

Political Economy of Caring Labor, Gender and Deepening Conservatism in a Developing Economy Context: The Case of Turkey

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I. Introduction

Parallel to the so-called feminization of the labor force in many countries around the world, as families have transformed from single- to dual-earner families, the amount of time available to households for care of their members, in particular of children, the elderly, disabled and the ill, has emerged as a binding constraint. The multitude of problems associated with this emerging constraint on caring time has been named by some feminist scholars as the “crisis of care” emphasizing the parallels to the financial and the economic crisis, and the environmental crisis. The care crisis has triggered national governments as well as inter-governmental organizations to bring up the issue of work-life balance in an ever-increasing range and depth on the public agenda. A joint UNDP-ILO report suggests that work-life balance is one of the most challenging social policy issues of our times (UNDP-ILO 2009). The European Commission identifies “work-life balance” as one of the six pillars of its equality plan and underlines reconciliation policies as a precondition not only for gender equality but also the EU objectives of sustainable growth, full employment and social integration (The Roadmap to Gender Equality: 2006-2010, EC 2008). “De-familization” of care has emerged as a social and economic policy response to the so-called “crisis of care”, and it has taken place primarily through extension of the social care service sectors as well as improvement of labor market regulations on working hours and care leave.

In some developing economy contexts, where feminization of labor has not occurred, the trend has been towards stronger familization of care rather than de-familization as observed elsewhere. Turkey is a case in point. The historical evolution of familization of care in Turkey can be attributed to two dynamic processes as suggested in İlkkaracan (2012): First, the lack of sustained periods of robust growth and relatively weak labor demand combined with poor labor market conditions, has left the male breadwinner family norm unchallenged. This has resulted in a care regime that is strongly dependent on familization and an adverse path dependency of traditional gender roles and social division of labor. As such the lack of feminization of the labor force and the parallel familization of care can be understood in an analytical framework based on two pillars: A Marxist-feminist approach to capitalism and patriarchy as two interacting and mutually accommodating parallel systems; and an institutional economics approach to historically and geographically specific conjectures resulting in path dependencies (or a kind of Keynesian hysteresis).

Against this background, this paper focusing on the case of Turkey, argues that a highly familized care regime and the parallel exclusion of women from the labor market in a developing economy context has the potential to get locked into a number of adverse path dependencies: Namely, a masculinized and highly gender disaggregated labor market regime and an increasingly conservative political

approach to gender policy. Hence although low female labor market activity may seem like the result of a strong patriarchal tradition (typical of the MENA region), this paper argues that through reverse causality low female labor market activity supports a highly familized care regime and a masculinized labor market regime, and creates vicious cycles through a series of adverse path dependencies including popular support of conservative gender politics.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The next section pulls together a conceptual and theoretical background driving from different lines of literature on care regime, familization and path dependency. Section III presents a profile of the care regime in Turkey characterizing it as a highly familized one. Section IV uses household labor force micro data to show that a highly familized care regime inevitably mirrors a masculinized labor market regime embedded in inequalities by gender and class and hence creates a channel of adverse path dependency. Section V uses private survey data on voting behavior to argue that a highly familized care regime also provides a natural breeding ground for conservative (gender) politics, which in turn supports the sustenance of familized care regime. Final section concludes with two challenges to adverse path dependency and some policy visions.

II. A Conceptual and Theoretical background: Familization of Care Regimes and Path Dependency

The analysis in this paper draws upon two different strands of literature: Feminist social science research on the welfare state and caring labor; and institutional economics literature on path dependency. This section first introduces fundamental concepts from both strands of literature and then weaves them together to build the analytical framework of the paper.

“Care regime” is defined as the set of legal, institutional and social mechanisms that govern the allocation of responsibilities between the family, the State and the market for meeting the care needs of households, healthy adults, children, elderly, disabled and the sick. A general framework for evaluating care regimes in feminist social science literature is based on the typology of social welfare states suggested by Esping-Anderson (1990). This framework broadly categorizes care regimes as social democrat, public services-based care regimes; liberal market-based care regimes; and conservative family-based care regimes (Razavi, 2007).

