ABSTRACT This paper aims to discuss the situation of Gender and Women’s Studies (GWS) graduate programs within mainstream academia of Turkey with a critical Feminist Standpoint Theory approach from the aspect of situated academic marginalization. Within the scope of the study, I carried out 17 semi-structured in-depth interviews with GWS academics from two distinct universities with similar historical backgrounds yet quite different specificities, and in the light of these interviews, I analyzed whether GWS, as an academic reciprocity of feminist movement, can be thought as a field with a twofold epistemic superiority with regard to “better accounts of social reality”, as an ‘other’ of academia or not. In this regard, four main factors influencing GWS directly and deeply are found to be, respectively: socio-political situation which the programs were born into, current political conjuncture of the country, current situation of academia and of feminist movement within the country. In addition to these structural factors, self-definitions and self-valuations of the agents of the programs – from students to academics–, and curricula formed in parallel to the mission and vision the agents adopted appear to be significant factors that situate the programs within academia within the scope of subjects and specificities of the subjects.

KEYWORDS: Gender and Women’s Studies, Feminist Standpoint Theory, Feminist epistemology and methodology, Situated academic marginalization, Turkey.
je izložena analiza sedamnaest polustrukturiranih intervjua sa profesorima dva univerziteta koji imaju sličan istorijski razvoj, ali i svoje specifičnosti. Analizirala sam da li ŽRS, kao akademski reciprocitet feminističkog pokreta, mogu da se podučavaju kao polje koje ima dvostruku epistemičku superiornost, jer pružaju “bolji uvid u realnost”, kao svojevrsna “Drugost” akademskog sektora, ili to nije moguće. U tom smislu, utvrđena su četiri glavna činioca koji utiču na ŽRS direktno i duboko: početna društveno-politička orijentacija nastavnih programa, trenutna politička konjunktura u zemlji, postojeća situacija u kojoj se nalazi akademski sektor, i postojeća situacija u kojoj se nalazi feministički pokret u zemlji. Takodje, pored ovih strukturalnih činilaca, samodefinisanje i samevaluacija subjekata koji učestvuju u programima, od studenata do akademika, kao i nastavni programi koji su oformljeni paralelno sa misijom i vizijom ovih subjekata, čini se da predstavljaju važne faktore koji situiraju programe unutar nastavnih kurseva i posebnosti tih kurseva.

KLJUČNE REČI: rodne i ženske studije, femnistička teorija stajališta, feministička epistemologija i metodologija, situirana akademska marginalnsot

Introduction

We had a precious teacher and one day she told us “your faces are so pale, go and eat some homemade food...” The students had no money to buy even a bagel! There is something that saves me from this attitude. How can I make myself to become such a person? Since I have been grown up now, since I am a faculty member and I get a considerable amount of salary etc, how can I say I am in clover? I am not looking from that perspective of course, I definitely know, but this is a work of blood, sweat and tears. Yes, we are unemployed, we were always unemployed and we will be unemployed even more. Yes, it is wearing; and yes, when we get home it is “what the hell women's studies is, that is all we need now?” and so on. That is, we are already “damaged goods,” however, we read and write from exactly this standpoint, since we have a very limited time, we must accumulate more and more knowledge (O).

Gender and Women’s Studies (GWS) graduate program is an institution of knowledge production and an area of political action with an almost 30-year-history in Turkey. This paper is going to discuss current position of GWS within mainstream academia of Turkey from the viewpoints of its agents with a relatively positive understanding of marginality through a Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST) perspective. The main objective of the research is to understand the position GWS holds within academia and to analyse to what degree it is exposed to an academic marginalization due to its specificities. The main research problematic of the study is the relationship between the marginalization of GWS programs within academia and the dynamics of knowledge and politics. My sub-questions are: How does situated knowledge contribute to understand the marginalization of GWS, more specifically, how has current political conjuncture affected the situation of GWS programs and their agents within academia? How does the outsider within positions of GWS attribute a positive meaning to their marginalization?
Theoretical Background

