

Gender Representation in Academic Geography in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Geography began in Turkish with the establishment of Faculty of Letters at Istanbul University in 1915. This was an embryonic stage lasting until 1920-25, with greater modernization accomplished with a Reform Plan in 1933. At that time the Institute of Geography emerged as a modern geography department with the help of foreign geographers in both Istanbul and Ankara universities. During this initial stage and subsequently, male scholars have dominated the subject. The first woman in geography was appointed to the Institute of Geography in Ankara University, Faculty of Language and History-Geography in 1955 and at Istanbul University in 1959. Although these appointments were an important step, they did not lead to significant appointments of women in the discipline. By comparison, the last two decades have seen a more equitable gender representation at the geography departments in Istanbul and several positive developments at Anatolian universities. Geography departments are still predominantly masculine, however, in spite of the fact that the proportion of women staff across Turkish academia (38.3%) is higher than in most other countries of the world. The presence of women in geography has not been accompanied by the development of gender studies within the discipline.

Key words: gender representation, higher education, academic geography, Turkey

This paper addresses the development and nature of the representation of women geographers in twentieth century Turkey, raising questions about the implications of their representation for research and teaching about gender in geography. It considers both early external influences on the place of geography in Turkish universities and the implications of internal political changes in relation to higher education. The paper then takes up gender representation on faculties across disciplines and in geography and the ways in which that has changed over time and between places, considering also the ranks of women faculty. Next it explores the changing attractions of the discipline for women and men students, linking this to cultural and employment themes. Finally, it asks about the contributions of women geographers in Turkey and the potential for creating work that considers gender themes.

The Establishment of ‘Modern’ Geography in Turkey

The nature of modern geography in Turkey in the twentieth century has been influenced by both external and internal political conditions. In the late nineteenth century, geography was little more than a dry and boring enumeration of names and a recitation of figures. It began to change and become a higher level of knowledge and learning as Turkish scholars and military personnel went to France for study in the early twentieth century (the years before World War I). The former were exposed to the teaching of such geographers as C. d’Almeida, F. Schrader, M. Dubois, and W.M. Davis (who gave a series of lectures at the Sorbonne in 1910) and they returned to Turkey to teach first in the secondary schools and later in higher education, writing books and presenting a geography free of its previous limitations and constraints (Akyol 1943). The military personnel who went to France during the periods of Reformation and Absolutism in Turkey (1876-1908) to study how geography applied to their work also returned with a more sophisticated and broad view of the subject.

Significant progress was made in research and teaching during the years of World War I. In 1915, the University of Istanbul’s Department of Humanities (as well as other departments) was reformed. Because of the close links at that time with Germany, German scholars were brought into the University with the development of seminars and laboratories. Scholars such as Obst and W. Penck brought with them a wealth of teaching materials which were deposited in an Institute of Geography at Istanbul University (the only university in the country at that time). At first, all the courses were taught by German professors, but shortly after the War the first Turkish professors began teaching, including those who had a French education and one who had taken his doctorate in Vienna. Thus in an institution where geography had been developed by Germans, French and other European

influences (Austrian and Swiss in the 1920s) were gradually introduced (Tümertekin, 1974). This was the first of the three essential reform movements in the Turkish system of higher education.

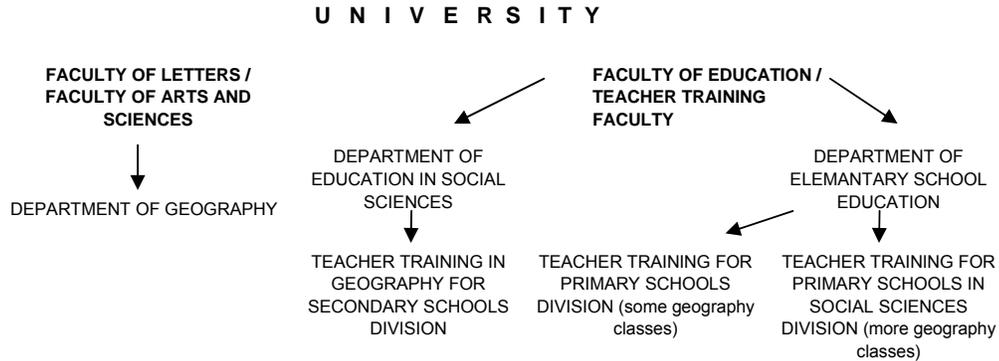
A further -second- reform was instituted in 1933, again by scholars returning from government-sponsored training in France, when efforts were made to achieve a balance between the teaching of physical and human geography and also in publications. This group of scholars contributed in two ways to the development of the science of geography in Turkey. One was the fact that the French School re-established its influence, and the other that human and economic geography asserted their power at the expense of physical geography and geology (Tümertekin, 1998). Although geography classes started in 1863, the Geography Department in Istanbul University officially established after 1933 reforms.

Also, during this reform period, in 1935, another Department of Geography was established under the leadership of German geomorphologist H. Louis in the newly founded Faculty of Language and History-Geography in Ankara by those who were graduates of the Geography Institutes of the Universities of either the Sorbonne or Strasbourg. Later, the British geologist, Professor McCallien, taught there from 1944 to 1950. It is noteworthy that in the University of Ankara the teaching of geography began with physical geography and geology. These two institutions remained the only universities offering geography during the years before World War II. Subsequently, a movement developed to spread the teaching of geography in universities and institutions of higher learning. In 1961 the University of Atatürk was established in Erzurum (Eastern Anatolia) and soon opened up a Geography Department with the help of two assistant professors who graduated from Istanbul University. In this way, geography (except the department in Ankara, the capital city) began to diffuse to the other parts of Anatolia. Nineteen years later, the third Geography Department was established in Ege University (in Izmir, Western Anatolia). Another development has also be mentioned in this period that from 1950s onward as new generations established close ties with the universities in USA, the American influence started to be strongly felt in academic research and instruction in geography as it is in other sciences.