The care regimes differ from one another in terms of the extent of de-familization which Esping-Anderson defines as “policies ... that maximize individuals’ command of economic resources independently of familial or conjugal reciprocities” (1999:45). Leitner and Lessenich (2007) propose a two-tiered framework for characterizing national care regimes as familized versus de-familized: Social de-familization and Economic de-familization. The social dimension entails the social and emotional relationship between the caregiver (parent) and the care receiver (child). Obviously complete social de-familization is not possible or even desired; yet provisioning of child-care services contribute towards social de-familization. Leitner and Lessenich also point out that the caregiver such as the mother can also enjoy social de-familization to the extent that caring labor is shared with the father or other family members such as grandparents provides another mechanism of social de-familization.

Economic de-familization refers to the financial possibilities/restrictions on the caregiver (parent) which determine who covers the costs of the care receiver's (child's) care needs. Socialization of costs through public social care services, paid care leave or transfer payments enables economic de-familization.

Social democratic welfare state supports both types of de-familization through the provisioning of public care services as well as paid care leave. A completely market-based care services system could potentially create possibilities for social de-familization through extension of market services but not economic de-familization. Similarly cash transfers in support of home-based care, usually characteristic of conservative welfare states, would address economic de-familization but not social de-familization.

The care regime design adopted by the European Union welfare policy (based on Esping-Anderson's vision of 'a Viable New European Welfare Architecture') is centered on both social and economic de-familization whereby provisioning of public care services and paid care leave become the fundamental tools. The EU policies towards de-familization of care also form one of the five pillars of its gender policy under the name "work-family reconciliation." A familized care regime is inevitably associated with a high degree of gender inequality as the care burden falls primarily on women and acts as constraints on female labor supply. Hence a familization of care can be thought of as synonymous with feminization of care. This in turn generates a series of inequalities such as the gender employment gap, female employment being characterized by part-time work, gender pay gap, occupational and industrial gender segregation and the glass ceiling.

Path dependency theory was originally developed by economists to explain that any current set of choices that stands before an economy are shaped or limited by the set of decisions that were made in the past (David 2005). Institutional economists have used this concept to argue that emergence of particular institutions in particular historical conjectures create their path dependencies. Institutional economics is based on the premise that the institutional structure of the economy including particular mechanisms of regulation, policy-making and governance as well as less defined forms such as culture as an institution, define and determine economic outcomes. Path dependency within an institutional economics context suggests that institutions which emerge often as a result of particular historical conjectures, shape and determine the future set of possibilities that an economy would face. To the extent that these are positive institutions, path dependency leads to virtuous cycles; to the extent that they are negative institutions, they result in adverse path dependency and vicious cycles. As such the concept of adverse path dependency can be thought of as similar to the Keynesian phenomenon of 'hysteresis.' While the concept can be seen as verging on determinism, actually it leaves room for agency, in that effective policy initiatives (and sometimes new external shocks) can reverse path dependency.

The analysis in this paper suggests that the highly familized care regime in Turkey has created an adverse path dependency of gender and class inequalities in the economic sphere, through two mechanisms as visualized in *Figure 1*:

1. First, the labor market evolved as a masculinized institution, mirroring the familization/feminization of the care regime. This meant

- The regular effective weekly work hours are very long hardly leaving any room for a full-time worker to simultaneously undertake caring responsibilities in the domestic sphere;
- There is a high degree of occupational and industrial gender segregation diminishing women's choices and also promoting the gender pay gap;
- Organized labor negotiations revolve around the (male) family wage while work-family reconciliation issues are hardly brought forth as demands by (male) workers.

In the first chain of vicious cycles, the paper argues that a highly familized care regime instigates an extremely masculinized labor market which in turn poses additional obstacles to caregivers' (women's) entry in the labor market; and further supports the sustenance of a familized care regime.

Figure 1: Two-way feedback Effects between Familization of Care versus Masculinization of Labor Market and Conservatism of Gender Policy

2. Second, a highly familized care regime implies full-time homemaking becomes the predominant female occupation.
 - One of the main arguments of this paper is that that full-time homemaking provides a natural breeding ground for conservative social politics, which emphasizes women's roles as mothers and wives, and prioritizes the integrity of the family over individual freedoms such as the right to work for pay.
 - The political discourse evolves into a socially conservative one as political leaders attempt to cater to female electorate votes.
 - Emerging gender policies emphasize either outright familization of care;; or only economic de-familization through conditional cash transfers for home-based care by women.

With respect to the second chain of vicious cycles, the paper argues that a familized care regime entails a high share of women engaged in full-time homemaking. Full-time homemakers' preferences tend towards a conservative politics and policies such as cash transfers which support women's domestic roles and the family over individual rights. Design and implementation of conservative family policies in turn further supports familization of the care regime and feminization of caring labor.

