Foucault observes that power is not exercised simply as an obligation or prohibition on those “who do not have it; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure on them” (1984, p. 174). As a formula of the power relation exerted on men and women, patriarchal power forces both sexes to internalize its rules and values, and expects them to transfer the world that they structure to the next generations. Thus, it is obvious that power produces knowledge, and power and knowledge directly affect one another. Yet, such a relationship can be analyzed or questioned by subjects only if they identify the objects of power, in other words, if challenging the subject is possible when “he/she is the one who knows”. When subjects recognize the power exercised over their bodies and comprehend its strategic position, the power ends. However, patriarchy as a form of power relation subtly maintains its continuity due to related social practices, such as state politics, economic provisions (capitalism, reserving the richest area of labor force especially for white men), and religious and cultural factors.

Hamide, as a female-subject who seemed to complete the internalization process, did not have any opportunity to understand and position herself toward the power of knowledge exerted on her, and most probably will never do so. She would remain a *gelin*, daughter-in-law, from the day she wears her wedding dress to the day her own son gets married to a young girl. In this process, she will have fulfilled the domestic duties traditionally imposed on her. However, after she becomes a mother-in-law, who then has to pass everything she knows to her young daughter-in-law, she achieves another parallel subjectivity exposed to a limited life related to her femininity under a patriarchal discourse, however, perpetuating all the circumstances that she had experienced as a bride. This also means, as a mother-in-law, she becomes a member of another social group that bestows a higher and more authoritarian status and comfort.

According to Kağıtçıbaşı, maintaining a good relationship with his relatives is more important for a young man in an extended-patriarchal family structure than his relationship with his wife (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996). Traditional

values and patterns of behavior have taught him that even after getting married, a young man must show great respect for the family's elders, and customarily, his wife must take responsibility for looking after them as well as the children as a "derivative relative." Attaching more importance to patrilineal ties and obscuring all characteristics of the bride's family, makes her position more ambiguous, nothing less than an outsider. Carol Delaney, author of *The Seed and the Soil*, talks about the loneliness of the daughter-in-law, who is an outsider in a new environment even though she is living in the same village with her family. She is the one accommodating and changing. Her husband does not have to agree with her in disputes, and she cannot ask for any help from her own mother. This is a situation that no one can cope with easily (Delaney, 1991). The narratives reveal many patriarchal dialogues describing young brides living in extended-patriarchal families and subjected to an authoritarian control mechanism by their parents-in-law. In their defense, all they want to do is to protect their young daughters-in-law from the external factors, such as the evil eye, people who have evil spirits, or bad intentions. A daughter-in-law always expects that she will achieve the same comfort with her mother-in-law in the future, owing to the strong bond with her son. Such an expectation will help her internalize the sense of being a mother-in-law and mentally develop her own image of the mother-in-law role for the future.

At this point, it is necessary to apply two theoretical concepts: the rite of passage and liminality. Transitioning from the daughter-in-law to mother-in-law status refers to a rite of passage and the state of being derivative represents the experience of a liminal persona. According to Van Gennep (Van Gennep, 1960; Hockey, 2002), the process of a rite of passage comprises rites of separation, threshold rites, and rites of aggregation. "For groups, as well as individuals, life itself means to separate and to be reunited, to change for and condition, to die and to be reborn. It is to act and to cease, to wait and rest and then to begin acting again, but in a different way" (Van Gennep, 1960, p. 189). Marriage, as a ritual, is an authorized access into a new social status, referring to a transition from the place of the birth-parents to the place of the parents-in-law's, from becoming a girl to becoming a bride and wife. It counts as a rite of aggregation with the idea of re-assimilation into a new family group (the husband's family) and the world of brides or wives. However, in my approach, the period of remaining as a daughter-in-law strictly refers to the experience of living in a liminal stage. Victor Turner (1967, p. 95) argues that "the subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, invisible". That is, the status of liminal individuals is socially and structurally ambiguous. During this phase, the ritual subjects are given new names to denote their "no longer/not yet" status. These symbols express that the liminal personae are neither living nor dead, and both living and dead; they express the ambiguity of the inter structural period. This ambiguity is also demonstrated by the fact that the ritual subjects are during the seclusion period disguised or hidden; they are considered neither male nor female, deprived of rank, status, and property. They are all treated equally and are subjected to the rest of the community. In sum, the liminal subjects are "neither here nor there", they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial (Turner, 1969).

