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The Not So New Turkish Woman: A Statistical Look at Women in Two Istanbul Neighborhoods

By Mary-Lou O'Neill¹ and Fazil Guler²

Abstract

Using survey data gathered from nearly 400 women living in two Istanbul neighborhoods, this article explores issues of work, education, family and feminism. In addition to presenting the findings we argue that there is a continued gap between the ideal of the Republican woman and the actual practices of this group of Turkish women. The picture of these Turkish women that emerged from this survey is that of women still largely in the grips of an ideal born in the early days of the Turkish Republic. However, it also became clear that there also exist rifts between belief and practice in the lives of these women: they seem to believe in many facets of the Republican woman while at the same time the practices they engage in belie some aspects of this belief. Ultimately, it seems that in some respects they are in the process of constructing their own idea of a Turkish woman while at the same time some aspects of these women's lives remain deeply bound by traditional notions of gender.

Keywords: women, Turkey, Republican woman, work, education, family, survey

Introduction

Women have always been central to the construction and reproduction of nations. Ideas of gender and nation are deeply intertwined. Women, as mothers and those most often in charge of childrearing, are quite literally the reproducers of the nation (Carbayo-Abengozar; Echeverria, Moghadam; Anthias and Yuval-Davis). Yuval-Davis, author of *Gender and Nation*, makes clear, "It is women—and not (just?) the bureaucracy and the intelligentsia—who reproduce nations, biologically, culturally and symbolically"(2). Moreover, women's reproductive rights do not just concern individual women. Pressures to bear or not bear children are placed on women as members of national collectivities rather than as individuals (Yuval-Davis 1997). It is their duty as members of the nation to produce (or not) the nation's future citizens. This duty extends to the cultural reproduction of the nation in terms of proper childrearing as well. Women are often expected to not only have but to raise future citizens. This involves the transmission of the proper language, values, ways of dress and behavior.

As citizens themselves women and their roles are also deeply embedded in nationalist projects. The place of women in society is often used as a symbol of the nation's purported modernity. Yuval-Davis argues that, the position of women "has been one of the important mechanisms in which ethnic and national projects signified—inwardly and outwardly—their move towards modernization"(60). This has been the case particularly in Turkey. In the early days of the Republic, leaders invoked a new idea of "woman" to counteract what they viewed as the "backwardness" of women under the

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Ottoman Empire. This new Republican woman, educated, socially active, a trained wife and mother and yet feminine in her western dress, would demonstrate Turkey's modernity. The position of women in Turkey still operates as a symbol of Turkey's "modernity" and is often referred to in discussions of Turkey's fitness for European Union Membership. This project surveyed 388 women in two different Istanbul neighborhoods on a wide range of issues of interest to women with the hope that a more nuanced picture of Turkish women would begin to emerge.

What emerged from this survey is a portrait of Turkish women still in many ways in the grips of an ideal born in the early days of the Turkish Republic. However, it also became clear that there exist rifts between belief and practice in the lives of these women: they seem to still believe in many facets of the Republican woman while at the same time the practices they engage in belie some aspects of this belief. A detailed discussion of the concept of the Republican woman follows below.

History

Long before the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 women's issues came under discussion. Beginning with the Tanzimat period in 1839 and its "purposive modernization" women's issues began to come to the fore (Z. Arat 7). During this reform period some educational opportunities were extended to women and debates over polygamy and veiling took place. The Constitutional Reform of 1876 and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in 1908 further extended women's rights and more importantly gave women the opportunity to start entering the public sphere. Those women who did enter public life to educate other women, do charity work and, and argue on behalf of women's rights were largely educated, urban, middle class women; in other words hardly representative of the bulk of Turkish women, though they began to make women's voices heard. The Turkish scholar Aynur Demirdirek argues that in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, among urban Ottoman women, a feminist movement was born (68).

With the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Turkish state turned its gaze to the West and began a conscious process of modernization, and women became an important symbol and marker of Turkey's modernization. Indeed, the modernization project of the Republic brought many needed advances for women. Compulsory, free primary education for both sexes was introduced in 1923. In 1926, the Civil Code was reformed and brought some advances for women with regard to marriage, divorce, and parental rights. By 1934 women were granted full suffrage and the right to stand for elections at all levels.