An internal reform movement in Turkish higher education system in 1981 (one year after the military coup of 1980) brought a new structure that has influenced the opportunities and nature of geographic work. The Higher Education Council, the governing body of Turkish higher education (YÖK-Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu) transformed from a system that had been decentralized system in the 1970s to a centralized one. Since that time, 27 universities have experienced a through and challenging re-structuring process, and many new universities have been

established, including some privately owned universities (the first in 1984 in Ankara). In 2005, there are 74 universities in Turkey (17 of them governed by a privately constituted Foundation); 43 of these were established during the 1990s. Geography is represented in 17 of these universities as a “Department of Geography” in the Faculty of Letters or Faculty of Arts and Sciences, as they are called today. It is also represented in 26 universities either as “Geography Teachers Training Divisions” in Social Sciences Departments of the Faculty of Education (their number is 11) or as several geography courses in 37 different primary school teachers training divisions and social sciences teachers training divisions 31 faculties which some of them have both components.

Figure 1: FACULTIES AND DEPARTMENTS OF UNIVERSITIES RELATED TO GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION



The employment of women geographers came much later than the origins of the discipline. Although the Department in Istanbul was the leader in the establishment of the discipline, it was in the Department of Geography in the Faculty of Language and History-Geography in Ankara that the first female geographer was employed when in 1955 Ayhan Onur (Sür) became a research assistant in the Physical Geography and Geology Division of this Department. Four years later, a second woman, Bedriye Denker, was the first to be appointed in Istanbul in the position of research assistant to the Geographical Institute’s Human and Economic Geography Division of the Istanbul University. Technically, she was not a geographer, but a graduate of German Language and Literature reflecting her German origin.

The emergence of these two women geographers in Ankara did not provide adequate momentum for women faculty, with no further women being hired until 11 years passed. The delay reflected the perception of the profession that the discipline necessitated heavy fieldwork and special skills to use the equipment to draw maps. Nevertheless, significant changes have occurred in traditional views and

women's representation in geography in recent years: most handicaps or difficulties that the first women geographers originally faced (such as oppression, rejection, and lack of collegial support) disappeared in time in the most developed parts of the country. Unfortunately, not only geographers but all the women academics in the developing regions of the country are still facing the same obstacles, as will be noted later.

The above summary of the establishment of geography as an institution in Turkey reveals a male-dominated profession. Contrary to this, history - "sister" of geography - developed as an institution under the guidance of a woman historian, Afet Inan. It is not easy to find a simple answer to the question of "why did not women geographers play a role in institutionalizing geography in Turkish universities?" But, at this initial stage the physical side or subjects of geography with the help of geology was dominating the science and, as in other countries, there was no place for women in this "hard work".

Gender Representation in Turkish Universities

Turkey is a developing country with a relatively high rate of population increase (2 per cent per year) and high percentage of young population (30.7 per cent under age 15). Although the number of schools and universities is growing rapidly, it always remains far from meeting the demand of young people. In spite of university expansion, institutions can accommodate only one third of the students who take the central entrance examination to each year. Yet the growth of the early years of the 1990s, when more than half of the current 74 universities were established, created greater opportunities of career mobility for women and men academics as well. Academic staff increased from 28,114 in 1989 to 60,129 in 1999 and to 82,096 in 2005. The shortage of qualified personnel resulting from this expansion enabled greater access for women (especially in the higher education schools with 4-year programs) as well as influencing promotion for many academics who otherwise had experienced relatively stable careers (Özbilgin and Healy 2004: 362).

The increase in the number of university faculty has not been equally distributed across Turkey, however, or shown a reasonable male-female ratio in all parts of the country. In some universities the developments have been more than satisfactory but in others very slow and insufficient because of the great regional disparities in Turkey. Although the proportion of women university staff in Turkey at 38.3 per cent, is relatively high compared to Western Europe and the United States², as Atasü (1994) indicated, women are concentrated in the "metropolitan universities" in the larger urban areas. While universities are expanding beyond those localities, women remain much less well represented in them. In mid-1990s, for example, more than half of the women faculty were in the "old metropolitan" universities and

only 8 per cent were in the less developed (provincial) universities. In 100 faculties of total 220 there were no woman staff (Atasü, 1994; Acar, 1994). (Figure 2).

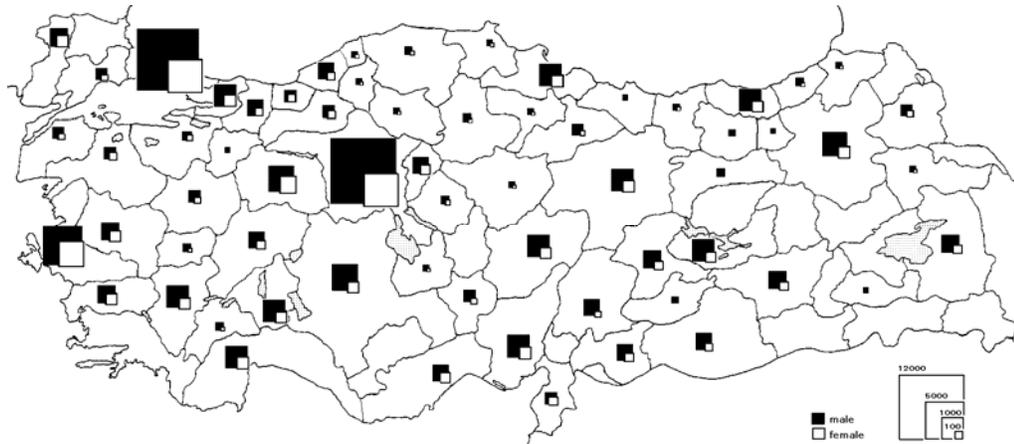


Figure 2: Distribution of total and female university teaching staff in Turkey (by numbers).