Marginality studies has a long history and a wide scope. For a long time period, marginality has been perceived as a negative phenomenon and, thus, discussed through its negative effects on its agents. With 1970s, mostly with the effects of deconstructionist methodology of postmodernity, the concept has evolved to have a positive meaning which has been both caused by and resulted with the adoption of the concept by its agents. In 2004, Patricia Hill Collins introduced us with “outsider within” positions of the marginalized, which is deeply rooted in Hegel's master and slave dialectic due to the double vision attributed to the marginalized groups (Collins, 2004). GWS conducts a conceptual/abstract practice of academic work within the conceptual structures of academia although a highlighted women’s knowledge and women’s experience set a challenge to objectified, rationalized and universalized understanding of science. It is an insider with this practicing academic body, while is an outsider due to its activist agenda within the political arena, which represents a practical/concrete activity resulting in its social and academic non-recognition and non-inclusion in the sight of academia. This outsider within position brings out a stronger objectivity that, as Sandra Harding discusses, mainstream academic understanding of objectivity lacks in origin (2004). In Harding’s words, “the problem with the conventional conception of objectivity is not that it is too rigorous or too ‘objectifying’... but that it is not rigorous or objectifying enough” (2004, p. 128). Strong objectivity leads to epistemic superiority due to its “less partial and less perverse” claims of reality which is generated through everyday experiences of marginalized groups who have politically struggled to acquire this viewpoint (Harding, 2004: 322). Alison Jaggar names the acquisition of mentioned viewpoint through political struggle as collective consciousness and urges marginalized groups to collective actions (2004). However, the way for collective consciousness and collective actions has not been paved thoroughly within these theoretical discussions.

Marginality, for me, is a deviation from the mainstream. It is both a feeling and a perception of/about one's own self, thus, it changes not only from person to person but also from time period to another throughout a person's life. Marginalization, here, refers to the non-inclusion, unrecognition and invisibility of the knowledge and politics GWS programs produce within academia. Although the first layer of marginalization GWS born into is a given one, situated academic marginalization is one that depends on the achievement of each program of gaining that critical standpoint. Since this standpoint is not automatic, turning the given and disadvantageous marginalization which results with non-recognition of GWS both within and outside academia into an advantageous and privileged one with critical insights and transformative power requires struggle and politics.

As for my standpoint, taking feminist ontological approach as a base for the study, I consider reality to be contextual, situational and contingent just as the knowledge itself. Realities of feminist academics— most of whom are also
activists– change in accordance with the specificities of their experiences, and since both knowledge and politics are both personal and public issues, it is vital to embrace an inclusive and enhancing ontological understanding that challenges and transforms mainstream life practices.

Epistemologically, on the other hand, experiences, personal histories, observations and narrations of feminist academics already taking part in both knowledge and politics production processes are of high importance and represent knowledge of the social realities that I wish to investigate in this study.

Last, methodologically, since there is a non-hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, with the help of interaction and mutual learning process, data to be generated can be new, enlightening and healing. Also, outsider within positions of feminist academics enable to flex and enlarge strict boundaries of dichotomous understanding through an intersubjective viewpoint.

Methodology

I conducted this fieldwork within the scope of my master’s thesis in January-February of 2016. In this research, qualitative research has been meaningful and helpful with regard to probing the situation of GWS programs within academia through the experiences and observations of feminist academics who have taken place either in the emergence and development processes of feminist movement or academic feminism or in both. In order to enrich the produced data and to understand the effects of different academic existence forms on a GWS program, I selected the instructors of two GWS programs in Turkey with a similar historical background but different academic stories and conducted 17 semi-structured in-depth interviews in total. I preferred purposive sampling that provided me with the inclusion of a wide range of instructors varying from the retired founders of the programs to recently introducing elective course instructors from different disciplines.

My fieldwork had coincided with the first events of Academics For Peace3 and most of the academics I planned to interview were facing both physical and psychological oppressions during the time, which made me feel selfish and timid to call and ask about an interview during such a complicated and demotivating atmosphere. In addition to this ethical concern, I felt also the necessity of anonymity in order to ensure security of the interviewees and coded both the names of the universities as X and Y and the academics from A to S. Confidentiality, voluntary participation and permission for voice-record were also my ethical precautions during this phase.

3 In January, 2016, 1483 academics and researchers from Turkey and abroad signed a statement with a title “We will not be a party to this crime” as a reaction to the incidents of terror and violence in Kurdish regions and with the demand of a preparation of negotiation conditions between the state and the community. However, the government has harshly reacted against this statement and 1128 academics from Turkey have confronted legal and/or illegal oppression, as a result. Immediately after the first statement, a second sign petition has been opened up to support the academics, and these have also shared that oppression. After the events of July 15, a big majority of these academics have been dismissed from academia. This is still an ongoing issue. For more and detailed information: https://barisicinakademisyenler.net
I analysed the data via Nvivo and generated free codes out of 300-page-transcription according to which self-definition, self-valuation, emergence conditions of the programs, current political conjuncture, current situations of feminist movement and academia appeared to be significant factors that define situated academic marginalization of GWS has within academia.