Alongside the legal changes also came a new image for Turkish women. "The Turkish Woman" was born. The ideal Republican woman was expected to be an educated professional and socially active and at the same time a dutiful wife and mother. Although women were fully a part of public life, marriage and motherhood were considered a "national duty for women" (White 146). "The Turkish or Republican Woman" was a mass of contradictions. She was "'an educated-professional woman' at work; 'a socially active organizing woman' as a member of social clubs, associations, etcetera; 'a biologically functioning woman' in the family fulfilling reproductive responsibilities as a mother and wife; 'a feminine woman' entertaining men at the balls and parties" (Durakbaşı 147). A superwoman if there ever was one. Like her Ottoman

feminist sisters before her, this ideal woman, with the expectations that she behave and dress in a “modern” way, could hardly represent all Turkish women. Jenny White, an anthropologist specializing in Turkey, explains that:

Women who felt that their religious beliefs required them to dress modestly and cover their heads, and women who kept to older customs—like sitting on cushions and eating at low trays instead of sitting on chairs at a table—were not accepted into this Republican sisterhood and were alternately reviled as the uncivilized primitive or romanticized as the “noble” peasant. Since poverty and rural origin hindered women from “obeying” the injunction to leave their homes, become educated, and contribute to the Republic’s professional life, social class and urban/rural differences were, from the beginning, implicit in the differentiation of the Republican woman from the “reactionary” woman (“State Feminism” 146).

In the construction of the ideal of the Republican woman, there was and is little room for difference as “equality was conceived of as irreconcilable with difference”(Y. Arat 102). In 1960, a military coup occurred which began an era of unprecedented freedom in Turkey. The 1961 constitution granted far-reaching rights to individuals and labor and helped spawn a time of widespread political organizing. While political parties and groups at that time did not concentrate on women’s issues, they did mobilize and politicize women (Z. Arat 17). The experiences women gained and the lessons they learned during the 1960’s and 1970’s would form the basis of an emerging women’s movement after a subsequent 1980 military coup banned all political parties and restricted organizations based on class politics and labor unions. With the ban on political parties instituted after the military coup, women began to organize as women. Women’s groups were organized and women began to identify themselves as feminists. Feminists focused on a number of issues including violence against women and sexism in the legal code that defined the man as the head of the family and offered reductions in punishment if the victim of rape was a prostitute. Eventually, women’s organizing began to bear fruit as women’s magazines appeared, shelters for victims of domestic violence and a women’s library were founded.

Turkey’s attempt to become a member of the European Union has also brought far reaching legal changes affecting the position of women. In 2001, changes were made to the Civil Code, which had been adopted from Swiss Law in 1926 and had remained relatively unchanged since then. Important changes included removing the designation of the husband as the head of the family, declaring equality of spouses, and establishing a property regime that divides all property purchased during the marriage equally between spouses. There is no doubt that these and other changes made in the effort to harmonize Turkish law with that of the EU have strengthened the position of women in Turkish society. However, there is still work to do and women continue to organize, protest and speak out about issues of concern to women.

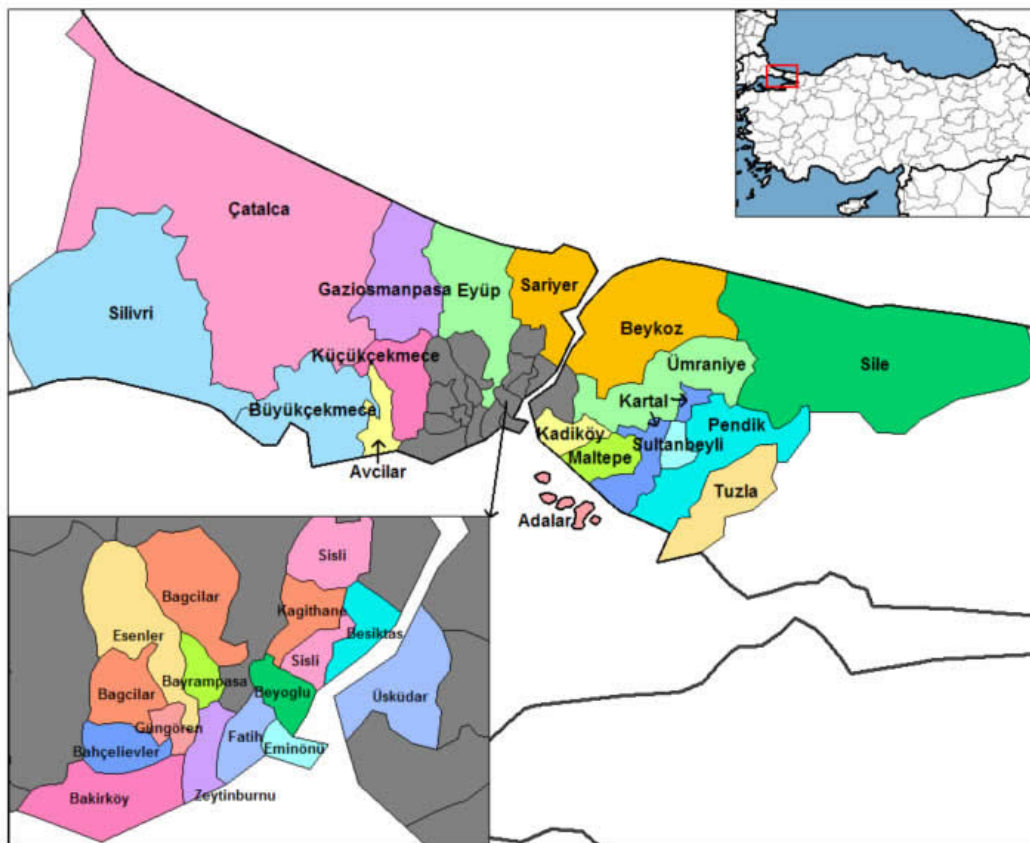
Methodology

The data collection aspect of this project was administered as a class project by students in the Department of Statistics and Computer Sciences at Kadir Has University in Istanbul, Turkey. The authors, a statistician and a women’s studies scholar, developed