The rest of the paper brings in evidence from the official household labor force and time-use surveys, as well as private voter behavior surveys to show that both mechanisms of adverse path dependency and vicious cycles have been in effect in Turkey. Deepening familization of care, feminization of caring labor, masculinization of the labor market, and increasing gender conservatism of politics have played off through mutual feedback effects resulting in an economy characterized by globally one of the largest gender employment gaps.

III. The Care Regime in Turkey: A highly Familized System based on Feminization of Caring Labor

The care regime in Turkey can be characterized as a conservative family-based care regime in Esping-Anderson's typology. I would argue even within the category of conservative family-based care regimes, Turkey represents an extraordinarily familized case in comparison to counterparts featured in Esping-Anderson's characterization. There are hardly any legal or institutional mechanisms for work-family reconciliation and to the extent that they are in place, they are directed exclusively at women reflecting the implicit perspective that care is primarily a female responsibility.

The main piece of legislation governing care leave is the 16-week paid maternity leave for female workers.¹ Beyond maternity leave, female workers are also entitled to nursing leave of a minimum of 1,5 hours per day until the child's first age.² The share of female workers who can actually exercise these maternity leave rights are, however, limited to those formally employed. Female workers who are employed off-record (i.e. not registered with any social security institution) and hence no access to maternity leave right, make up as much as 54% of total female employment (vs. 33% of male employment); and 23% of wage and salary workers (vs. 22% of male wage and salary workers) (HLFS2012).³ Paternity leave is limited to public employees only; paid but only for ten days. Parental leave, recently adopted, again applies only to public employees for 24 months but on an unpaid basis. For private sector workers, only women are entitled to a 6-month extension of their maternity leave upon their request and on an unpaid basis. As far as other care leave is concerned, public employees are entitled to up to six months of unpaid leave for care of family members (including parents and siblings) who suffer from an illness or an injury (Bakırcı 2010).

Provisioning of social care services is also extremely limited in Turkey. As far as legal responsibilities are concerned, the only legislation governing child care service provisioning is in labor law which obliges workplaces with more than 150 *female* workers to provide a child care center either within the workplace premises or in close proximity. School starting age in Turkey was recently decreased from 7 years old to 6 years old with the opening of kindergarten classes. Other than this, there is no legal obligation on the State to provide childcare services. Hence legally the main responsibility for providing any child care service lies with the employers and that is only for substantially large workplaces which account for a relatively small segment of total employment. Beyond this, there is also evidence that many of these large workplaces do not fulfill the childcare center obligation and there is hardly any legal enforcement. A recent parliamentary session where the issue was brought up has shown that there are about 9000 workplaces (1658 public and 7204 private) in Turkey that have more than 150 female workers. In 2012, only 172 of these were monitored

¹ Female workers are entitled to maternity leave on the condition that they accumulated a minimum of 90 days of premium payments prior to giving birth.

² Nursing leave is 1,5 hours daily for private sector workers; 3 hours daily for public employees for the first 6 months and 1,5 hours for the second 6-months.

³ More than half of the unregistered female workers (total 3.96 million) are unpaid family workers in agriculture (2.3 million) (HLFS 2012).

with respect to their child care center obligations and it was found out that 76 did not have any childcare centers (Radikal 2013).

As a result benefitting from childcare centers remains the privilege of a minority of the workforce who are in formal employment in substantially large workplaces and the workplace fulfills the legal obligation. Or it is a privilege enjoyed by high-income families on the basis of private childcare centers. As a result, Turkey has the lowest enrollment rates in pre-school child care and education amongst OECD countries. Enrollment rates in preschool education for 3 and 4 years-old children are only at 4.1% and 16.5% respectively. For 6-year olds (the age of mandatory kindergarten class since 2006), enrollment goes up to 61%. There is no official data on enrollment rates for children under 3. A recent study by Ecevit (2010) shows that between 2004-2009, the number of childcare centers at public workplaces from 419 centers to 148 centers. A private survey by Hacettepe Institute for Population Studies (2003) shows that only 4.7% of the working mothers with under school age (6 years old) children use pre-school care; only 4.1% use home-based paid assistance; 41% rely on the help of other female family members (30% grandmothers; 11% elder girl children); and as much as 37.2% state that they undertake childcare themselves although they are engaged in some form of employment.