To clarify my contention, I will relate a short story reported by Gürsoy (2001) in response to Turner's ideas: A woman living in Central Anatolia was married at a young age. Despite the fact that she contributed financially to the family by knitting carpets, she reported that she had always been shoved around and despised. After her husband left the village for military service, her baby caught pneumonia, but her mother-in-law did not allow her to take the baby to the nearest hospital. Her own mother visited the neighbors and unsuccessfully attempted to collect medicine for her grandchild but that did not work either. The disease lasted 40 days until her baby passed away. Gürsoy (2001) added that under the roof of patriarchy, the bride is faced with a system of dominant values that bring about long-term tension and conflict between parents-in-law and daughters-in-law. Patriarchal/hierarchical structure entails steering the mother-in-law in every occasion and limiting her power to primarily focusing negatively on her daughter-in-law. This affects the relationship between the bride and other members of the household, particularly with her husband and child (ren). Moreover, such negative domestic settings also affect young mothers' ability to nurse their children and even to keep their children alive. Although the ritual subject of this story, who is given a name to denote her "no longer/not yet" status, appears to be the bride, we must notice the other ritual subject involuntarily involved in this clash: the infant. Frequently, both, the mother and her child, have to be exposed to the arrangements of this inter structural period, usually concluding with a daughter-in-law becoming a mother-in-law, and the infant's ultimate survival or death.

SN5. My mother-in-law was really mean to me. Every night she told on me to her son. Untrue stories with no basis in fact... Sometimes my husband did not want to listen to her; sometimes he did and beat me up. During a trip, it was cold but though I warned her kindly, she opened the window in the car on purpose and started smoking. The day after, my one-month daughter caught pneumonia. She had three daughters-in-law more and we all lived in the same hell until she passed away at her 80 (Age 32, East Anatolia, 2010).

SN6. I was working in a bank... every morning I put my sleeping daughter in her cradle before leaving home. My mother-in-law woke her up as soon as I left home and showed her crying face to me through the window, her crying face to hurt me (Age 25, Mediterranean Sea Region, 2008).

SN7. She always refuses to watch and feed our baby while my husband and I are not home... Every time we come back, I notice that she has fed my little baby bread dipped into black tea (Age 23, Center Anatolia, 2013).

Many demographic studies mention that the probability of children dying before age five has been found to be extremely high in poor countries and some developing countries, experiencing bad socioeconomic and cultural transformations; however, the focus is mainly on the high risk of dying in the first year of life. World Health Organization [WHO] (2014) reports that “since more than one third of all child deaths occur within the first month of life, providing skilled care to mothers during pregnancy, as well as during and after birth, greatly contributes to child survival. Millennium Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2000 aim to decrease child deaths worldwide by 2015”. Many social scientists interested in the infant mortality risk focus on percentages of cause and effects, thus, overlooking cultural details based on human relations. However, many ethnographic writings highlight that infants born in rural or less developed areas of the countries have also been condemned to “public morality” as well as their young mothers, very similar to the Anatolian lands: It is possible to examine and compare two different contexts by reading Grabolle-Çeliker’s *Kurdish Life in Contemporary Turkey* (2013), and Carol Delaney’s *The Seed and the Soil* (1991).

Childbearing and childrearing both consist of some imperative ritual processes of cooperation with patriarchal dialogues dedicated to sustaining the husband’s lineage and honor. However, as the previous examples demonstrate, mothers-in-law are not aware of how they sometimes put their infant grandchildren at risk by never making concessions related to housework or other domestic expectations when their daughters-in-law are pregnant, sick, or have nursing babies. To rephrase, they never realize how they bring into being a secondary-liminal subject by depriving him/her of a mother’s bosom or how they jeopardize a fetus’ life by forcing the mother to do housework or to work in the field.