**Socio-Political Conditions that GWS Programs Were Born into**

The field of GWS has an almost 30-year-history in Turkey. As a driving force, Beijing Women's Conference and United Nations (UN) were significant factors in the emergence of GWS programs. However, it would be misleading to attribute the emergence of GWS programs in Turkey solely to the contributions of the Conference and UN because the existence of several other factors paved the way for these contributions. Upon the sound basis that Ottoman women’s movement had provided (Sirman, 1989), these factors can be counted as consciousness raising groups among women academics and activists, return of women academics from abroad who had already been studying and working on the issues related to women within their specific disciplines, women-themed seminars organized in BİLAR– the intellectual meeting point of academics following 1980 coup d’état-, translations of international women’s works and studies by Women’s Circle Publishing, and women-related courses having already been offered by women academics at Middle East Technical University and Bosphorus University (Arat, 1996; Ecevit, 2015). Abovementioned factors played a vital role in the entrance of GWS officially into academia and also served its recognition and visibility outside academia although the emergence of GWS programs in Turkey coincided with 1980 coup d’état and, thus, a silenced academic environment.

Initially founded in 1993 in Istanbul University and followed by Middle East Technical University in 1995, Arat implies, it cannot be asserted that precursory women’s studies programs confronted a severe resistance during their entrance into academia (1996). However, the time and place settings of such assisting factors significantly differ among and within universities. In other words, not all university administrations assisted their programs and agents of the programs, regarding not only previous years but also recent times. As for previous years, interviewee P underlined that there existed a high level of ‘readiness’ at her university thanks to the first women academics present at that time and their efforts with a vital emphasis that “the university supported this field, at least it did not hamper”. This emphasis, now, implies a crucial point in grasping the attitude that academia has held towards GWS and its position within it. As it can be inferred from this quotation, the tendency of “not hampering” the foundation and, in some cases, even the improvement of the programs within academia has come to a meaning of a “support”. Serpil Sancar sarcastically puts this as academia’s respectable social scientists never confuse their minds with gender-related research; never learn nor criticize the doctrines of
this field, they do not even follow the academic discussions in the field as listeners. Via this way, women's studies find opportunities for “free” and “independent” studies in its field. Notable characters of social sciences, on the other hand, neither bother themselves with “light” works such as women's studies nor fail to respect for women's studies field, as an indicator of their “democratic” and “liberal” sense of science (2003, p. 215).

This so-called support, however, turns out to be an illusion in the long term, giving rise to an indifference to the discipline along with a layered invisibility and non-recognition not only among natural sciences but also within social science disciplines. What GWS faces as a result of this backless support has been found out to be an academic marginalization. As Sancar perpetuates the point, academic efforts of women's studies which are stuck in the autonomous field that has grown to be ‘small but mine’ in academia are turning into a field of ‘talk to yourself and listen to it yourself’ via this way. While this state of setting free and released is on the center, it becomes extremely difficult to criticize the justifying but excluding and frosty manners of social scientists developed towards women's studies. What women's studies experiences at the point of facing academically “valuable” behaviors such as staying on the sidelines and inviting [GWS] to prove itself standing on its own legs is a complete “marginalization” (2003, p. 215).

What, in addition, explicitly highlights the differences of GWS from other disciplines is feminist pedagogy leaded by feminist ethics which both politically and intellectually aims to challenge and transform mainstream academic understandings. These differences result with a double-marginalized position of GWS within academia as an academic reciprocity of a political movement, when mainstream academic structure and understanding of academia are considered. When current political conjuncture of Turkey and lack of both academic and activist support have also been taken into consideration, this layered marginalization becomes deeper and more formidable for GWS programs.

If I consider dividing historical sprout of specifically GWS programs within academia in Turkey, I would divide it into three. First would be the period of 1993–2011 during which there only existed four GWS programs within universities4. Each one of these programs differs radically from the others with respect to their founding bodies, historical backgrounds, names, curricula, and profiles of academics and students. However, both political and academic existences, struggles and studies of these programs have paved the ways of following periods and enabled the recognition and visibility of GWS programs within academia. I would, then, start the second period in 2011 and end it in 2016, during which nine more graduate programs5 were founded. These programs do also differ from each other and are less institutionalized

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4 These programs were founded, respectively, at Istanbul University, Middle East Technical University, Ankara University and Ege University.