the survey instrument and the students administered it in two different areas of Istanbul. We chose to use a survey instrument in part for pedagogical purposes in order to provide students with hands on experience of survey development, administration and analysis. However, the survey also allowed us to gather a substantial amount of data concerning a wide range of issues. In fact, we conceptualized the survey as part one of a series of projects. The survey represents the initial gathering of information that we hope will open paths for more focused qualitative research which consists of focus groups and individual interviews.

The neighborhoods of Fatih and Kadıköy were chosen due to the perception that they are home to relatively distinct populations (See Figure 1). Fatih is generally considered to be more religiously and socially conservative and home to many migrants who come to Istanbul from rural areas of Anatolia as a result of continuing internal migration which began in the 1970's. Fatih is located inside the ancient city walls of Istanbul and is characterized by narrow streets and what appears to be a near complete lack of planning. While there are some more "secular" areas of Fatih, it is also home to many conservative Islamic people.

Fig. 1 Map of Istanbul neighborhoods including Fatih and Kadıköy.



Kadıköy, on the other hand, is viewed as more cosmopolitan and unaffected by large influxes of internal migrants to Istanbul, thus typifying "old" Istanbul. It is home to some of the most "fashionable" and expensive neighborhoods located on the Asian shore

of Istanbul. Each year Kadıköy witnesses a host of secular and leftists protests and it is one of the only neighborhoods where May Day celebrations are officially sanctioned. It is also of the first if not the only municipality to outlaw the drummers that parade the streets to wake the faithful during the month of Ramadan and the public killing of animals during the Feast of the Sacrifice, the religious holiday of which marks the end of the Haj.

The administration of this survey was part of a required classroom project for students in a department of statistics. As part of training future statisticians, we felt it was vital for students to have hands-on practical experience of survey development, administration and analysis of the data generated. Students were prepared for administration of the survey through both theoretical discussions of survey methodology and proper techniques for conducting surveys. They were also provided with practical demonstrations of how to approach potential subjects as well as opportunities to practice prior to execution of the actual survey. Finally, students were provided with a detailed script to guide them through the actual administration of the survey. Although the purpose of having a student conducted survey was largely theoretical, we also felt that some of the women we sought to survey might be more willing to participate knowing that it was a school project and that they were assisting university students.

The students administered the survey face-to-face exclusively to women: 388 completed it. The data collected was evaluated on the basis of frequency and cross-tabulation and the statistical significance of the cross-tabulations was measured using the Chi-square test. The women surveyed ranged in age from 17 to 78 years of age. The sample included women from all walks of life: women born in Istanbul and those who immigrated to Istanbul; highly educated women and those with only a grade school education; working women and those who did not work outside the home for pay; women who knew of feminism and those who had never heard of it. While the sample is not representative, the data collected is diverse and as such provides insight into the lives of Turkish women.

Results

The picture that emerged from this survey is that of women in transition and yet still in the grips of an ideal born in the early days of the Republic. Women have undoubtedly made progress toward equality in Turkey but they are certainly not there yet, and some areas remain where deeply entrenched ideas of appropriate gender roles continue to result in inequality. Some of the historical difficulties that have plagued the idea of the “Turkish” or “Republican woman” also still exist. However, it is no longer a simple split between urban and rural women. Many women have migrated into Istanbul and are now living in an urban context, but distinct differences remain between these once rural women and their Istanbul-born sisters. In fact, nearly 60 percent of the women we surveyed migrated to Istanbul. What does emerge clearly from the survey group is that there is still a gap between the belief in aspects of the ideal of the Republican woman and the actual practices of the women we surveyed. The Republican ideal continues to influence the women in the survey but the practices these women engage in also defy, contradict and undermine aspects of the ideal. Moreover, it appears that the Republican or what some might call the “modern woman” remains fairly allusive in Turkey. The survey, due to the varied nature of the questions asked, yielded a large data set and the

most important results are grouped into the related categories of work, education, and family matters.

Work

One of the biggest changes proposed by Kemalist reformers in the early years of the Turkish Republic centered on the importance of women working. Women were exhorted to leave the private sphere and enter the world of paid professional work. Women taking up roles as professionals challenged women's place in Turkish society and were seen as countering the prior practice of relegating women to the domestic sphere. The new working woman was to symbolize Turkey's modernity both within and without. Within this discourse work was defined as that which took place outside of the home, in the public sphere, and for pay. Under the aegis of the then new idea of the Republican women, women's newfound public responsibilities became more highly valued than the traditional roles of wife and mother (Durakbaşı 143-144). Despite the value placed on the newly defined public role for women this does not mean that these new women were not also expected to be wives and mothers. They were expected to do it all.