During a demographic survey, a mother-in-law showed me a very young woman grabbing soil through a window and said that “her foot was in the grave”. This is an idiom meaning that she is pregnant. Although such a saying dramatically expresses the dangers of pregnancy for women, in patriarchal societies with high fertility, pregnancy is a highly expected and a typical experience of a being woman. Gürsoy (1992) suggests that patriarchal customs and habits embraced by the extended families in Anatolia force newly married young women to live under the same roof with their parents-in-law, which presents an excessively limited and subdued living profile. Furthermore, the dialogues about childbearing and child rearing are based on complete involvement of parents-in-law in decision-making processes, and the constraints on a bride’s life create a great risk of dying, especially for infants. The frequency and severity of problematic situations is related to socio-cultural constructions of kinship values, womanhood, hierarchy, parenthood, and personhood in a community. However, changes in certain social processes, such as acculturation, development, and socialization, occur through movement from less-developed to more modernized areas. In sub-local areas, patriarchal dialogues are more obvious and certain. Therefore, to cope with such determinants of public morality, the Ministry of Health has to reconsider social health policies, including legal policies (such as laws forbidding physical and psychological violence against women as well as child abuse laws), which could affect relationships among older family members, daughters-in-law, and infants.

Therefore, while talking about the infants at risk of dying, especially in the first year of their life, because of the patriarchal power relations, we should also focus on ideas about personhood. “Are babies persons?” Picone (1998) and Morgan (1998, 2006) illustrate the way the notions of fetal and infant “personhood” are informed by particular political and cultural circumstances, examining cases in Ecuador, North America, and Japan. Similarly, in Anatolia, notions of both “personhood” and “parenthood” should be considered a cultural and political issue for both young mothers and their infants. For instance, as a researcher conducting demographic surveys and national censuses, I have frequently encountered household heads not declaring a baby sleeping in its cradle as a household member. We, Turkish demographers, must *always* use a “warning question” to understand if they are declaring household members accurately: “Is there any child or infant sucking a pacifier we did not add to the household list?”

The risk of a baby dying in an extended patriarchal family is much higher than that for a baby born into a nuclear family (2001, p. 17). Anthropologist Erdal shared one of his remarkable experiences on the field with me:

SN8. I was in Bismil [a small town in the East Anatolia] and visiting a house. I was talking to a young man, and his little child was with him. During our conversation, he held him up and started to toss him up. There was a

ceiling fan in the room and all of a sudden it hit the child's head. The father was upset and wanted to take him to the doctor without delay. But his mother shouted behind him, "Why are you taking the child to the hospital? You are very young, so, you can have one more!" (2011)

After telling this story, Erdal added that this is totally a personhood issue. It is obvious that they do not identify a baby as a person. Thus, an infant or a baby has to reach physical maturity, which is also culturally determined, to merit respect for her/his existence. This condition, therefore, thrusts the child into a liminal period that has to be survived, similar to that of the mother. I should state that in such an exceptionally patriarchal context, re-productivity and fertility are means of sustaining the husband's lineage, and thus must occur frequently. Meanwhile, examples such as the one above make me think that infant or child death is a fact as culturally constructed as childbirth.

The following stories demonstrate the lack of personhood assumed for infants:

SN9. I was 8. My mother and I visited the village where she was born to see her childhood friends. There were children everywhere. A few old women were sitting in a large living room, drinking tea and chatting. Suddenly one of them noticed that the baby sleeping in the side room was dead. There was no screaming. The small dead body was covered by a blanket and put on a divan silently. The young woman finding the baby dead kept serving tea, and the women in the living room kept chatting loudly, just like nothing had happened. (Age 35, Central Anatolia, 2009)

SN10. I lost a six-month-old baby. We didn't take him to doctor because my family had thought that he just caught a cold. I dreamed about his dying, the day before I found him dead in his cradle. (Age 20, South East Anatolia, 2010)