This characteristic still prevails at the national level; 37 per cent of total women faculty are concentrated in three greatest cities (Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir) and 46.9 per cent of the total is employed in the universities located in 10 metropolitan areas. Özbilgin and Healy (2004: 359) who restricted their studies to women professors, emphasize the proportion of women staff in Turkish academia is higher than Europe and most other countries of the world. They identify three phases of transformation in the history of women's employment in higher education.

The first phase of transformation, from the 1920s to the 1930s, led to the entry of women in academic employment through a set of principles introduced by Atatürk (known as the *ancestor* of all Turks) in his efforts to modernise Turkey. These principles were consolidated in the second phase of transformation from the 1940s to the 1980s, as the number of women academics gradually increased. Relatively stable growth rate of the university sector was replaced in the 1990s by a third phase of rapid expansion of the universities around the country, with the emergence of a “new” university sector which was made up of privately owned universities in Turkey. These developments allowed a shift away from the dominant bureaucratic career structure of older universities. Women's access to academic work has widened; the proportion of women academics in Turkey increased from 19 per cent in 1960 (Acar, 1994) to 38.3 per cent in 2005. There were 7,832 full professors in Turkish universities in 1999 of whom 22.9 per cent were women (ÖSYM, 2000), a proportion that had gradually increased from only 15 per cent in the early 1980s (Doğramacı, 1993) to 26.5 in 2004-2005 (3,020 of total 11,381).

Table 1: UNIVERSITY TEACHING STAFF BY ACADEMIC STATUS IN TURKEY

Academic status	Sex	1998-1999		2004-2005	
		Numbers	Percentages	Numbers	Percentages
Professor	Total	7,832	13.0 in total	11,381	13.9 in total
	Women	1,790	22.9	3,020	26.5
	Men	6,042	77.1	8,361	73.5
Associate Professor	Total	4,487	7.5 in total	5,456	6.6 in total
	Women	1,321	29.4	1,728	31.7
	Men	3,166	70.6	3,728	68.3
Assistant Professor	Total	8,289	13.8 in total	14,461	17.6 in total
	Women	2,380	28.7	4,504	31.1
	Men	5,909	71.3	9,957	68.9
Instructor	Total	8,299	13.8 in total	14,064	17.1 in total
	Women	2,738	33.0	5,262	37.4
	Men	5,561	67.0	8,802	62.6
Language Instructor	Total	5,193	9.0 in total	5,964	7.3 in total
	Women	2,796	53.8	3,382	56.7
	Men	2,397	46.2	2,582	43.3
Research Assistant	Total	23,805	39.6 in total	28,271	34.4 in total
	Women	8,853	37.2	12,512	44.3
	Men	14,952	62.8	15,759	55.7
Others (specialists etc.)	Total	2,224	3.7 in total	2,499	3.1 in total
	Women	948	42.6	1,026	41.1
	Men	1,276	47.4	1,473	58.9
Total	Total	60,129	100 in total	82,096	100 in total
	Women	20,826	34.6	31,434	38.3
	Men	39,303	65.4	50,662	61.7

Source: ÖSYM-Student Selection and Placement Center . 2000 and 2005. *1998-1999 and 2004-2005 Academic Year Higher Education Statistics*, Ankara.

Women are not as well represented in the higher levels of academia as in the total staff: 31.1 per cent of assistant professors, 31.7 per cent of associate professors and 26.5 per cent of the full professors are women. Nevertheless, there have been considerable improvements in women's representation in the ranks of academic hierarchy in Turkey over the last two decades: the share of research assistants, the lowest level of academic faculty, has risen to 44.5 per cent and augurs well for the future. The highest proportion of women staff at other ranks (56.7 per cent) is for language instructors reflecting the skill shortages that appeared during 1990s in new universities and which were filled by women academics.

Changes in Gender Representation among Students in Geography

Prior to the reform act of 1981, geography in Turkey was represented in four faculties: Faculty of Letters in Istanbul, Erzurum, İzmir and Faculty of Language-History and Geography in Ankara. Faculties opened since then are named Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Although Geography Departments are found in these

faculties, unlike History and a Turkish Language and Literature departments which are required in these faculties, a geography department may not exist. As noted earlier, Geography Departments may also be represented in the the Faculties of Education/Teacher Training.

Until recently, female students predominated in geography since a degree in the discipline automatically lead to secondary school teaching jobs and this career path is the more traditionally accepted one for females. Actually, looking at the entire developed world, the situation was almost identical: for instance in Finland the number of female students in geography was always higher than the number of males after 1926 (Kivikkokangas-Sandren, 1992). Turkish students completing secondary school are not free to choose their disciplines, however, because of the sheer competition between 1.5 million candidates and the challenging mandatory annual central examination system organized by ÖSYM (Student Selection and Placement Center). Still, until recently, it has been female students' "desire to become a teacher" that chiefly accounts for their decision to choose geography. In general, they have outnumbered the males: for instance in 1997-1998 curriculum year women accounted for 60.5 per cent of the 1,007 students in the Geography Department of Istanbul University.