As elderly care, service provisioning obligation lies primarily with social security institutions which are obliged to provide a place in elder care institutions for those who are covered by the social security system. Coverage is conditional on registered employment and retirement, which as has been mentioned above excludes more than half of the workforce. Hence elderly care is provided, like childcare, again predominantly by women on an unpaid basis in the domestic sphere. In 2006, the conservative AKP government enacted a cash transfer policy conditional on taking care of a disabled or ill family member in households which fall under a certain income bracket (discussed further in section V).

The foremost implication of such a highly familized care regime in Turkey has been employment patterns characterized by huge gender employment gaps as well as employment gaps amongst women by education level and marital status. *Figure 2* shows labor force participation rates of urban women and men of prime working age by education level and marital status. Married men's labor force participation is almost universal at all education levels (ranging from 93% for the lowest education level to 98% for the highest). The rates for single men are slightly lower due to mandatory military service and continuing in education.

Figure 2: Urban Gendered Participation Rates and Gaps by Education and Marital Status, 20-44 age group, 2011

What is striking in this picture is that beyond the huge gender employment gaps, there are also substantial gaps amongst women by education level and by marital status even when controlling for education level. For instance, while never married women with 8-years of primary schooling enjoy a pretty solid participation rate of 48%, for their married counterparts the participation rate falls to 19%. There is a similarly striking gap amongst high school graduate women by marital status; the participation rate falls from as high as 63% for never married to 29% for married women. University graduates have the smallest gap by marital status: 82% vs. 73%. Looking

at these patterns from a care regime perspective, this is not surprising. The lack of policies for de-familization of care imposes relatively less binding constraints on labor supply of highly educated women for two reasons: They earn higher wages and belong to higher income households which enable their access to market substitutes for own caring labor time. Moreover, their rate of formal employment is much higher, which enable their access to legal rights care leave, provide them with the added motivation of social security coverage and generally better working environments. Yet university graduates make up as little as about 10% of the total female adult population in Turkey. The majority of adult married women have high school (24%) or lower education (65%), which provides them with employment situations hardly conducive to reconciling work and family. Hence the dominant profile of women's labor market engagement is one where women participate at relatively younger ages, prior to marriage and childbirth and depart thereafter to return only under conditions of extreme financial needs of the household (İlkkaracan 2012).

Time use patterns reflect the other side of the coin. The only official time use survey of Turkey conducted in 2006, shows that on the average adult (15+) women spend 5 hours and 17 minutes daily on household care and 1 hour and 8 minutes on labor market work versus 51 minutes of household work and 4 hours 27 minutes labor market work by men. In terms weekly total work hours, this means on the average women work 22% more than men. Despite women's significantly lower labor market engagement, the fact that their household work hours are more than 6 times that of men, results in higher female total work hours.

Table 1: Time Use in Household and Workplace Work Hours, 2006

As *Table 1* shows, the gender ratio in unpaid household care hours varies significantly by marital and labor market status and education level. Never married women spend 5.7 times more on household work than never married men; while for married women and men the ratio is 6.8. Primary school graduate women spend 7 times more time than men on household work, while the ratio for university graduates is 3.6. Note that employed women and university graduate women have the lowest household work hours (4:03 and 3:52hrs daily), yet this decrease in their share is not reflected in a parallel increase in their male counterparts' household work hours: Employed men have even lower than average household work hours at 43 minutes daily, male university graduates have slight higher than average at 1:05. This can be interpreted as meaning that employed women and university graduates rely on either market substitutes or unpaid contributions by other female family members such as grandmothers and elder daughters rather than sharing the burden with their male partners.

The last three columns of *Table 1* show similar data from three EU countries. In Sweden and France, two countries where the care regime is highly de-familized, women spend about 1.8 and 1.3 times household care hours than men. In Spain, where the care regime is relatively less de-familized, the ratio is about three times, still substantially lower gender gap in Turkey where the ratio is as high as 6.2 times. It is interesting to note that narrower gender gap in household care work is not due to lower hours by women (in all countries including Turkey, women spend on average about 5 hrs daily on household care work), but rather in the extremely low hours by

Turkish men (51 minutes) versus the European men who spend on 2-3 hours daily on household work.