Among the women we surveyed, there is substantial support for women working. This extends across all ages. The least support came from women over age 51 but still 81.9 percent of that group supported women working. While support for women working was high, the reality of women working is quite different. Of the women we polled 37.7 percent were working. This corresponds with the 2000 census that showed 39.6 percent of women in Turkey working ("Population by Labour Force Status"). In our survey, we focused on income producing work outside the home and this may mask the actual number of women who are working for pay. White points out that many Turkish women who do piecework at home or in small family run shops often do not view themselves as working (White "Money Makes" 21). Instead, they see their income producing activities in the context of their roles as good wives and mothers (White "Money Makes" 21). While 37.7 percent of the women we surveyed described themselves as working, the figure may underestimate, as would the census figure, the number of women engaged in income producing activities both in and out of the home.

In our sample, young, relatively-educated women born in Istanbul were the most likely to be working. Women under 28 showed the largest labor force participation at 54 percent. The older a woman, the less likely she was to work. Young women aged 17-28 also saw less opposition and more support for their working than did older women, which is not terribly surprising. What did prove surprising was that women aged 40-51 saw 34.9 percent support for work compared with just 26.3 percent for 28-40 year olds, with the least support offered for women ages 51 and over. No clear explanation appears for what seems like an anomaly among women aged 40-51, especially when one considers that the overall numbers of women in the paid work force has increased each census year since 1980 ("Population by Labour Force Status"). We want to suggest that these women refused the injunction of the Republican ideal to place more importance on their role as working women rather than on their domestic duties while they had young children at home. However, once their children moved beyond a certain age they could support the idea of working. This possibility is supported by the fact that 92 percent of the women in the 40-51 age group had children but 64.9 percent of them had children at or before the age of 22. Having born children at a relatively young age these women,

once they entered the 40-51 age group, would have finished many of their childrearing duties. Lending further credence to this explanation is the amount of support that young women, prior to childbearing age, saw for working.

One thing that was immediately clear from the survey data was the enormous gap between attitude and practice regarding work. The women we surveyed overwhelmingly supported the idea of women working. In this regard they appear to have internalized the Republican ideal of the importance of working women. While 89.2 percent of the women we talked with supported women working, only 37.6 percent of them were actually working or had ever worked. Even taking into account a large number of working women who may not be reflected within this statistic, there is still a substantial gap between the numbers of women who support women working and the number of women who have actualized this idea through their working in the public sphere. Certainly there are a number of factors which prevent women from working. One of them is the issue of the headscarf.

Currently there exists a ban on the wearing of headscarfs in public institutions, including schools and universities. This prohibition renders it very difficult for observant Muslim women to secure an education. Unless, of course, they are willing to remove their scarves, which some do. However, employers are also reluctant to hiring women who cover their heads thus making employment difficult to secure. The ranks of professions such as law, medicine and the academy, although relatively well-populated with women, still remain largely closed to women who chose to wear an Islamic headscarf.

Table 1
Numbers of working women

Do you work?			
		Frequency	Percent
Yes		145	37,4
No		241	62,1
Total		386	99,5
Missing	System	2	,5
Total		388	100,0

Table 2
Support for women working

Should women work or not work?		
	Frequency	Percent
Should work	346	89,2
Should not work	42	10,8
Total	388	100,0

Perhaps the most important impediment preventing women from working stems from the continuing difficulties that many women experience in getting an education. Along with age and place of birth, education affected women and work. Women with less education were less likely to be working. The low numbers of older women working is not surprising given the low levels of education found in older women. However, it was women with middle and/or high school educations that had the largest percentage of workers rather than women who had a university or graduate level education. Women with primary school educations worked least. Only 40 percent of the women with university or graduate level education were working compared with 32.3 percent of those with primary school education and 50 percent of those with middle or high school education. The largest reason university-educated women stopped working was retirement, despite the relatively young age of some of these women.

Along with work, education for women was a cornerstone of the Republican project. Education was seen as providing a means for both liberating women and a way for them to enter the workforce. Underlying this was the assumption that the more education a woman possessed the more likely it was that she would choose to work in the paid labor force. The results from our survey call this assumption into question. Just 40 percent of the women with a university education were working compared with 50 percent of those with a middle or high school education. Eighty percent of the university educated women in our survey were retired. Despite their relatively young ages, these women chose to retire rather than to continue working. The remaining 20 percent of these highly educated women left work when they married. For those women with less education the trends were quite similar. Contrary to the Republican ideal, the women we surveyed, despite high education levels, often left work when provided the opportunity.