While Delaney wrote about the babies dying in the first year of their life, she (1991) mentioned that the *kundak* (swaddle) turns into a *kefen* (burial shroud), and SN9 and SN10 show that whenever an infant death occurs, a self-control mechanism and imperturbability can be engaged without difficulty. While Delaney (1991) associates such an engagement with a belief that dying infants mediate on their parents' behalf in the Hereafter, Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) suggests that in societies characterized by high childhood mortality and by a correspondingly high fertility, cultural practices of child care tend to be organized primarily around survival goals. However, what this means is a pragmatic recognition that not all of one's children can be expected to live. Even if Scheper-Hughes is sometimes criticized for her analyses, I believe her opinion here deserves consideration because it is a demographic fact that high mortality rates typically occur in rural Anatolia, where fertility rates are also high, and as long as giving birth is viewed as a blessing, culturally, the event of a child's death will continue to be normalized. Grabolle-Çeliker's recent study suggests that the Kurdish village women conceal deaths in childbed, stillbirths, and the deaths of babies and toddlers from illnesses or accidents, noting that "the women involved in these tragic incidents knew better than to expect a sympathetic audience for their experiences once sometimes had passed" (2013, p. 180).

In addition, since an infant is a creature not yet stained with sin, it is not perceived as a person, so, being upset over its death is unacceptable.

SN11. You cannot cry! You shouldn't! It is a sin to cry for an infant who has passed away, no need even to pray! It's not even a person. It's innocent and has no sin, God gave it to you and took it back immediately, so what? You should cry and pray for a person who lived and so had sins. (Age 52, East Anatolia, 2010)

Meryem, another bride, recalled the following:

SN12. In our village, just the close relatives and the bride's own mother visit her when her baby passes away. If an infant death occurs, two or three persons take the corpse to a cemetery. There is no need for a grave stone. They put a couple of stones around the grave and abandon it. No more visits. (Age 35, South East Anatolia, 2010)

Kaufman and Morgan (2005, p. 317) claim that "producing persons is an inherently social project" and according to them, in many cultural contexts, infants are accepted as the creatures who are unripened, unformed, ungendered, and not fully human. This situation turns personhood into a cultural attribute. According to the women I talked to in the villages, infants are not fully recognized as a person by household members without having undergone a variety of steps toward personhood that are associated with becoming more visible at home: walking, talking, eating independently, or serving any purpose.

On the other hand, however, circumcision for baby boys and menstruation for young girls are the most common milestones of personhood. The former refers to *erkekolmak* (becoming a real man) and the latter refers to *kadınolmak* (becoming a real woman), and both are associated with a sexual capacities. However, women who

have been both daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law told me that there is one way a daughter-in-law can ensure a better status in the house: by giving birth to a boy and this guarantees that in the future, she will become a mother-in-law who patriarchy directly offers the authority to rule the home. This makes her feel more confident and comfortable in the presence of her husband and the family elders, especially her mother-in-law. But, ironically, the baby boy has to see his first birthday for this to occur: According to the data I have collected in many villages, an infant's sex/gender is recognized on the first day s/he comes to the world, when people are enthusiastic and excited, but thereafter, until the baby completes the first year of life or starts walking, s/he is assumed to have no sex and no personality. Thus, in rural Anatolia, especially in sub-local contexts, a particular kind of patriarchy has been observed for years, a patriarchy perpetuated by traditions, religious assignments, and hierarchical relations. These three factors confine the bride and infant to a constrained and suppressed life that we identify as a liminal stage in which they do not count as real people.

4. In Lieu of a Conclusion

This article embraces the idea that gender relations and the structure of gender as a social classification are shaped by the interactions among gender relations and other social relations. Gender relations, as a contextual matter, vary over time. As social scientists, we have to fulfill the purpose of feminist theory by analyzing how we (do not) think about gender or becoming a "man" and "woman". Flax suggests that "as a practical social relation, gender can be understood only by close examination of the meanings of 'male' and 'female' and the consequences of being assigned to one or the other gender within concrete social practices". (1987, p. 630) Aware of the differences in the meanings and by means of data of the field surveys, I have observed that in Anatolian lands, a patriarchal system exists that controls gender hierarchy. However, its power varies according to the effects of gender-based division of labor, political, and religious enforcements of the State, and the contextual perception of "family" (the realm of intimate relationships, primarily between mothers, children, and female kin). I have focused on rural areas where patriarchal practices intensely interfere with gender relations, where women, as Catherine MacKinnon (1982) states, come to identify themselves as beings that exist for men, which I have called the sub local contexts. And as a second thought, I chose to associate that interference with a demographic problematic: infant mortality.