Table 2: STUDENTS IN THE GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITIES

	Total	Female	%	Male	%
<i>2000-2001</i>					
New registrations/First-year undergraduates	618	212	34.3	406	65.7
Total number of undergraduates	2,361	900	38.1	1,461	61.9
<i>2001-2002</i>					
New registrations/First-year undergraduates	646	286	44.3	360	55.7
Total number of undergraduates	2,424	980	40.4	1,444	59.6
<i>2002-2003</i>					
New registrations/First-year undergraduates	653	262	40.1	391	59.9
Total number of undergraduates	2,408	1,009	41.9	1,399	58.1
<i>2003-2004</i>					
New registrations/First-year undergraduates	653	287	44.0	366	56.0
Total number of undergraduates	2,588	1,083	41.8	1,505	58.2
<i>2004-2005</i>					
New registrations/First-year undergraduates	657	269	40.9	388	59.1
Total number of undergraduates	2,677	1,135	42.4	1,542	57.6

A new restructuring phase in universities associated with changes in the Higher Education Law in 1997 brought about many changes in programs, resulting in a reduction in size and reorganization of most of the geography departments. As a result, the number of geography departments has increased and the female-male ratio has substantially changed: while Faculties of Letters (or Faculties of Arts and Sciences) maintain their Geography Departments, faculties of Teacher Training (or Education) have gained importance as the task of teacher training has been given

only to them. Even the graduates of Faculty of Letters have to continue their education for a further three semesters through these faculties in order to become a teacher. This additional burden (making the curriculum 5.5 years for aspiring teachers) made many changes in geographical teaching and training. For example, many academic faculty changed their place of employment, not only their faculties within the same university, but moved to a different university town. Concurrently, a 'drift' has been seen among geography students. Male students from the arts and social sciences have moved to other disciplines such as business administration, engineering etc., yet male students also began to outnumber females in geography. This situation is not the only factor affecting gender representation. Politics play an important influence in multiple ways: the annual examination system is unstable (there are substantial changes from year to year or from one government to another) and employment of graduates as teachers (and for all work in the public sector) is also subject to government control. Potential teachers fear being appointed to a location they consider unfavourable and financial benefits are lower in provincial regions, though, in contrast, is the hardship and cost of living in metropolitan areas on an inadequate teacher's salary. As they discover possibilities of other professions, teaching has become less attractive and the female-male ratio in geography departments has changed in consequence. As Tables 2 and 3 indicate, a situation very similar to Catalonia (Garcia-Ramon & Pujol, 2004) has arisen in recent years occurred in Turkey; male students now have a much higher percentage than females. It is surprising to experience the same developments in the teacher training schools.

Table 3: STUDENTS IN GEOGRAPHY DIVISIONS OF THE TEACHER TRAINING FACULTIES

	Total	Female	%	Male	%
<i>2000-2001</i>					
New registrations/First-year undergraduates	245	103	42.0	142	58.0
Total number of undergraduates	1,874	604	32.2	1,270	67.8
<i>2001-2002</i>					
New registrations/First-year undergraduates	281	120	42.7	161	57.3
Total number of undergraduates	1,123	432	38.5	691	61.5
<i>2002-2003</i>					
New registrations/First-year undergraduates	273	116	42.5	157	57.5
Total number of undergraduates	1,290	509	39.5	781	60.5
<i>2003-2004</i>					
New registrations/First-year undergraduates	289	124	42.9	165	57.1
Total number of undergraduates	1,317	542	41.2	775	58.8
<i>2004-2005</i>					
New registrations/First-year undergraduates	292	135	46.2	157	53.8
Total number of undergraduates	1,359	580	42.7	779	57.3

Source: ÖSYM-Student Selection and Placement Center . 2000 and 2005. 1998-1999 and 2004-2005 Academic Year Higher Education Statistics, Ankara.

A closer look at the distribution reveals a difference between the metropolitan universities and the provincial ones. For instance, in the 2004-2005 curriculum year while 45 per cent of the first-year students were female in the Istanbul University

Department of Geography, this proportion was 32.4 per cent in the Teacher Training Faculty's Geography Education for Secondary Schools Division at Erzurum Atatürk University. It is noteworthy that it is hard to draw conclusions just from the statistics in a country like Turkey in which the university entrance examination system varies very frequently and the students choose their disciplines according to their points but not to their desires and levels of personal achievements.

The Emergence of Women in Geography Departments and Temporal-Spatial Relationships in Their Employment

The representation of women faculty in academic geography academia is lower than students and much lower than the national average of 38.3 per cent among women academics. In 2004-2005 (see Tables 4 and 5) official statistics from OYSM indicate the total number of female geography staff was 41, or only 21.5 per cent. The hierarchical status of female staff was worse than their numerical representation: there were only two female professors and six associate professors (the highest ranks). Personal inquiries show the numbers and share grew slightly in mid-2005 to a total of 53 (23.3 per cent). Women have the highest share in instructors/specialists positions but these are the temporary appointments which do not lead to higher positions. Currently women are mostly (around 40 in total) employed at the levels of "assistant professor" and "research assistant" which are lower and also non-permanent positions; they both are relatively easier to obtain but can lead to higher ranks. For all the staff, male or female, the most difficult to achieve is "associate professorship" since YÖK (Higher Education Council) has instituted many prerequisites, among which overcoming the foreign language barrier is the most difficult. Thus there is a surplus of assistant professor positions at all universities in the country and "full professorship" seems to be very far away for not only geographers but most of the academic staff at the universities. Even in the lower ranks (assistant professor and research assistant) women are under-represented both in terms of numbers (16 and 21 respectively) and percentages (17.6 per cent and 30.0 per cent respectively). But, as Monk *et al.*, (2004) indicated "it needs to be emphasized that representation varies considerably by place and time". "Progress" in Turkey is not linear.