Table 3
Women Working by Education Level

Percentage of women working by education level

		Do you work?		Total
		Yes	No	
Education level	Primary School or less	25,8%	74,2%	100,0%
	Middle/High School	56,6%	43,4%	100,0%
	University and above	44,2%	55,8%	100,0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	32,628 ^a	2	,000
N of Valid Cases	386		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16,15.

Marriage exerted a large influence on the working lives of the women we surveyed. Substantial numbers of women in our sample, including younger women, gave up work when they married. Seventy-one percent of women between the ages of 17-28 reported stopping work because they married. Fifty percent of women who had been divorced also gave up work when they married. The absence of women who were both married and working also points to the sheer difficulty of balancing work and home life. The largest numbers of working women were concentrated among those who had never been married or those who were divorced. Never married women and divorced women were working in nearly equal numbers, 57.8 percent and 58 percent respectively, compared with just 29 percent of married women. Single women saw the largest support for their working while 36 percent of married women saw opposition. In practice, the small number of women who were both married and working contravenes the priority that the Republican ideal of womanhood places on work over domestic life.

In a further challenge to the idea of the liberated, urban Republican woman, women born in Istanbul were more likely to leave work when they married than those who did not come from Istanbul. This may be for a number of reasons. Those women born in Istanbul may enjoy some economic privilege that women who migrated to Istanbul do not, especially, given that women from Istanbul tend to have more education than women who were born elsewhere in Turkey and then later migrated to Istanbul. Women who originated from outside Istanbul simply may not be able to afford to leave the paid labor force. Perhaps the best explanation for this regional disparity centers on the fact that 67.5 percent of women born outside of Istanbul have never worked in the paid work force. Unlike their Istanbul counterparts, they do not have jobs to leave when they marry. The ideal of the Republican woman was “by definition” that of an urban woman and even though the women in our survey are now living in an urban context it appears that regional differences may endure, suggesting that those coming from outside Istanbul have not or perhaps can not embrace the “working woman” aspect of the Republican ideal (White “State Feminism” 147).

For Turkish women who work, second shift issues loom large (İlkkaracan 286; Sugur and Sugur 272). Arlie Hochschild’s pioneering book, *The Second Shift*, recounts how, despite the progress that women in the United States had made in the workforce, they were still responsible for the vast majority of housework and childcare and thus were effectively working a “second shift”. Similarly, the dual role for women as workers at home and in the labor force is an intrinsic part of the concept of the Republican woman. From the very inception of the ideal, the Republican woman was expected to be a working professional but also “uncomplaining and dutiful at home” (White “State Feminism” 146). In practice, this dual role still exists for the working women that we surveyed. Despite these difficulties, working women in the Ümraniye neighborhood of Istanbul felt that their working gave them a greater voice at home (İlkkaracan 290).

Regardless of age, education, place of birth or marital status, the women in our survey are responsible for housework. Moreover, women are also largely responsible for childcare as well. Of the women we surveyed who characterized themselves as working, 90 percent reported that they were responsible for housework and 67.8 percent of this same group said they were also responsible for looking after children. Clearly for working women the dual role established for women within the Republican ideal is still very much in practice. As Öncü makes clear one of the keys to women becoming

working professionals is there ability pass on their domestic responsibilities to other lower class women (187). At the same time the burden of this dual role also plays a part in preventing less financially well off women from entering the paid work force (İlkkaracan 292; Özbay 163).

Table 4
Responsibility for Housework

Responsibility for housework based on laborforce participation

		Who is responsible for housework?			Total
		Men	Women	Everyone	
Do you work?	Yes				145
	No				
		,7%	90,3%	9,0%	100,0%
		,4%	95,0%	4,6%	100,0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3,124 ^a	2	,210
N of Valid Cases	385		

a. 2 cells (33,3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,75.

Table 5
Responsibility for Children

Responsibility for children based on laborforce participation

		Who is responsible for caring for children?			Total
		Men	Women	Everyone	
Do you work?	Yes	15,4%	67,8%	16,8%	100,0%
	No	13,0%	71,8%	15,1%	100,0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	,718 ^a	2	,698
N of Valid Cases	381		

a. 0 cells (,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19,89.

This research demonstrated that some inroads, however, are being made as younger women, women with more education, and divorced women are less likely to view child rearing as solely the responsibility of women. However, more research is required to determine whether or not these same attitudes are put into practice. Yet, so entrenched are traditional ideas of a woman's role that a woman's belief in equality between the sexes had no effect on the idea that women are responsible for housework and only a slight impact on the idea that women are responsible for children.

Many Republican reformers viewed the entry of women into the paid labor force and particularly entry into professional occupations as one of the primary means through which women could and would establish their equality with men. Work, however, does not appear to have the same meaning for the women in our sample. Although Turkish women overwhelmingly support women working, work appears to be about necessity rather than personal fulfillment or a quest for equality. In fact, women's belief in equality of the sexes had no impact on whether the women in this survey were working or not. Furthermore, across all groups, more than half of the women in the survey sample viewed professional advancement as the obligation of men. Although women with more education did not see professional advancement as exclusively for men, 34.9 percent of university educated women did, along with 53 percent of the women who professed a belief in the equality of men and women. With so many women relinquishing responsibility for professional advancement to men it seems difficult for supporters of Republican gender ideals to argue that work represents a pathway to equality for women.