5 These are at the universities of Mersin, Hacettepe, Akdeniz, Dokuz Eylul, Samsun 19 Mayis, Gaziantep, Celal Bayar, Koç and Sabancı.
programs when compared to those of the first period normally due to their recent histories. However, it is possible to observe a fast forward movement of new foundations of GWS programs during this period not only, in my opinion, due to initiations and efforts of feminist academics of the first period but also visibility and recognition of the program throughout the world. I would open up the third period with the events of July 15, 2016, which is still ongoing. During this period, many feminist academics have been dismissed and/or forced to retirement from academia and even not allowed to enter their university campuses following their dismissals. A considerable number of programs have been exposed to various oppressive mechanisms including the possibility of closing the programs whose agents are aware of the backlash and struggling to hold on their acquisitions obtained during previous periods. In addition, activities of/for LGBTI+ individuals have been cancelled and adjourned sine die by governorship of Ankara (Birgün, 2017), and courses organized with LGBTI+ NGOs have been interrupted in some universities. Moreover, within this conservative political atmosphere, there appears the risk of transforming these programs into the places where patriarchal knowledge is aimed to be produced and patriarchal gender roles of women and men are acutely and more conservatively reproduced. The usage preference of “sex justice” instead “gender” by the government, incentives for family and marriage studies, and expected regulations regarding both higher education system and family laws are some of the implications of this deconstruction process. To demonstrate this backlash, I quote Satı Atakul whose feelings and experiences were not much different from what we feel and experience now:

in such a country, we have lived all handicaps of our first institutionalization experience of such a subject matter. Declaring that we are students of women’s studies graduate programs has always resulted in reactions of sneering smiles and astonishment. It has always been necessary to make long explanations. ... The weak position of the program within the university, the tense incidents we have experienced, the difficulties of our own selves, of other women, of femininity, of the subject of women and others –we can gradually broaden the circle– have highly significant influences on this situation (2002, p. 321).

Now that we have not surmounted these difficulties, in contrast, have been absorbed once again in them, it is vital to find alternative ways of improvement through discussions of the matter in detail besides holding onto current acquisitions.

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6 In July 15, 2016, a number of military events had sprouted out and both civilians and soldiers died during the events. The ruling party (Justice and Development Party) has named the events as military coup d'état by Fethullah Gülen Terror Organization (FETO). After this, the government has declared a state of emergency which is still continuing, and thousands of people have been dismissed from their institutions with decree-laws. A great number of the members of Academics For Peace – a considerable number of whom are feminist academics of diverse GWS programs – have been dismissed and/or forced for retirement from academia during this process.
The Necessity of Self-Definition and Self-Valuation

Before stating current factors influencing the situation of GWS programs within academia, I would like to mention the high significance and necessity of self-definition and self-valuation, which actually come out of the field itself despite the lack of the related questions.

A variety of popular urban myths have been sprouted out about GWS since its existence. When interviewee O shared her experiences, she exemplified that, for some, GWS may mean to be a discipline related with women’s health or nursing. Otherwise, it might be a house of wantonness for maybe ‘spinsters’, or those “having problems in sexual prowess and cannot spill the beans’, or even ‘morally corrupted’ ones. For others, on the other hand, GWS is a discipline that avoids meddling; as K stated, it is a discipline “even our friends look down on, mock at and criticize for ‘messing around with nonsensical women’s or girls’ matters while there are quite significant issues like politics, economics, class and struggle’”.

When ‘perceptions’ evolve to be ‘definitions’ they become more powerful, and this power enables the owners of these definitions to shape and lead a thought on behalf of which a basis is provided for inclusion as well as exclusion of some meanings. If these owners are not the subjects of the knowledge that is defined, and, more significantly, if they do not have a ‘situated’ position, then the definitions have the potential to dominate and to alienate. In order to avoid the stereotypical characterization of this historically and contemporarily pervaded dominant definitions, self-definition is a must. Patricia Hill Collins, in the chapter The Meaning of Self-Definition and Self-Valuation within her essay, writes that the insistence on self-definition “reframes the entire dialogue from one of determining the technical accuracy of an image, to one stressing the power dynamics underlying the very process of definition itself” (2004, p. 106). Through questioning not only the above-mentioned definitions and epithets constructed in the name of GWS but also “the credibility and the intentions of those possessing the power to define”, a self-definition of GWS can explicitly signify a clear and direct rejection of “the taken-for-granted assumption that those in positions granting them the authority to describe and analyze reality are entitled to do so” (2004, p. 107). In addition, the act of insisting on self-definition plays a significant role in validating the power of GWS as the subject of the field and its components as human subjects since self-definition embodies outfacing the political knowledge justification process resulting in extrinsically-defined, cliché images of not only an academic discipline and its knowledge but also, in a wider sense, of womanhood.