The number of women who are involved in scientific production in a country depends on the degree of incorporation of women (or feminism) in their research traditions. Although the number of women employed in academic geography is steadily increasing, they continue to be under-represented relative to their presence in the population and in higher education in general. Even in the countries of developed world the situation is similar to the developing countries: for instance, in USA where the highest number of geographers in the world live, the subject remains male dominated (Janelle, 1992); countless geography departments in that country still have no female staff. In late 1980s in Great Britain, 25 geography

departments still had no women staff and 27 had only 1 (Bowlby, 1989). Several years later Valentine (1995) reported continuing male dominance in British geography, even in a country where feminist studies have progressed so well. While Germany had the lowest percentage of female students among the European Union countries, even in Austria, Australia and New Zealand the share of women staff was less than 20 per cent (Monk, 1994).

Table 4: TEMPORAL CHANGES OF THE NUMBERS OF GEOGRAPHY STAFF AT THE GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENTS AND DIVISIONS OF UNIVERSITIES IN RECENT YEARS

Staff		Curriculum Year					
		2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	mid-2005*
Full Professor*	T	22	23	25	24	26	33
	F	2	2	2	2	2	5
	M	20	21	23	22	24	28
Associate Professor	T	23	17	15	18	19	25
	F	4	3	4	5	6	7
	M	19	14	11	13	13	18
Assistant Professor	T	63	73	74	75	82	89
	F	16	16	16	14	15	16
	M	47	57	58	61	67	74
Research assistants	T	65	60	56	48	51	69
	F	12	12	12	12	13	21
	M	53	48	44	36	38	48
Instructors/specialists	T	23	19	17	15	13	11
	F	7	7	7	6	5	4
	M	16	12	10	9	8	7
TOTAL	T	196	192	187	180	191	227
	F	41	40	41	39	41	53
	M	155	152	146	141	150	174

Source: OSYM ÖSYM-Student Selection and Placement Center . 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002,2003 and 2004-2005 Academic Year Higher Education Statistics, Ankara.

*Data collected through personal research. These figures showing the latest situation are not official ones.

Women's employment in geography departments at the national level, after the initial stage mentioned above, grew slowly until 1980s. Indeed, only one female staff member was added to the previous two between 1975-1980. Between 1980-1984, a total of seven was added (Istanbul University. 2; Ege University (Izmir) (2); Marmara University (Istanbul) (1); and Atatürk University (Erzurum) (2). Ten were added between 1985-1989 and 16 between 1990-1994 as research assistants in various universities. This progress was accompanied by the dispersion of female geographers outside the metropolitan universities, especially through the newly established Teacher Training Faculties, which were experiencing a shortage of professionally trained faculty.

Table 5: GEOGRAPHY FACULTY MEMBERS ACCORDING TO ACADEMIC STATUS IN TURKEY, mid-2005* (absolute numbers and percentage for the total of each category)

	<i>Female</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Ratio</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Teaching staff:</i>						
Full Professor	5	(15.2)	28	(84.8)	5.6	33
Associate Professor	7	(28.0)	18	(72.0)	2.6	25
Assistant Professor	16	(18.0)	73	(82.0)	4.6	89
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>28</i>		<i>119</i>		<i>4.3</i>	<i>147</i>
<i>Non-permanent staff:</i>						
Research assistants	21	(30.4)	48	(69.6)	2.3	69
Instructors/specialists	4	(36.4)	7	(63.6)	1.8	11
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>25</i>		<i>55</i>		<i>2.2</i>	<i>80</i>
Total	53	(23.3)	174	(76.7)	3.3	227
<i>Total geography staff in all ranks** in Teaching Training Faculties for primary education (estimated)</i>						
	21	(28.4)	53	(71.6)	2.5	74
Grand Total	74	(24.6)	227	(75.4)	3.1	301

*Data collected through personal research. ** 2 professors, 4 associate professors, 36 assistant professors and 32 research assistants and instructors distributed all over Turkey.

Distribution of Women Geographers: Unequal Intensification

The temporal and spatial developments in the employment of women geographers in Turkish universities did not follow the same path and remains very uneven reflecting different politics and perceptions about their employment. For example, although Istanbul has 22 of the country's 74 universities, geography is represented in only 3 of them. Yet the Istanbul metropolis has the highest number (16) and relatively higher percentage (42.1 per cent) of women geographers on its faculties. Istanbul is followed by Izmir (seven, (30.4 per cent)) and Ankara with (six, (24.0%)). Although four female geographers have been working in faculties of Erzurum Atatürk University, they only account for 18.2 per cent of that institution's geographers.

If the distribution of geography faculty is uneven nationally, women's distribution is even more so. Departments with the same number of students may have not the same size of staff and many of the departments do not have any ranked higher than assistant professors. The largest geography department, Istanbul, has the most women, but some smaller departments have higher percentages of women because there are relatively few men. For instance, in the small Geography Division of Teacher Training at Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University, half of the staff is female, but this represents only two of a staff of four.

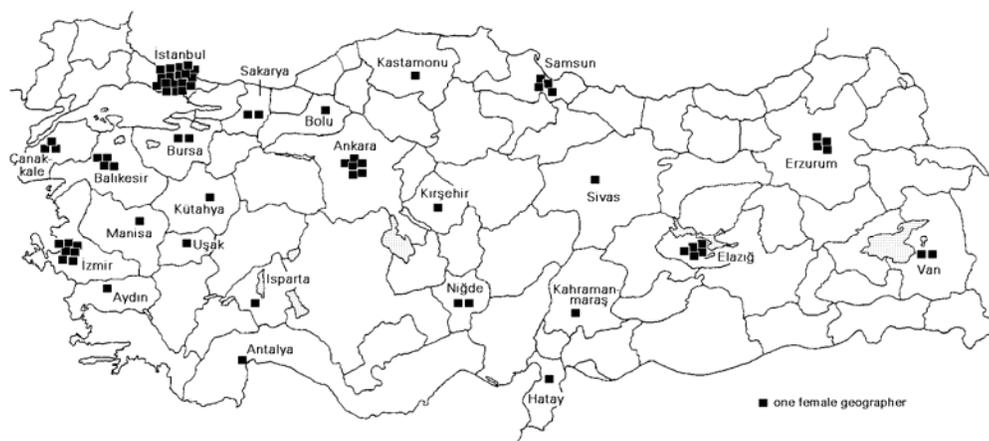


Figure 3: Distribution of female geographers in Turkey (2005).