Perhaps the reality of the work that women perform impedes their ability to envision work as a means to achieving equality. The vast majority of women in Turkey are still engaged in agriculture and agriculture related work. For those in urban settings, especially those with few skills or little education, jobs are concentrated in the service sectors and piecework or in the informal economy of housecleaning and childcare. Work for women in Turkey is often low paid, long hours, no insurance and with little opportunity for advancement (İlkkaracan 287). This may explain why so many women leave work when they marry.

Moreover, sociologist Yildiz Ecevit's examination of the Turkish economy's transition to free market capitalism in the 1980's makes clear that "patriarchal relations in the labour market function to keep women in the home as unpaid family labourers; and in the workplace control over women's participation in waged labour is determined by state and patriarchal relations"(86). Women are often excluded from jobs or hired in low numbers; women are discriminated against in the workplace and married women are passed over for single women, trade unions discriminate and women are often the first dismissed during times of economic crisis. All of these factors operate to control women's labor force participation (Ecevit 86-87). Today, even better educated young people are having enormous difficulty finding jobs that pay a living wage as the effects of the 2001 economic crisis drag on and unemployment remains high. While work for most women in Turkey remains vitally important, it also appears to be a matter of economic necessity rather than a political statement or the pursuit of equality with men.

Education

In recent years in Turkey, much attention has once again been focused on education and the education of girls in particular. According to the 2000 census 12.7

percent of Turkey's population remains illiterate. However, the rate of illiteracy among girls and women is far higher. Of girls and women aged six and older 19.4 percent are illiterate compared with 6.1 percent for boys and men ("Illiteracy and Literacy"). At present for each 100 boys that begin school there are only 74 girls starting and the problem only gets worse at higher levels ("Percentage of Illiterate"). These disparities have led to several nationwide campaigns to draw attention to the problem as well as to encourage families to send their girls to school. As in the Republican era, these campaigns view education as the key to rectifying the continued inequality that Turkish women face. Yet, Özbay argues that "instead of inducing social change and mobility, education as an institution protects the existing and, in many respects, the traditional structure" (179). Similarly, Acar and Ayata, in their study of different types of high schools in Ankara (Imam-Hatip, Lycee, Public), found each in their own reinforced the existing patriarchal structure of Turkish society (92). Perhaps it is no real surprise that women in Turkey still lag far behind men in attaining an education. However, for those women who were able to receive an education, the data from our survey affirmed that education had an enormous effect on their lives.

At all levels, younger women are better educated than the women who came before them. Older women were the most likely to have a primary school education or less. The women in our sample who had the most education were under 28 years of age. Still only 24.8 percent of them had completed university. This, in part, stems from the enormous difficulty in attending university for both women and men. Only 3.9 percent of women and 6.9 percent of men attended university in the year 2000 ("Percentage of Illiterate and Literate Population by Level of Formal Education Completed, 1970-2000"). While the numbers are low for both men and women, the disparity in university attendance is apparent as only 58 women for every 100 men are entering university in Turkey ("Percentage of Illiterate and Literate Population by Level of Formal Education Completed, 1970-2000"). Women born in Istanbul were better educated at all levels and, once again demonstrating the impact of marriage, single and divorced women proved better educated than women who were married. Demonstrating that overall, education has improved in Turkey, younger women had better educated mothers and fathers.

In a question designed specifically to explore women's attitudes about sending girls to school, we asked the women in our sample to state which child, boy or girl, they would choose to educate if they could only educate one. Sixty-three percent of women under age 28 and 67 percent of women aged 28-40 stated that they would educate a girl child over a boy if forced to choose. The reasons offered for this centered mostly on the idea that women should have an income. Interestingly, women aged 28-51 thought it more important that women have an income than their younger counterparts aged 17-28. The 17-28 age group were evenly divided with 34.1 percent stating that women should have an income and the same number claiming that because men can work anywhere, it is girls that should be educated over boys when forced to make a choice. Reflecting some of the historic preference for boys in Turkey, older women were the least likely to educate girls over boys. Women born in Istanbul were more likely to educate girls rather than boys, yet more than half of the women in both categories would choose to send a girl to school rather than a boy if they could only send one child.

For the Turkish women in our sample, education can heavily influence family matters. Education affects the age at which a woman marries and if and when she has

children. For the women in our sample there was a clear relationship between the age when women finished school and the age at which they married. A similar relationship also appeared to exist regarding the age when women had children. Women married and had children at or around the time that they finished school. While the majority of women in our sample have children, education also showed a deep impact on this decision as well. Ninety-three percent of women with primary school education and 89 percent of those with middle or high school education have children. However, the picture changes rather substantially when we look at women with university or graduate school education. Just 58.8 percent of these women have children. Apparently, education does not just affect when women in Turkey have children but if they have them at all.