As for the self-definitions of the two programs I selected, one of them self-defined itself to be “W.S.7”. The academics of the program constantly emphasized that “we call it W.S. here” (O, H, K) out of which it can be inferred that this is an important way of ‘being’ and ‘togetherness’ for them. For O, it is a home where she was born, grew and is still living. O stated that “when they ask where I was born, I reply: I was born in W.S.,” while for K it is the space not to ‘take a breath’ but ‘to breathe’:

7 Women’s Studies.
Everybody involves in this program with a great devotion, feeling themselves good and regarding here as a life space for themselves. From the personal dialogues, I know that these people are to be pretty sad in case they need to drift away from there. Here is a space which makes us feel good and feel that we are together with people alike, here is a breathing space that really refreshes us since we closely engage with our students.

The vision, mission, outputs and, in the long term, the position of the program take shape in accordance with the self-definition programs make. In another part of the interview, K happily and critically added:

We have a political standpoint and this political standpoint brings the necessity of an equal relationship with our students with it. This is not something that we are forced to do, it is our perspective on life; if the students learn something from us, we learn something from them, as well. From this aspect, our courses pass highly interactive. It is true that we are instructors and we are standing by the chair and they are sitting there, but this does not mean that I can teach them but they cannot teach me, they are lower than me or so on. Most of us are trying not to set such a hierarchy, such an authority between us as much as possible. And this pleases our students a lot! We are going to the bar together, we are going to the protests together, we are sitting in the garden, meeting in our homes. Some of them have children, we are arranging joint activities for and with our children, and so on. ... What I am trying to say here is that such an interaction develops something beyond the courses: a solidarity, a mutual understanding and a remedy.

As for the remaining program, some of the academics called themselves “U.Y.8 GWS”. The respect for the university and the implication of an equally respectful identity of the program have been shown through a constant and direct usage of the name of the program with that of the university. As D proudly stated

U.Y. and GWS cannot be separated from each other, we, of course, conduct these studies with our identity of U.Y. and we are all from U.Y. ... U.Y. is one of the exceptional institutions which embodies academic freedom with all its components. And our GWS refers again and exactly to the same.

In addition, some academics insisted on ‘WS,’ while some emphasized the G of ‘GWS’. For example, L drew the attention that “The G part of GWS is being forgotten here, I would also like to mention this, G is also existent, it is not only women and their studies”. This small but significant reminder refers to the absence of queer and masculinities studies within the program, which is a must from the aspect of the mission and vision of the program in direct accordance with its name.

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8 University of Y.
Following the self-definition, the theme of self-valuation furthers the issue one more step. Self-definition speaks to the power dynamics involved in the act of defining images of self and community, while the theme of self-valuation addresses the actual content of these definitions, as Collins puts it (2004, p. 107). To ridicule GWS by labeling it ‘the house of the wanton, of the spinsters, of the sexually troubled women’ or to mock at it by marking it as ‘fantasy’ or even ‘magazine’ reflect an effort to put all critical programs in its place and control the assertive characteristic of these critical programs that challenge the ‘rules’ of mainstream academia and threaten its status quo. To disclude GWS from the main discourse of the academia echoes an effort of keeping away another threat of critical programs that discomforts and disturbs mainstream academic understanding and dispossesses it from producing knowledge that serves for its own perpetuity. As K stressed, what is not understood is that the issues sprouting out of the problems that heterosexism and gender inequality give rise to are intersectional with all other types of discrimination. In other words, gender issues cannot be separated from the issues of class, race and ethnicity, and the solution of the one goes neck and neck with the solutions of the others. Considering the potential damage of internalized control to the self-esteem and self-recognition of GWS community, and the remarkable effort and inner strength it requires, self-definition and self-valuation turn out to be not luxuries but necessities (Collins, 2004, p. 109) for the survival of GWS. The position that GWS wants to have within not only academia but also feminist movement and social platforms in the both near and distant future is in parallel relationship with the self-definition it makes and the frameworks it draws for itself through this self-definition.