The findings and their theoretical basis show that one of the most important factors that turns IMR into a *puzzle* is the patriarchal/hierarchical approach that condemns young daughters-in-law to traditionalist interpretations. As a matter of fact, the narratives highlight a kin relationship in which the husband/son and his father do not want to be involved or where the mother-in-law has deliberately kept them away, so the focus should be on the relations among the related women within the household and dynamics of the patriarchal structure steering and controlling them.

Marxist approaches ignore activities of labor and production, especially those traditionally performed by women. Activities such as pregnancy, childbearing, childrearing, or relations among family members cannot be perceived as elements of property relations in action, since they are not related to production (Flax, 1987). However, gender socialization has always worked this way. Ebert (1988) while discussing gender, mentions that individuals voluntarily and freely take a step on a patriarchal field based on differences, privileges, power, and discrimination, a place where everything seems to be exactly the way it should be. This is because women are not aware of the apparatuses of the discourse transforming their body and sexuality. Thus, the perfectly-constructed female subjectivities embracing all the reproduced treatments towards their personality promote all patriarchal living conditions and reproduce the discourse repeatedly. Therefore, mothers-in-law are the fully expected outputs of a transformation process; they are the subjects who have experienced a rite of passage, and are equipped to teach the system.

Personhood as an anthropological issue has a political representativeness and consequence of the ideological-behavioral assessments of a patrilineal system. A competitive-intra household environment deprives women's lives of public activities. Within a household, a mother-in-law is very similar to an Ottoman Sultan representing a dynasty, and a bride is treated as a handmaiden. Delaney (1991) defines the relationship between brides and mothers-in-law as the most important and difficult relationship. The more hierarchical oppression there is within a household, the more the young bride devises living strategies. For Mernissi (1987) generally, an ideal woman pictured by the Islamic approach is a silent, inactive, and completely adapted to the household. She is a woman who has no defenses against Islamic messaging and thought. The narratives show that both a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law have already adapted and internalized everything presented by the men's (husband) world. Becoming active or inactive within the household depends on which hierarchical stage a woman is currently experiencing: The mother-in-law is a woman who manages to give birth to a boy and raise him for her future comfort. The lowest status belongs to the bride, who is actually depersonalized, silent, and

inactive in her husband's lineage, but is actually the woman considered the most ideal under the Islamic life conditions (Civelek, 2013; Kandiyoti, 2011; Mernissi, 1987; Sirman, 1993).

Mernissi (1987) adds that the relationship between a mother and son is likely the key to Muslim marriages. However, for Kandiyoti (2011), Islam cannot be directly credited as the only source of patriarchy in rural Anatolia. It has remarkably strong cultural and political bases. The life of a woman experiencing patriarchal extended family rules refers to a life full of deprivations and difficulties followed by another full of authority and control. In other words, the transformation of a subordinated woman into a woman with household authority is guaranteed by having a son(s). Therefore, a strong matriarch who experienced menopause a long time earlier is the other face of patriarchy.

The first period of a woman's life involves the depersonalization of a young bride: She is oppressed by her mother-in-law, other older women, and all the men in the family, and almost imperceptible within the household. That is why bridehood is the first stage of a liminal life, and why the elements of her liminal life also affect her baby's chances of survival after she becomes a mother.

In rural Anatolia, a child always belongs to the father's lineage in general and an *oğul* (son) is the loyal agent of his *soy ad* (family name) in particular. However, about 60 percent of the stories that I gathered during the previous surveys as well as my study ended with the tragic deaths of infants caused by unreasonable orders or expectations of mothers-in-law. The depersonalization of infants or children can be associated with the high regional birthrate, namely how ubiquitous they are in the region. Because according to the women's narratives, children, especially those still in the cradle, are not perceived as a person by elders or even by their own fathers: In the sub-local contexts, even rubbing the head of a child in front of an elder is unacceptable. For a daughter-in-law, going to nurse her child while one of the parents-in-law expects work to be done is equivalent to disobedience. Furthermore, though a child's birth is welcomed, her/his existence will only be acknowledged by family members once s/he acquires a cultural attribute or a socio-economic function, so the child's young mother must behave accordingly.

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