It appears that this small segment of highly educated women has both embraced and rejected the Republican ideal set for them nearly 85 years ago. They have pursued education but they have not had as many children. While vigorously supporting education for women, Republican reformers never wanted women to forsake family life. This current group of women has seen fit to take up the parts of the ideal that suited them while refusing those aspects that did not, thus reshaping an age old ideal to fit their lives.

Family Matters

The concern for Republican era reformers was the “public emancipation” of women (White “State Feminism” 147). In their almost exclusive focus on public life, they left the patriarchal family untouched. Despite improvements in equality in the public sphere, in matters concerning the family our survey results show that some of the most entrenched ideas about traditional womanhood remain, along with the inequalities that these ideas can produce. Only education seemed to be a factor that made an impact as it significantly affected women’s decisions when to marry and have children and whether to have children at all.

Women born in Istanbul were significantly more likely to be single—38 percent of Istanbul women versus 12 percent of women born outside of Istanbul. While the percentage of married women originating from outside Istanbul was higher, there was little difference when it came to divorce. Slightly more than 7 percent of Istanbul women reported being divorced compared to 5.3 percent from elsewhere in Turkey. While divorce rates have been rising over the past decade in Turkey, rates are still at just 53 per 1000 persons (“Number of Divorce and Crude Divorce Rate”).

One effect of the rising divorce rate appears in the area of dating practices. Traditionally in Turkey families arranged marriages and the interactions of men and women were strictly controlled. Today more and more people of all ages choose their own life partners rather than allow their family to control their choices. More than two-thirds of the women in our survey voiced support for contemporary dating practices where couples meet and then determine their own fates. Among divorced women, however, this number increases dramatically. Of divorced women, 87.5 percent support contemporary dating practices compared with 69 percent of married women.

The movement towards contemporary dating practices represents another aspect of these women’s rejection of the Republican ideal. Without doubt women’s roles dramatically changed as they moved into the public sphere but “traditional sexual morality was not ever radically questioned within the Kemalist ethic”(Durakbaşı 151). A

woman's sexual virtue was directly tied to the maintenance of her virginity before marriage, interactions with men were controlled and women's sexuality was repressed. It was also women's duty to behave honorably and to uphold the honor (*namus*) of the family primarily through appropriately restrained behavior with members of the opposite sex. According to Ayşe Durakbaşı, "This old morality was preserved by Kemalist reformers, the 'emancipators' of Turkish women, because they felt that they might lose control of their women if the women discovered their own potential for emancipation"(151). This fear of women's sexuality and the drive to control it continues to be an issue for Turkish women as news coverage regularly reports the honor killings of women seen to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. The women in our survey seem to be moving away from this older discourse on women's sexuality, especially in their support for contemporary dating practices that allow women and men to choose their own sexual and marriage partners.

During the early Republican era a distinct gap emerged between the urban middle class of Istanbul who were "barely replacing themselves" and those in rural Anatolia who "were bringing into the world seven children on the average and those in towns and cities over four"(Duben and Behar 1). Some of this regional disparity over ideal family size persists through the present day although perhaps not to the extent of the 1930's and 1940's. Across all age groups and all education levels respondents stated that a family consisting of 2-3 children was ideal. However, those from Istanbul reported more support for a family consisting of 1-2 children than those who had migrated to Istanbul. Twenty-one percent of those originally from outside Istanbul reported a family consisting of 3-5 children as ideal as versus 13.4 percent of those born in Istanbul. Although some regional disparity over family size persists still one third of the women surveyed supported a relatively large family size. Yet, it appears that in their overall support for somewhat smaller families these women, regardless of origin, are moving closer to the standard that existed among the middle class in Istanbul during the early years of the Republic.

Although the general size and shape of families are changing in Turkey, once inside the family, men's and women's roles remain distinct and bound by tradition, men being responsible for breadwinning and decision making and women being responsible for housework and children. At all ages and levels of education, the women we polled said that men were responsible for ensuring the financial survival of the family, although the age group 40-51 again proved a slight anomaly. More than their younger counterparts, 12 percent of this group believed everyone to be responsible for the financial well being of the family. The idea of more shared responsibility continued with divorced women. They were far less likely than any other women to place the family's financial survival solely in the hands of men. Just 58 percent of women who had been divorced compared with 80 percent of married, single and widowed women felt that breadwinning should be solely in the hands of men.

Divorce continued to show its impact on women's attitudes concerning one of the most traditional issues: childrearing. Women who had divorced were much more likely to see caring for children as everyone's responsibility. Thirty-three percent of divorced women compared with just 18 percent of single women and 13 percent of married women believed that childrearing should be collective rather than solely the responsibility of women. Overall, younger women in the sample proved less willing to place childrearing

exclusively in the hands of women but still a majority view children as women's responsibility. Interestingly 16.9 percent of women aged 40-51 supported the idea that the caretaking of children is everyone's responsibility, more so than younger women aged 28-40. Although there are signs of changes afoot, the women respondents still view childrearing as largely their responsibility.