Table 6: APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF TOTAL* AND FEMALE GEOGRAPHY STAFF** IN GEOGRAPHY-RELATED DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO THE UNIVERSITIES, mid-2005

<i>University-City</i>	<i>Department of Geography</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Female %</i>
ISTANBUL, ISTANBUL	Faculty of Letters	29	12	41.4
FIRAT, ELAZIĞ	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	16	4	25.0
ANKARA, ANKARA	Faculty of Language-History and Geography	15	2	13.3
EGE, IZMİR	Faculty of Letters	14	4	28.6
ATATÜRK, ERZURUM	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	12	3	25.0
ONSEKİZ MART, ÇANAKKALE	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	11	3	27.3
BALIKESİR, BALIKESİR	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	9	2	22.2
ONDOKUZ MAYIS, SAMSUN	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	9	2	22.2
YÜZÜNCÜ YIL, VAN	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	9	2	22.2
HARRAN, ŞANLIURFA	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	7	0	0.0
SÜTÇÜ İMAM, KAHRAMANMARAŞ	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	7	1	14.3
KOCATEPE, UŞAK	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	6	0	0.0
KOCATEPE, AFYON	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	6	0	0.0
MARMARA, ISTANBUL	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	6	3	50.0
SAKARYA, ADAPAZARI	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	5	2	40.0
SÜLEYMAN DEMİREL, ISPARTA	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	3	1	33.3
FATİH (PRIVATE), ISTANBUL	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	2	0	0.0
MUSTAFA KEMAL, HATAY	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	1	0	0.0
<i>University-City</i>	<i>Division of Geography</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Female %</i>
ATATÜRK, ERZURUM	Kazım Karabekir Teacher Training Faculty	10	1	10.0
GAZİ, ANKARA	Gazi Teacher Training Faculty	10	4	40.0
DOKUZ EYLÜL, IZMİR	Buca Teacher Training Faculty	9	3	33.3
SELÇUK, KONYA	Selçuk Teacher Training Faculty	8	0	0.0
ATATÜRK (Branch), ERZINCAN	Teacher Training Faculty	5	0	0.0
DICLE UNIVERSITY, DIYARBAKIR	Teacher Training Faculty	4	0	0.0
ONDOKUZ MAYIS, SAMSUN	Teacher Training Faculty	4	2	50.0
BALIKESİR, BALIKESİR	Necatibey Teacher Training Faculty	3	1	33.3
ONSEKİZ MART, ÇANAKKALE	Teacher Training Faculty	3	0	0.0
MARMARA, ISTANBUL	Atatürk Teacher Training Faculty	3	1	33.3
KOCATEPE, AFYONKARAHISAR	Teacher Training Faculty	1	0	0.0

Still today some geography departments or divisions have no female staff, or only one woman geographer, some of them the first woman appointed in their departments. Although the same situation is also encountered in many countries including the USA (see Falconer al-Hindi, 2000), in Turkey this is probably related to (a) traditional conservative male perceptions of woman in Turkish society; (b) the traditional perceptions of geography requiring physical field work (especially because of the longstanding link with geology) for which a woman is not considered suitable. Thus, we can say that there is an implicit discrimination against women in their appointment in some places.

In addition to these factors for female geographers, regional disparities also play an important role on the distribution of all geography faculty members. Economic development differences, lack of amenities, even the hardship in finding housing restrict some academics, especially full or associate professors, from applying to particular universities. There are, of course, some contradictions: although women mostly favour metropolitan areas because of the freedom that urban life provides them, as well as the research capabilities, those places are also very expensive ones in which to maintain a life style because of low faculty salaries; there is, however, no discrepancy in salaries between men and women under Turkish laws. So it is very difficult to make a decision between provincial sites and greater cities of Turkey. But, the main point I would like to emphasize is that in order to get a job at the university one must find “a vacancy status” at any rank.

Changing Location

Even if disproportionate in numbers, changing locations (mobility) have played an important role in the recent distribution of female academics in Turkish universities. The need for skilled labour means that geography departments or divisions tried (still try) to draw academics with masters or PhD degrees from other universities; women geographers and even female geography teachers in secondary schools who look for a career have benefited from this mobility. Some may change their working and living place because of the husband’s desire to seek a higher position and better living or working conditions. For instance, Samsun, Kırşehir, Niğde and some other Anatolian universities have many cases like this.

Making a change in location is much easier now than it was in the past, partly because formerly, when there were fewer universities, academics were required to stay at the same institution in which he/she began their career and they could only leave their university after gaining the highest status (that is, full professorship). After the 1981 Higher Education Law, with the opening of new universities, it became easier and widespread between institutions, between departments at all levels. Additionally, with this Law some statuses, such as assistant professorships and research assistantships, became more temporary and insecure. So academics

may try to seek safer places and higher positions but these are mostly located in the developing areas. In this situation a “recommendation” with a dean or department head from the previous university is the most effective basis on which to make a decision to move a new university. This process has created a chain from the lowest to the highest positions in some departments, that is “acquaintance” and “recommendation” are very important when applying to any geography department. The Department of Geography at Atatürk University in Erzurum is the leading example of this: more than 20 geography academics (of which five are female) have moved to universities such as Istanbul and Marmara in Istanbul, Süleyman Demirel in Isparta, Kocatepe in Afyonkarahisar and so on.