III. A Masculinized Labor Market Regime Mirroring a Familized Care Regime

A highly familized care regime implies that typical household structure remains male breadwinner with full-time female carer, which in turn supports a masculinized labor market regime. By this we mean, a labor market where the rules of the game are shaped around the full-time male worker with no unpaid care responsibilities back home because there is an adult female who assumes responsibility for all household care. Yet given the male breadwinner family structure, the male worker carries the responsibility to earn enough income to meet the material needs of the entire family. Hence a masculinized labor market can be identified through structural characteristics such as

1. Long working hours and wide-spread practice of over-time work;
2. Occupational and industrial gender segregation shaped around required working hours such that women tend to concentrate in a few sectors where hour requirements are relatively less;
3. Negotiations between (organized) labor and employers tend to focus on wages ('the family wage') rather than on work-family reconciliation issues such as working hours or provisioning of childcare services;

Figure 3 shows distribution of average weekly labor market work hours by gender and marital status. The average labor market hours for men (around 53 hours) are substantially longer than the legal weekly work hours in Turkey (which is 45 hours). We observe that men's working hours do not vary by marital status. More than half of the employed men –whether married or single - work in the labor market longer than 50 hours per week; about a quarter work between 61-72 hours; and more than 10% work more than 72 hrs. Part-time employment (less than 35 hours weekly) for either single or married men is almost inexistent. By contrast, there is substantial variation in women's labor market hours by marital status. Single women in employment work on average 48,5 hours per week, close to men's weekly working hours. Married women in employment, however, work on average 40 hours per week. Part-time employment amongst single women is quite low – only around 10%; while as much as one third of married women are employed on a part-time basis. Close to half of employed single women work longer than 50 hours per week versus only a quarter of employed married women. The differences in labor market hours amongst employed women by marital status are parallel to the differences observed above women's employment rates by marital status.

Figure 3: Distribution of Employment by Weekly Actual Work Hours, Urban, 2011

Figures 4a and b pose average weekly working hours by occupational and industrial category against occupational / industrial share of female employment. We observe a clear negative correlation; the shorter the average occupational work hours, the higher the female concentration of employment in that occupation. One white-collar occupation (legislators and managers) and one blue-collar occupation (plant and machine operators) with the highest work hours (58 and 56 hours respectively) have the lowest shares of female employment (only 2.8% of total female employment in

each). As such, the glass ceiling problem (lack of female engagement in decision-making and managerial positions including politics) can also be attributed in part to working hours requirements and conflicts with caring responsibilities. Two of the occupations with the lowest work hours (agricultural workers and professionals) at around 40 hours have relatively the highest concentrations of females (at 30% and 11%). Distribution of female employment by industry shows a similar negative association with average industrial work hours.

Figure 4a: Distribution of Female Employment versus Occupational Work Hours, 2011

Figure 4b: Distribution of Female Employment versus Industrial Work Hours, 2011

A look at the female shares of employment shows that an overwhelming majority of occupations and industries have extremely limited female presence. Out of 27 occupational categories reported in the HLFS, 18 have less than one third women (6 of them have less than 10% women); and only 6 have at least half or more women. Out of the 87 industrial categories reported in HLFS, 68 have less than one third women (20 of them have less than 10% women); and only 6 industries have employment consisting of 50% or more of women. The overwhelming domination of men in the majority of industrial and occupational categories which forms the axis along which labor unionization and collective bargaining is organized implies that labor negotiations are dominated by experiences and priorities of men.

Indeed an overview of industrial relations in the context of collective bargaining agreements, labor union organizing as well as the tri-partite Economic and Social Council confirms that the focus of has been more on “wages”, particularly on “the family wage” against the presumption that the male worker had to earn sufficiently to provide for the homemaker wife and the children. We hardly see issues of work-life balance mechanisms (such as childcare services or care leave legislation) being brought up on the labor instigated agenda. As such a masculinized labor market also implies that work-life balance issues are left out of the scope of the agenda of organized labor in Turkey.

Hence a familized care regime imposes constraints on female labor supply limiting women’s presence in the labor market and sustaining a male breadwinner, full-time female carer household structure. As a result, the labor market is shaped around male norms of long working hours; influencing occupational and gender segregation; and lack work-life balance policies on the labor agenda. Such a masculinized labor market in turn facilitates further constraints on female labor supply and a deepening familization of the care regime. This is one of the two channels of what we call adverse path dependency. The next section attempts to show the other one through increasing conservatism in policy-making.