Current Political Conjuncture, Academic Situation and Feminist Movement in Turkey as Factors Influencing the Current Position of GWS

As it is acutely emphasized in the field, the political conjuncture in Turkey has influenced all social institutions and their relations from family to health, to military, education, economics, and so on. As sources of knowledge and politics, both academia and social movements have also had their places within this picture. An attacked and besieged academia and a targeted feminist movement have immediately affected the position of GWS within academia. As N insisted, it is not possible to discuss anything without touching on the situation Turkey is in ... context is very important for everything. However, in our field, context comes into prominence, and in our field, scientific environment must be free in reality for programs that have such critical perspectives. We clearly see that programs that have a critical perspective are seriously sabotaged in scientific environments which are not free, and this worries us a lot.

During 14-year-rule of Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, almost half of the society has found itself excluded from the main discourse of
president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Not only social institutions like academia but also agents like feminists along with all those “semi-” and “under-” women who refuse to be mothers (BBC, 2016) have increasingly and gradually become his target board. GWS programs and their agents, having problems at minimum with the governments of the past periods, have also had their share from this downpour of arrows especially in recent years. According to E,

we were always supported by the government, at least, we got moral support, in other words, all women ministers were in cooperation with us until AKP government came in. They had invited us to their meetings, encouraged us for abroad and had taken us, they had asked for our opinions while working on policies, had invited us to trainings they held and others, both individually and institutionally. Of course, with AKP it broke away dramatically.

In a political conjuncture where independent and critical thinking has been encumbered with restrictions, coercion, insult and compulsion, not only doing science but also living, taking a breath in the simplest term, happens to be painful. The picture I have been drawing here is not a scratch of a dystopia that I encountered through the pages of a fantastic fiction; actually, we are living, and witnessing it in our daily lives. We have lived it during and after the Gezi Resistance\(^9\), we have heard it in the songs and slogans of Peace Meetings\(^10\) that were bombed, and we have witnessed it in the signatures of Academics for Peace, and in so many more invisible incidents without number. Therefore, it would be far too utopian to imagine a political discipline like GWS who has its origins in the criticism of oppression to come out uninjured from this struggle. As K associates:

It is gradually tried to hinder the autonomy of university, self-decisions of universities, conduct of these self-decisions, opening up units on its own, and so on... They are talking about a new law of Council of Higher Education (CoHE), these will probably take universities under their control. So, the possibility of carrying over institutional studies regarding women’s freedom, feminism, women’s movement decreases at the universities, because they have already been turned into institutions where patriarchal thinking and conservative patriarchal culture are

\(^9\) In the spring of 2013, AKP government wanted to destroy Gezi Park in Taksim, Istanbul in order to build artillery barracks in its place. As a reaction to this, a group of people set up tents on guard in the park to prevent the action. However, on May 31, excavators entered the park and destroyed the tents and some trees, as a result of which thousands of people all around the country poured into streets for protests and turned the protest into a resistance for freedom. During the resistance, nine young people lost their lives while more than ten thousand were wounded. For detailed information: https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/eur440222013en.pdf

\(^10\) There arranged two peace meetings in order to maintain solidarity and fraternity between Turkish and Kurdish communities in Turkey in 2015, one of which was in Suruç, Şanlıurfa on 20th July, while the second was on 10th October in Çankaya, Ankara. Both of these meetings were bombed and hundreds of people lost their lives and far more were wounded. For detailed information: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Suruç_bombing, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Ankara_bombings
dominant; and there were few places we could point as ‘last castles’, but they are also aimed to be surrendered step by step.

It is clear and cannot be underestimated that

the government has made the issue of women unable to be in contact with institutions like us regarding women’s perspective. They have their own agendas of women, their own women groups, their own women academics, their own women ideologists and we are excluded from them in this sense (E).

This detachment and exclusion directed to GWS not only reduce its academic recognition but also result with marginalizing attitudes of university administrations that feel themselves in need of being cautious about the issues regarding GWS programs. These issues vary from the foundations of support units against sexual harassment and assault to limited—mostly no—tenures, from joint projects in collaboration with LGBTI+ organizations to voluntary student organizations, and similar. This state of being cautious reflects as subtle preventions, sometimes mocking, when mentioned issues come into question. No matter how unintentionally and scarcely it occurs, impeding these sine quibus non of GWS means to smooth its political nature, that is to ‘normalize’ it by eradicating its ‘extremism’, or plainly, to ignore its specificities, which is not a that simple and ignorable issue. Within this political atmosphere, marginality of GWS programs within academia have been deepened and attitudes towards the programs have become tougher.