Spatial mobility of academics is also widespread in some developed countries, but in a different and competitive way from Turkish case. Sidaway’s (1998) interviews with British geographers speak to the increased role of inter-institutional competition in prompting contemporary career moves related to advancement in status contrast to traditional advancement to seniority in the past within a single department. These issues are also valid for Turkey, but the mobility between the universities or faculties in Turkey mostly (in newly established ones) follows a different path, especially if we remember that positions, with one exception, are in state universities. We cannot talk about the role of qualification or competition in the lower ranks, rather, the necessary conditions are to have a degree (preferably the PhD) and especially to have an “acquaintance” or “recommendation” when the position is in a newly established provincial universities requiring fresh academics. Some geography departments prefer to see their own graduates as research assistants or assistant professors for better communication and better understanding. In this we see parallels with Spanish universities which frequently hire their candidates for higher degrees as *ayudantes* in full-time positions and subsequently hire their own graduates as faculty (Garcia Ramon & Nogué Font, 1992). These two practices are very similar to those in Turkey, and have had implications for the hiring of women in both cases.

Contribution to Geography

In 1973, in one of the earliest articles on women’s positions in geography, Zelinsky concluded that

The literature on the status of women in North American geography can be surveyed in only one sentence: There has been a single master’s thesis (essentially a factual review) and no other extended, there seems to be no published discussion at all of the status of female geographers in other parts of the world (p.151).

This is still true for Turkish universities. Only in 1998 was a study published on women's studies and another one on female geographers (Özgüç 1998a, 1998b). Although two articles were published by a male geographer on women (Tümertekin 1958, 1964) they were statistical evaluations of the female population and its share in agricultural work. Even after the latest publication (Özgüç, 1998a) that tries to direct geographers attention to matters of women, there are still no further articles or books on women's issues in geographic literature. The major reason for this is the fear of being seen as a radical "feminist" geographer, which as Winkler (2000: 744) noted, deterred her from writing in the United States, saying "I associated all literature on women in academe with feminist criticism, which I found too extreme and which made me uncomfortable." Many women are reluctant to speak up. Swim and Cohen (1997) echo this view: "We are often silenced by concern that if our actions are interpreted as feminist then some of our male colleagues may view us negatively." Timar and Jelenszkyné (2004: 107) also emphasize this issue for Hungary as "feminist geography, still excluded from mainstream geography, and marginalized graduate female students would only weaken each other's positions." The situation contrasts with that of feminist geographers in some other countries, where, interestingly, even junior scholars working in contexts that differ from those of Turkish universities, have begun to develop research on gender themes in Turkey, addressing such issues as identity, religion, citizenship and political ecology (see, for example, Gökariksel (2007); Gökariksel and Mitchell (2005); Harris (2005, 2006); Secor (2002, 2004, 2005).

The second reason for the dearth of work is possibly that it is easier in the Turkish context to study a subject on a physical geographic topic or on characteristics of material culture than more psychological or human ones related to women. I have to add that studying issues in development or under-development has also largely been avoided until now among the geographers in Turkey because of their political implications. The research preferences of Turkish women geographers appear to include both major branches of geography, i.e physical and human, and they produce quite a volume of research and publications. Still, most do not want to deal with women's issues in their research. Nevertheless, they (and men also) are not totally free to choose their own directions, but rather need to specialise in subjects which their departments and professors (where they exist in developing universities) require. Sometimes repetition occurs, sometimes particular subject areas remain neglected because of the lack of guidance of a professor or even lack of a higher degree staff other than an assistant professor. The requirements of different faculties are very different from each other: for instance teacher training faculties would like to see their staff specialised on the issues about education in geography in contrast to staff in the Faculty of Letters who can specialise on any subject worth to a geographic study. But briefly we can say that most of the research in human geography has always been "neutral", never referenced to gender roles; instead "people" or "population" terms were frequently preferred; and women have been mostly seen as "female population in total".

Problems

In 1983 (Johnston and Brack, p.100) claimed that “*The sociology of British University geography is as yet largely unknown.*” More recently, Wills (1996: 293), commenting on academics and their hours of work accentuated this claim writing “*geographers ... have been reticent in illuminating current changes in the nature of our work.*” In the Turkish geographer’s world this is strongly felt. To understand the sociology of the geographic community in Turkey is difficult because of the small size of the profession and the even smaller number of female geographers and their unwillingness to speak. In a relatively newly developing science, and still not totally modernized one, academic geographers in Turkey, some with the job security provided by state universities, have not adopted yet a custom of opening themselves up to the outside world.

From the female geographers’ perspective, everything is more complicated; they were not even aware of the developments related to efforts to secure rights for women during 1960s and 1970s in contrast to the other female writers in social sciences such as philosophy or sociology (Arat, 1996) since they were a very, very tiny community. And because the accumulation of female academics in geography remains to be achieved and the shortness of time that has passed since the first appointments, there are so few women at higher ranks. Like academics in other sciences in Turkey, academic women geographers have faced many problems. These are mainly in research, teaching-and-instruction, administration, and the problems related to daily life. When more time is spent on one of them, the others are neglected; to maintain a balance seems almost impossible. Hardest of all to overcome is the lack of finding a supervisor/professor research mentor. It is a very serious problem for most of the geography departments, as it is mentioned above, in which many posts are not higher than assistant professorship.