V. Mutual Feedback Effects between Familization of Care, Gender Disaggregated Labor Markets and Increasing Conservatism in Politics

This section attempts to disclose another mechanism of adverse path dependency between familization of care, women’s exclusion from the labor market and increasing conservatism of the political discourse on gender. The female electorate which consists predominantly of full-time homemakers has served as a natural

breeding ground for conservative politics in Turkey. Political party leaders, facing a female electorate that consists predominantly of homemakers have inevitably appealed to women over the “importance of their roles as mothers and wives.” The past decade under the rule of the conservative Justice and Development Party AKP in Turkey has seen the epitomy of this syndrome.

From the 1950’s onwards, through rural-to-urban migration patterns, the dominant female profile transformed from rural unpaid family worker in agriculture to urban homemaker;⁴ named in the literature as “the housewifezation of women” in Turkey (İlkkaracan 2012). By the 1980’s homemaking had become the most popular female occupation; more than 12 million adult women have defined themselves as full-time “housewives”. The 1990’s marked the rise of political Islam in Turkey as a significant political force. Women’s votes played a significant role in the first-ever electoral victory of a religious conservative party in 1994 (at the time the Welfare Party, later the Justice and Development Party AKP). When Erdoğan was questioned in an interview on the innovative tactics used by his conservative religious party, resulting in the electoral success in local elections in 1994, he highlighted foremost women becoming active in political lobbying:

"First of all, the most innovative strategy in our party was the fact that it was for the first time in the Beyoğlu elections⁵ that women took their place in active politics. This was of extraordinary importance; they undertook some serious work with us."(CNN Turk, 2012).

Women were credited a significant role for also bringing about the ever increasing success of Erdogan in the national elections in 2002, 2007 and 2011. The Women’s Branch of AKP was acknowledged for mobilizing hundreds of thousands of women in the urban metropolises’ to become active in local political organizing through their regular home visits and neighborhood meetings.⁶ In a more recent interview regarding the electoral success in 2011, a Prime Ministerial aide states:

"AKP has received votes from all segments of society but particularly women and young voters. 55% of AKP's votes came from women; 45% were from men. Women were 10 points in front of men. The Prime Minister is very good at organizing; he gave particular importance to the Women's Branch and the Youth Branch of the Party, included them in the decision-making mechanisms and utilized their support very effectively leading up to his success in the elections."(Sabah 2011)

This paper argues that it was the women who were in the full-time homemaking position in the urban Metropolises that political Islam has mobilized towards building up their electoral success. I use a unique database by Konda, an independent private

⁴ Parallel to this process, the female labor force participation rate declined from a high of 70% in the 1950’s to a low of 25-30% in the 2000’s. This trend has been interpreted by some as the U-shaped phenomenon typical of women’s labor force participation patterns in the course of economic development. İlkkaracan (2012) argues that the declining trend in women’s participation rates was mainly due to the types of industrialization and growth strategies adopted which did not generate sufficient jobs to absorb women into labor markets.

⁵ Beyoğlu is the central electoral district of the Istanbul Metropolis; Erdogan was elected the Mayor of Istanbul in 1994; then as his newly founded AKP won the elections in 2002, he became the Prime Minister.

⁶ Although there is no official disclosure by the AKP Women’s Branch that these home visits and neighborhood meetings is an active electoral lobbying strategy, there are numerous local and national media reports on these initiatives (See for instance: <http://www.aksarayhaberci.com/haber/1386/ak-parti-kadin-kollari-ev-toplantilarini-surduruyor.html>)

research firm. Konda runs monthly field surveys on voting preferences as well as opinion polls on particular emerging issues. Their database entails demographic information on personal and household characteristics as well as the correspondents' answers to a series of questions on political preferences and opinions with respect to the main issues on the public agenda.

Table 2 shows the distribution of voting preferences by gender, level of education and labor market status. The group that has the overwhelming majority of AKP votes are female homemakers with elementary or less schooling (51.8%) and the minimum of support for the secular social democratic party CHP (only 11.7%). Women with the same low level of education but who are employed still support AKP with a majority, nevertheless significantly lower level of support than homemakers (44.7%). The AKP support of men with lower levels of education does vary by their labor market status with about 46-47% support for AKP.