While GWS programs struggle to survive, feminist movement, on the other hand, has also its own difficulties within this political atmosphere. Although the reasons of these difficulties cannot be reduced to the political conjuncture of the last 15 years, it can be said that all of them are somehow related to it. According to H,

there is also a feminist movement problem in Turkey. Unfortunately, there are a recession and power loss, canalization on different directions, getting lost in projects, failure in transforming the government, stepping back, being unable to establish sufficiently parallel relationships and many other things. Islamist women for example, there was something good in the beginning but later it all faded away, they are totally under the domination of men. Kurdish women are another issue, Kemalist women have already lost it, they are defeated... That is, there are a lot of problems, I believe that feminist movement is in a period of a lot of criticism but it is not being done much.

Internal difficulties have much in relation with both political actions and paradigmatic challenges. It would be easy to put the whole blame on current political conjuncture; however, all components of feminist movement have a share within it. Since I would like to analyze this situation from the aspect of GWS programs, I specifically focus on political conjuncture here. During AKP rule, not only feminists but each and every fraction of women have been influenced from the discourse of the president of Turkey and the regulations
he proposed. The discourses and regulations on abortion, motherhood, working conditions, education of women, their ways of living and even dressing and so many more have been in a great contradiction to what feminists work for and imagine to be ‘liberating’.

We see that clearly in Turkey now; the government has completely broken its ties with women’s movement and the person at the helm is, of course, somebody who already underestimates everything with insult saying “they [feminists] do not know their own society” and who does not approach any idea with an idea, which of course encourages the small patriarchy that is waiting in ambush, and as a result, violence has become a major topic of our day (R).

Although the relationship between feminist movement and GWS programs in Turkey was not an organic one in the beginning, it has been improved in time and the influence of feminist movement upon academic feminism cannot be underestimated. When feminist movement has had its share from current political conjuncture it has naturally and directly reflected on GWS programs as well. Current political conjuncture, the situation of feminist movement, the position of academia and agents within all this chaotic atmosphere are both separately and altogether compose an intersecting factors of oppression not only among themselves but also on GWS programs. Due to its both academic and political nature, GWS has been much influenced from all these factors and found itself marginalized among all. As H indicates,

the developments in this field has slowed down in parallel with Turkey’s new general political initiative, liberation, development expectations. In other words, this structure is the one that was thought about, discussed and built 7–8–10 years ago. New steps are not taken on it. Now, we are at the point of maintaining the current situation. I think all units are trying to maintain the current situation. ... We have a to-do-list for our improvement but it is not so easy to step into action because neither the political conjuncture nor the academic atmosphere supports such an action now, unfortunately. Academia is not in a process of expansion, on the contrary, it is in the period of shrinkage and decadence.

I would like to repeat and highlight the point that all units are working hard to maintain current situation. This is extremely significant in that the decision and action of saving current acquisitions is contextual and this context embodies an opportunity of a shared political action. Moreover, this conjuncture is not permanent, that is, it does not have a linear process. Instead, it is situational, it has its own specificities which are temporary and will soon change both conditionally and contextually, that is why feminist movement and GWS programs need to pursue their critical agenda, look for a new way within this atmosphere, a new way, a new discourse which will both affect the prevailing circumstances and protect current acquisitions.
Situated Academic Marginalization

While it varies from the specificities of one university to another, interdisciplinary and political characteristics of GWS seem to be its common disadvantages that marginalize it within academia. However, according to Feminist Standpoint Theory, these disadvantages can be transformed into political, epistemological and scientific advantages. For example, in a technical university where engineering faculties dominate over social sciences, and the faculties of medicine and law are absent, it can be much harder to achieve interdisciplinarity. Moreover, foreign language-based education system in Turkey may prevent intercollegiate collaborations due to the foreign language capabilities of the instructors. Also, as it is overtly theory-oriented, the relationships of GWS and of its agents with feminist movement may not be active and continuous. It is quite difficult for a GWS program which cannot live on its political movement to reside itself outside the realm of the mainstream. Politics is the main vein of GWS; it is exactly this main vein that provides it with both reasons to confront obstacles and difficulties, and resources to survive them. The aim of challenging and transforming the mainstream, and the mission of situating itself into a critical position in every condition to produce an alternative discourse, a third space, compose the political nature of GWS. Eradicating these characteristics of GWS turns it simply into a branch of mainstream. A non-political GWS survives easier within academia than a political one and its marginalization may fade away. However, a GWS decontextualized from its political nature and accordingly constituted specificities cannot realize itself, and loses its originality. In addition, this does bring neither recognition nor visibility.