Because of the very heavy teaching load and administrative requirements, other than nights, and holidays, it is very difficult to find adequate free time for research. This, of course, is a universal problem, as the literature notes (see, for example, Wills, 1996, Sidaway, 1997). The necessity of spending one’s own leisure time or holidays for research, especially in preparing to get the PhD or Associate Professorship, is understood as a universal problem for geographers. The other side of this problem is to try to complete the reports about the fieldwork at home which means to spend extra more times on these activities. This pressure is especially hard for married faculty with children: expectations of home (and the people there) and demand for work commitments sometimes can be in conflict, for example, if she is in class or a meeting and gets news about her child’s illness; she must divide her free time, such as at the evenings or weekends, between her own studies and housework. Difficulties to making a balanced life style between working and living places are universal. Turkish female geographers, like their colleagues in the other

parts of the world, constantly think about “...have I got the washing and cooking to do at home, have I got to go to supermarket on my way home from work, have I got to iron something to wear tomorrow?” and other things that are racing through their minds. One Turkish female professor explained this paradoxical situation to Özbilgin and Healy (2004: 366) as follows:

I believe that there is equality between sexes. However, once you enter the academic profession, the difficulties they [women and men] face are different. However much men help, responsibilities of caring for the family and children are expected of women... It is very positive for a woman to have an academic career. It has high social status. It is not important if she earns less. However, if men earn less, they are victimized.

In addition to these difficulties, field work is another obstacle for female geographers in Turkey: to visit the remote areas for research (especially for physical geographers when they are studying over a large area) or to collect data (even harder for human geographers) usually requires the help of a male collaborator whether a husband or a friend. One of the conclusions which Özbilgin and Healy (2004: 366) drew is also valid for geographers, that marriage and family formation impacts on the career choices of women and men, but in different ways. Female participants recognized gendered structural constraints for men and suggested that the “financial responsibilities of being a man” and “compulsory military service” are the main hindrances for men’s career advancement in academia. In their study, one male professor stated that barriers to career development exist only for men, while other male participants argued that marriage and child care constituted two important barriers to women’s career development.

The socio-cultural expectation that Turkish women should marry upward in the socio-economic ladder of hierarchy makes marriage more difficult for women who achieve career success prior to marriage. Men are more likely to be married than women (for instance in the Department of Geography at Istanbul University while only 4 of 12 women staff are married, 15 of 17 men staff are married). Although the inclusion of women in professional employment has a history of over 80 years in Turkey, the traditional family ideology, which assigned career and domestic roles to women and breadwinner roles to men, continues to be the main social frame of reference. But the unusual efforts of women to enter the working environment as soon and as much as possible are breaking the traditional structure of society especially in urban areas.

Conclusion

Though Turkey appears to have the highest proportion of female university professors in all Europe, this is still not the case in geography. But there is hope on the horizon. Although the numerical increase of female academics frequently relates to the low salary for male geographers as breadwinners, pushing them to seek employment outside the university facilities, this is not valid yet in geography since such opportunities are not substantial outside the educational sector. The development of new techniques can soon be expected to have an effect on the decisions of male geographers, however, as the figures of male students indicate. But still, to find any “position” at the universities, despite the insufficiencies of salaries, is important for both male and female geography graduates. Sometimes women even may prefer such a job to a “husband”; “*the love of career*” comes first and this love needs “*laboring*” with Wills’ (1996) words. Although women geographers have begun to accelerate their pace on the world stage, the traditional view still is an important barrier in front of them: they can only be preferred (to men) if they appear to be subservient, problemless, softer, etc. Even so, patience and perseverance for a scientific study which will take years by working at a university environment are needed in order to become an academic.

Even if the total percentage of women has risen from 19 in 1998 (Özgüç, 1998b) to 23 in 2005, gender-sensitive approaches to teaching and researching in geography continue to be absent in many geography departments. The image of geography in Turkey is as masculine as it was before, contrary to the growing number of women geography staff and higher percent in some departments. Because of the difficulty of providing comprehensive and detailed statistical data, I have only been able to draw attention to a few major characteristics and problems. Since nearly half of the population of Turkey is young and in training age and much of the Turkish society is passing from traditional to modern, the main features of the geographic public in terms of students and staff will change much rapidly than elsewhere. So what is said here will be seen as a recent historical characteristics of the gender in geography; the geography of women is still seems largely as a “*terra incognita*” in Turkey. In concluding, women geographers in a traditional society need to look within a “different angle”, seeing the world with “other than men’s eyes” (Zelinsky *et al.*, 1982; Monk and Hanson, 1982) in order to improve understanding and help to solve the contemporary problems of the world in general and Turkey in particular. This could only be realized as Winkler’s (2000: 747) preferred sub-title in her article declared: “Needed -more women faculty”.

NOTES

¹ The first female geography student, Şükûfe Nihal, was graduated from here at the end of 1919-1920 curriculum year.

² For instance, Ayla Neusel (1994) in her article on “Women academic staff in universities” comparing Turkey and Germany claimed that both the number and ratio of women staff in Turkish universities were higher than the German universities. In spite of the great difference between the ratios of women who have a chance to go to university (40% of females in Germany and 1.1% in Turkey), in total the ratio of female students in Turkish universities (42.3%) exceeded the German ones (38.2%) at that date. Tülay Çakiner (1995) who studied “women academics in the faculties of medicine” also put forward with figures that women in these faculties have a substantial role than anywhere else in the developed world (28.2% of the academic staff in 22 faculties of medicine was women in mid-1990s contrast to 10% in Great Britain and 5% in the USA). But she also emphasized the regional differences in the distribution of women staff in these faculties because of the unequal development levels all over the country.

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