Table 2: Conservative AKP Votes by Gender, Education and Labor Market Status

Looking at the group with high school and university education, we observe that there is a striking difference between the women's level of support by labor market status. 38.3% of higher educated women who are in full-time homemaking support AKP versus only 22.2% of higher educated employed women. The latter's support for the relatively more progressive CHP is the highest at 34.5%; while the former's (educated homemakers') support decreases to 22.2%. Interestingly, for educated men employment status seems to have the reverse effect on support for conservative politics; educated employed men's support for AKP is higher (35.2%) than that of educated men who are not in employment (28.1%).

We also conduct a simple binary logistic regression analysis to see if gender or labor market status acts as a determinant of conservative voting. The regression equation is as follows:

$$AKPVote_i = a_1 + a_2FEM_i + a_3HMKR_i + a_4AGE_i + a_5EDUC_i + a_6URBAN_i + a_7HHINC_i + a_8ETHNIC_i + a_9RELSECT_i + e_i$$

- AKPVOTE = Bi-variate voting variable; = 1 if person prefers AKP
- FEM = Gender dummy; FEM = 1 for women
- HMKR = Homemaker dummy (=1 if woman is full-time homemaker)
- AGE = Age; categorical variable (for 18-29; 29-44; base is age 44+)
- URBAN = 2 dummies for Metropolis and Small Provincial; base is Rural
- HHINC = Household low income dummy (for HH Income 1200TL/monthly and below)
- ETHNIC = Kurdish dummy
- RELSECT = Alevite dummy

The results are shown in Table 3 for two different regressions; one including the gender dummy and the other replacing the gender dummy with the homemaker dummy. The first part of Table 1 shows the results of the regression using only the gender dummy. Controlling for a whole series of individual and household factors, we find that gender is not a statistically significant determinant of conservative voting behavior.

The second part of Table 1 shows the results of the regression where we also add the homemaker dummy, effectively controlling for gender and labor market status

simultaneously. We find that this combination is a statistically significant positive determinant of conservative voting behavior. A homemaker has 1.6 times the odds of voting for the religiously conservative AKP than her counterpart with the same individual and household characteristics but who is not a homemaker (i.e. who is in employment or retired status.) In addition we also find that the gender dummy now becomes a statistically significant and negative determinant of conservative voting. In other words, when controlled for the status of being a full-time homemaker, women tend not to vote conservative. A woman (who is not a homemaker), controlling for individual and household characteristics, has 0.75 times the odds of voting conservative than a man with the same level of education, age, household income, and the like.

Table 3: Regression Results on Labor Market Status as a Determinant of Conservative Voting Behavior

The Turkish experience of the past decade shows that the relationship between women's inactive labor market status and support for conservative politics is not a static one. Rather it is a relationship that also continuously shapes the discourse on gender politics and policies. In the past decade, the gender discourse in Turkish politics has increasingly and explicitly emphasized women's primary roles as mothers and wives rather than as workers, professionals or independent individuals. The policy vision has transformed from '*gender equality*' to '*integrity of the family*'. While the governing AKP has been the driving force of increasing conservatism in gender policy, the secular, social democratic and relatively more progressive CHP has conformed her positioning on the gender issue in an attempt to compete against AKP and appeal to the female homemakers. Below I list some of the milestones of increasing conservatism in the political discourse on gender in the past decade:

1. The primary and almost the exclusive gender issue on which the AKP Government has taken an explicit stance in the 2002-2009 period has been the issue of the headscarf ban in universities and in public employment;
2. In 2006 Erdogan's governing party (AKP) started paying means-tested social transfers (equal to the minimum wage) to female homemakers for care of elderly and disabled family members on the condition that they are not in employment elsewhere;
3. From 2009 onwards, the AKP Government has become more active in promoting the integrity of the family as the primary policy objective and explicitly distancing itself from "gender equality" as a policy vision;
4. In 2010, the Prime Minister, in a meeting with women's NGOs, has stated "I personally do not believe that women and men are equal ...they are born with different natures that complement each other." (Kazete 2010); he has repeated his statements about women and men not being equal in numerous public forums since then;
5. Gearing up for the national elections in 2011, the main opposition party (secular social democratic) CHP, has announced in 2010 its plans for "family insurance" to be paid in case of the breadwinner losing his job to the breadwinner's wife; hence this was an example of CHP revising its gender policy towards conditional cash transfers to female homemakers as a means of women's empowerment;