Similarly, a GWS program whose interdisciplinary feature is not supported and maintained bears the risk of ghettoization and cannot achieve its mission. Within this context, the less interdisciplinary and political characteristics of GWS become apparent and strong, the less is mainstream academia challenged and consequently marginalization is weaker. Therefore, the less marginalization is felt, the less is critical insight developed on the mainstream, and epistemological, political and scientific advantage obtained. However, within a context different from this, where interdisciplinary and political nature of the program is stronger—that is, the program feeds itself with the help of each faculty taking place within the university from medicine to fine arts, from law to communication, and where both instructors and students are active agents of not only feminist movement but also LGBTI+ movement-, the power relations of the convention are unraveled and the coping mechanisms are more effectively generated against it. In direct proportion to this, the marginalization of the program explicitly comes to the fore. Thus, marginalization of GWS cannot be generalized since specificities differ significantly, and it is only possible to talk about a situated academic marginalization.

Situating GWS in a historical, political and academic context, I have aimed to draw a general picture about GWS programs in Turkey. As it can be seen from the picture, it is easy for GWS programs to fall into a marginalized sphere within
academia. This marginalized sphere mostly contains the negative effects of the situation, the difficulties GWS has to endure, overcome and survive. This is the first layer of the marginalization, that is, GWS confronts and is exposed to these difficulties and preventions from the beginning, it is the situation GWS enters in. However, what is necessary to highlight and strongly emphasize here is that this situation is no surprise for GWS. As a political program whose main objective is to challenge and transform mainstream academic understanding and knowledge production, GWS has to be and remain marginalized. As an outsider within, outsider due to its political nature and within with its knowledge production, GWS has the potential to produce ‘better accounts of reality’ in that it experiences both sides. Therefore, the second layer of this marginalization is to adopt and protect it in that experiences and research agendas of the marginalized bear less partial accounts of the world within themselves (Janack, 1997).

Considering the relationship of knowledge and politics in the background, there exist two significant factors needed to adopt and protect the marginalization of GWS within academia. The first one of these factors is the characteristic of being political, while the other is the feature of being interdisciplinary.

Conclusion

According to the findings, self-definition and self-valuation are of great importance in understanding the position of GWS in that these two shape the standpoints of GWS programs from the aspects of their missions, visions and attitudes towards academia. Then, it is not possible to situate GWS within academia without looking at the external factors that influence GWS. These factors are initially, the emergence conditions of GWS programs in Turkey in which the existence of U.N. and 1980 coup d’etat have been significant influences from the aspects of organic relationship of GWS with feminist movement and support of an independent academia which cultivates critical thinking. Then, present political conjuncture, current situations of academia and feminist movement follow the factor of emergence conditions of GWS. Within this regard, GWS is now in a position of protecting current acquisitions instead of moving forward due to the facts that political conjuncture does not support any feminist initiation, rather it prevents and prohibits; academia is not in a period of expansion but of decadence; and feminist movement is one of the main target boards of the political conjuncture and it has its own problems. These factors situate GWS into a marginalized position within academia. In other words, this is the situation GWS programs face today. However, the adoption of this academic marginalization is situated, that is, it is limited with the specificities of the programs and achievement of their interdisciplinary and political characteristics and thus, it changes from one program to another. The more a program achieves to be political and interdisciplinary the more it feels academically marginalized and this in a direct proportion affects its production of knowledge. The specificities of the programs and universities turn out to be significant in achieving these two characteristics.
To sum up all, in order to understand the position of GWS programs, it is necessary to keep in mind not only the specificities of the programs, but also the present political situation in the country. While general political conjuncture, current situation of academia and of feminist movement situate GWS in an inevitably marginalized situation within academia, specific characteristics of the programs and of the universities they belong to determine the adoption of this marginalization and its transformation into an advantage. All these findings are significant in that they have the potential to enlighten the way GWS is to draw for itself and help GWS to situate itself into a safer position within academia in the long run.

In addition, situated academic marginalization of GWS programs from the aspect of FST is a new inquiry. Making self-definitions and taking marginalization as an epistemic advantage contribute not only to the outputs of the programs but also their recognition both within and outside academia, and moreover, prevent them from assimilation and losing their critical standpoints. The last but not the least, it reveals the hidden subjectivities of academia and, in a wider sense, of the social relations, as well and reminds the necessity of producing critical knowledge for a better and much livable world.

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Literature