A 2002 change in the Civil law removed the man as the legally defined head of the family, but the respondents in our survey made it clear that men remain in charge of family decisions. At all levels of age and education, women's responses indicated that it was fathers who made family decisions. Women under the age of 28 showed support for democratic decision making, however 45 percent still stated that father made the decisions in their family. Divorced women were the least likely to rely on father for decisions while educated women were the most likely to support democratic decision-making. It appears that there may be some loosening of men's grip on family decision making, yet it still remains largely under male control.

Despite the large scale social change in a country that, over the last generation, has seen huge internal migration, increases in women's education, an increased number of women in the paid work force, changes in dating practices and an increasing divorce rate, the family has remained relatively unchanged. It is still bound by a traditional division of labor. Men are responsible for family decisions and finances and remain in control while women take care of the house and children regardless of whether or not they are also in the paid work force. Ideologically and practically, Republican gender ideals remain at their most successful in the area of the family. While some cracks are beginning to appear around the issue of childrearing, the vast majority of respondents reported the continuation of a deeply gendered division of labor. In fact, the Republican ideal was predicated on the continuation of a patriarchal family and according to the women in our survey that is precisely the type of family that most of them continue to live in.

Conclusion

Although much has changed from the founding of the Turkish Republic to the time that this survey was conducted (Fall 2005), the image of the "Turkish/Republican Woman" and the expectations and problems attached to that construction still cast a long shadow. In many ways, the roles of women in Turkey today are not so new. Nowhere is this more evident than in the deeply entrenched gendered division of labor in the house. Despite some advances in education and entry into the paid work force and professions, the women in our sample are still responsible for the house and children. Keeping in line with the Republican ideal, those women who work outside the home can anticipate effectively working two jobs, one paid and one unpaid.

Some of the original difficulties posed by the ideal of the Turkish/Republican woman also seem alive and well, albeit relocated to an urban context. Although all of the women in our survey are living in a highly urban context, hints of the rural/urban divide are still evident. Place of birth exerted an influence in a number of areas but particularly with regard to education and work. Women born in Istanbul possessed higher levels of education and were more likely to be working. The difficulties of poverty and rural origin that White identified as inhibiting rural women's ability to respond to the call to become Republican women seem to still exist despite the fact that the women in our

survey were all living in Istanbul (2005). It seems that for women of rural origin, finding a place within the category of “Turkish/Republican woman” may still be difficult.

Despite continued support for some aspects of the Republican gender ideals, the practices of the women we surveyed engage in undermining the ideal as well. Respondents overwhelmingly supported the idea of women working but two-thirds of those in our study did not themselves work which proves deeply problematic for the idea of the Republican woman being a working woman. Education, while deeply impacting women’s lives, proved not to be the panacea that Republicans had hoped as many university educated women chose not to work and perhaps more distressingly did not have children. The women we surveyed also appeared to be rejecting the rather repressive discourse on sexuality that is a part of Republican gender ideology in favor of more practices which allow women to choose their own marriage partners.

The one area that defied expectations and deserves more research focuses on women aged 40-51. They saw more support for women working than their younger counterparts and they were more likely than younger women to believe everyone was responsible for ensuring the family’s financial survival. It is not immediately apparent what may have caused this difference in attitudes and experience on the part of these women. It is not sufficient to say that it reflects a growing conservatism within Turkish society, because younger women were more progressive in many areas than women aged 40-51. Clearly, more research is necessary on this group and on women in Turkey in general, in particular on women living outside of the major urban centers. More than anything, this survey showed there is a gap between belief in aspects of the Turkish/Republican woman and the actual practices in which these women engage. Furthermore, it is clear that in some ways these women have found the Republican ideal for women constraining and have refused its injunctions at least in practice. Perhaps what these women are beginning is a process of constructing their own idea of a new Turkish woman.

Beyond the emergence of a multiplicity of ideas about what it means, in actuality, to be a woman in Turkey, this research also points areas where more work needs to be done in order for Turkish women to achieve better positions of equality. The area where, arguably, the least amount of progress has been made centers on women's continuing responsibility for children and households. Important efforts have long focused on creating educational and employment opportunities as a means for empowering women in Turkey. Many have, without a doubt, been successful and women have achieved higher levels of both. However, the focus on these areas has left issues such as household responsibilities and childraising in the shadows. This research suggests that progress in one area does not guarantee advancement in others and that just because women may gain entrance to schools and workplaces, this does not necessarily translate into empowerment at home. Given this, it seems vital for women's equality in Turkey that there be a renewed focus on the politics of housework and childrearing. In particular, activists and academics need to focus on issues such as the creation and maintenance of gender roles, the gendered division of household labor and practical ways to create more egalitarian roles for both men and women.

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