6. The State *Ministry for Women* was abolished in 2011 and its functions were transferred to a newly founded Ministry called the *Ministry for the Family and Social Policies*;
7. Prime Minister Erdogan has started making repeated public calls upon women to have at least 3 children (for Turkey to overcome the upcoming demographic challenge);
8. In 2012, the AKP Government made an attempt to ban abortion in Turkey (which had been legal since the 1980s); then withdrew the proposal upon widespread opposition but revised public health procedures making it optional for public employed doctors to accept/reject performing an abortion;
9. In 2013, Prime Minister Erdogan made a public statement that university students cannot be allowed to stay in coed housing; opposition leader of CHP, critiqued the Prime Minister for ‘blaming the lack of sufficient dorm space on students’ hence implicitly agreeing with the moral judgment that coed housing should not be allowed;
10. The AKP Government announced a draft policy on work-family balance, which claimed to improve women’s labor market attachment through extended maternity leave combined with expanding opportunities for part-time work and work from home as “appropriate forms of work” for women.

The development of this policy package came in response to concerted calls by women’s NGOs to improve the work-family balance environment. The women’s NGOs demanded in particular expansion of childcare, introduction of paternity leave and regulation of work hours. In support of these demands, women’s NGOs have also pointed to international processes that Turkey is a party to, such as the EU directives. The Ministry for Family and Social Policies agreed with women’s NGOs that work-life balance constitutes a bottleneck on women’s labor market attachment.⁷ Initially the policy package entailed expansion of childcare and introduction of paternity leave, effective tools towards both social and economic de-familization of care. Yet through a process of revisions in negotiation with other members of the cabinet, the package was transformed into one based on partial economic de-familization of care, yet imposing a deepening social familization by prescribing the sole responsibility for childcare to women inside the domestic sphere. The package proposed to extend maternity leave to as long as 6 years which is the mandatory school starting age for children, provide full state coverage of social security premiums during maternity leave becoming more generous for the third child; and also expanding opportunities for women to combine with part-time and home-based work as “appropriate forms of work” for women. İlkkaracan (2013) has called this “work-life balance policy alla Turca”, a policy initiative which is likely to deepen gender and class inequalities if adopted.

What is noteworthy here is the two-way mutual causality: It is the statistical reality that majority of female voters assume full-time homemaking as their primary occupation that encourages a conservative political discourse. A conservative political gender discourse, in turn, produces policies centered around motherhood and cash transfers for provisioning of home-based care which further support women’s positioning out of the labor market, in the domestic sphere as the bearers of a completely familized care regime. Even the most progressive demands and advocacy

⁷ This diagnosis of the relationship between low levels of female employment in Turkey and lack of work-family balance mechanisms has been based on insights from feminist economics research work in the past decade.

will be turned on its head to conform to conservative norms as demonstrated by the recent initiative on work-family balance. As it stands, the AKP Government proposes to improve women's labor force attachment ironically through extreme expansions of maternity leave and encouragement of part-time, home-based employment.

VII. Conclusion

The above discussion has shown that the political economy of a highly familized care regime set against the background of a strong patriarchal tradition as in Turkey – creates strong adverse path dependencies and vicious cycles. We have shown two mechanisms through which these path dependencies work. First, a highly familized care regime produces an extreme version of a masculinized labor market characterized by long working hours, high degree of occupational and industrial gender segregation shaped around working hour requirements, huge employment gaps between married and single women and an organized labor agenda centered exclusively around family wages. Second, a highly familized care regime provides a natural breeding ground for conservative gender politics. We have shown that women have been ironically strong supporters of conservative religious politics in Turkey in the past two decades; and that this female support was to a large extent defined by their labor market status. Hence exclusion from the labor market has increased women's support for conservative religious politics, while conservative Governments elected with women's votes have produced policies to further support women's positioning in the domestic sphere as providers of familized care.

A striking feature of the interaction between familized care and conservative politics that we noted, was the fact that the gender discourse adopted by the relatively more progressive, secular opposition has also conformed to traditional gender roles. The family insurance proposal of the main opposition social democratic party as a strategy to appeal to the female electorate was a telling example.

There have been a number of counteracting forces against these adverse path dependencies: Namely, the women's movement; international processes that Turkey is a party to, such as the European Union and United Nations; and economic forces of globalization. These have been effective in keeping the issue of the gender employment gap on the policy agenda and pressuring the Government to improve female employment levels and conditions. Yet as the above discussion has shown, even initiatives which have the objective of improving women's status have been trapped in a policy vision which perceives familized care and feminized caring labor as a 'natural' order.

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